

The Promise

James B. Hendryx

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James B. Hendryx

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THE PROMISE

A Tale of the Great Northwest

By

JAMES B. HENDRYX

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Seventh Impression

by James B. Hendryx

- The Promise
- Connie Morgan in Alaska
- The Gun Brand
- Connie Morgan with the Northwest Mounted

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THE PROMISE

CHAPTER I

THE PACE

Young Carmody awoke to the realization of another day.

The sun of mid-forenoon cast a golden rhombus on the thick carpet, and through the open windows the autumnal air, stirred by just the suspicion of a breeze, was wafted deliciously cool against his burning cheeks and throbbing temples.

He gazed about the familiar confines of the room in puffy-eyed stupidity.

There was a burning thirst at his throat, and he moistened his dry lips with a bitter-coated tongue. His mouth was lined with a brown slime of dead liquor, which nauseated him and sent the dull ache to his head in great throbbing waves.

Upon a beautifully done mahogany table near the door stood a silver pitcher filled to the brim with clear, cold ice-water. It seemed miles away, and, despite the horrible thirst that gnawed at his throat, he lay for many minutes in dull contemplation of its burnished coolness.

The sodden condition of his imagination distorted his sense of proportion. The journey across the room loomed large in the scheme of things. It was a move of moment, to be undertaken not lightly, but after due and proper deliberation.

He threw off the covers and placed a tentative foot upon the floor.

A groan escaped him as his right hand brushed the

A groan escaped him as his right hand struck the counterpane. Gingerly he brought the member within range of his vision--it was swollen to the wrist and smeared with dried blood, which had oozed from an ugly split in the tight-drawn skin. Slowly he worked the fingers and frowned--more in perplexity than distress--at the sharp pain of the stiffened knuckles.

He crossed to the table and, springing the silver catch of a tiny door, cunningly empaneled in the wall, selected from the cellaret a long-necked, cut-glass decanter, from which he poured a liberal drink. The sight of it sickened him, and for an instant he stood contemplating the little beads that rushed upward and ranged themselves in a sparkling semicircle along the curve of the liquor-line.

"The hair of the dog is good for the bite," he muttered, and with an effort closed his eyes and conveyed the stuff jerkily to his lips. Part of the contents spilled over his fingers and splashed upon the polished table-top. As the diffused odor reached his nostrils a wave of nausea swept over him. With a shudder he drained the glass at a gulp and groped blindly for the water-pitcher, from which he greedily swallowed great quantities of ice-water.

He paused before a tall pier-glass and surveyed himself through bloodshot eyes. The telephone upon

the opposite wall emitted a peremptory ring. Young Carmody turned with a frown of annoyance. He ignored the summons and carefully scrutinized his damaged hand.

His brain was rapidly clearing and, from out the tangled maze of dancing girls, popping corks, and hilarious, dress-suited men, loomed large the picture of a policeman. Just how it all happened he could not recollect. He must see the boys and get the straight of it.

His mirrored image grinned at the recollection of the officer, the quick, hard-struck blow, and the hysterical screams and laughter of the girls as they were seized in the strong arms of their companions, rushed across the sidewalk, and swung bodily into the waiting taxis.

B-r-r-r-r-r: B-r-r-r-r-r-r: B-r-r-r-r-r! Again the telephone bell cut short his musing. There was a compelling insistency in the sound and, with a muttered imprecation, he jerked the receiver from the hook.

"Well?" he growled. "Yes, this is William Carmody. Oh, hello, governor! I will be right down. I overslept this morning. Stay where I am! Why? All right, I'll wait."

"Now what?" he murmured. "The old gentleman seems peeved."

After a cold bath and a vigorous rub he began leisurely to dress. His eyes cleared and he noted with satisfaction that aside from a slight pouchiness, and the faint mottling of red that blotched his cheeks, all traces of the previous night's orgy had disappeared. True his hand pained him, but he had neatly mended the split with plaster and the swelling had, in a great measure, yielded to the cold water.

"Getting fat," he grunted, as he noticed the increasing heaviness at his girth. "Fat and soft," he added, as a huge muscle yielded under the grip of his strong fingers.

In college this man had pulled the stroke oar of his crew, and on the gridiron had become a half-back of national renown. By the end of his second year no amateur could be found who would willingly face him with the gloves, and upon several occasions, under a carefully guarded sobriquet, he had given a good account of himself against some of the foremost professionals of the squared circle. He was a man of mighty muscles, of red blood, and of iron, to whom the strain and sweat of physical encounter were the breath of life.

He wondered as he carefully selected a tie, at the strange request he had received at the telephone. He glanced at the French clock on the mantel. His father, he knew, had been at his desk these two hours.

They had little in common--these two. After the death of his young wife, years before, Hiram Carmody had surrounded himself with a barrier of imperturbability beyond which even his son never ventured. Cold and unyielding, men called him--a twentieth century automaton of big business. Rarely, outside of banking hours, did the two meet. Never but once did they hold extended conversation. It was upon the occasion of the younger man's return from a year's Continental travel that his father summoned him and, with an air of impersonal finality, laid out his life work. The time had come for him to settle down to business. In regard to the nature of this business, or any choice he might have in the matter, William was not consulted. As a matter of course, being a Carmody, he was to enter the bank. His official position was that of messenger. His salary, six dollars a week, his private allowance, one hundred. And thus he was dismissed.

It cannot be chronicled that young Carmody was either surprised or disappointed at thus being assigned to a career. In truth, up to that time he had thought very little of the future and made no plans. He realized in a vague sort of way that some time he would engage in business; therefore, upon receipt of the paternal edict he merely looked bored, shrugged, and with a perfunctory, "Yes, sir," quit the room without comment.

He entered upon his duties stoically and without enthusiasm. At the end of a year his salary had increased to twelve dollars a week, and his sphere of usefulness enlarged to embrace the opening and sorting of mail. The monotony of the life palled upon him. He attended to his duties with dogged persistence and in the evenings haunted the gymnasiums. His athletic superiority was soon demonstrated and after a time, neither in the ring nor on the mat could he find an opponent worthy the name.

More and more he turned for diversion toward the white lights of Broadway. Here was amusement, excitement--life! He became immensely popular among certain of the faster set and all unconsciously found himself pitted against the most relentless foeman of them all--John Barleycorn.

Gradually the personnel of his friends changed. Less and less frequently did he appear at the various social functions of the Avenue, and more and more did he enter into the spirit of the Great White Way. On every hand he was hailed as "Bill Carmody," and by the great force of his personality maintained his universal popularity. Many smiled at the rumors of his wild escapades--some even envied--a few frowned. If his father knew he kept his own council--it was his way.

Only one warned him. Ethel Manton, beautiful, immerious, and altoegether desirable, with iust the

suspicion of a challenge in her daringly flashing eyes, was the one person in all the world that Bill Carmody loved. And loving her, he set her high upon a pedestal and entered the lists with all the ardor of his being. His was the love of desire--the love of a strong man for his mate, bringing out by turns all that was best and worst in him.

Yet she remained cold--this girl of his golden dreams. Only at rare intervals did she unbend and allow him a fleeting glimpse of her very soul. At such times her eyes grew tender and she seemed very near to him--and very dear. And then he would tell her of his great love, and always her answer was the same: She would marry no man who was content to live upon an allowance. He must make good--must win to the fore in the business world as he had won in the athletic. And above all he must forswear the pace!

In vain he explained that business held no interest for him; that it was no man's game, but a sordid struggle of wits for the amassing of unneeded gold. In vain he argued that his father, already rich, would, in the event of their marriage, settle a large amount upon them in their own right. In answer to her reference to his habits he would laugh. He was not afraid; *there* was a man's game!

Of course, once married, all that would be changed. But, pshaw; it is all in a lifetime! And then he would

ignity promise to mend his ways--a promise that was forgotten within the hour. What do women know of a strong man's play?

But one woman did know, and, knowing, cared.

CHAPTER II

"BROADWAY BILL"

William Carmody had scarcely completed his careful grooming when, with a tap at the door, his father entered, closely followed by a rather burly individual in citizen's clothing, whose jaw was correctly and artistically swathed in bandages.

The two advanced a few paces into the room and paused. Father and son regarded each other in silence. At length the older man spoke:

"Where were you last night?"

William flushed at the tone and cast an inquiring glance at the man in bandages, who awkwardly shifted his weight from one foot to the other. His father motioned him to proceed.

"I was out with a bunch from Philly. Chesterton, '05; Burke, '03; little Hammond, '06; and old Busk Brater, star guard of the naughtv-naughts."

"Drunk, were you?" The words sounded coldly impersonal, and the tone showed no surprise.

"Why, no, that is, I wouldn't exactly say----" his father silenced him with a gesture.

"Did you ever see this man before?"

William scrutinized the other carefully.

"I think not."

"Oh, you hain't, eh?"

The man's awkwardness disappeared, he advanced a step and it was evident that he spoke with difficulty.

"How about last night in front of Shanley's? Guess you wasn't there, eh? Guess I just dreamt about a bunch of souses turkey-trottin' along the sidewalk? I'd of stood for it, at that, but the girls got to pullin' it too raw even for Broadway.

"I know'd you by sight an' started in to give you the tip to put the soft pedal on the wiggle stuff, when, zowie! I guess you didn't reach out an' soak me--a cop!" He tapped the bandage upon the aggressively advanced jaw.

"Maybe the Times Building just tangoed across the square an' fell on me!" he went on with ponderous

sarcasm. "An' that ain't all; when I gathers myself up, here's the tail-lights of a couple of taxis disappearin' into Forty-fourth Street, an' the crowd laughin' an' joshin' me somethin' fierce. I guess I dreamt that, too, eh?

"An' that ain't the worst of it. Down to headquarters I draws a thirty-day space--without! An' then, again, I guess they'll shove me right along for promotion on top of this. Not! I tell you I'm in bad all the ways around, with the whole force passin' me the grin an' askin' me have I saw Broadway Bill lately? An' in comes the inspector this mornin' with an order when I came back on, to report to McClusky, up in Harlem, an' help shoo the goats away from eatin' up the new sidewalks in front of the five-dollar-instalment lots.

"Nice kettle of fish for me, that was in line for a lieut. I ain't layin' it up again' you so much for the jolt; you're sure there with the punch, nor for the thirty-day space, neither, though with my family I can't afford that none. But, damn it, kid, you've broke me! With this here again' me I'll never be a lieut in a thousand years. I'm done!"

During the recital, the officer's voice lost its belligerent tone. He spoke as man to man, with no hint of self-pity. Young Carmody was honestly sorry. Here was a man who, in the act of giving him a friendly warning, had been felled by a brutal and unexpected blow. A hot blush of shame reddened

unexpected blow. A hot blush of shame reddened his cheeks. He was about to speak but was interrupted by the voice of his father.

The old man seemed suddenly to have aged. His fine features, always pallid, appeared a shade paler. Gone was the arrogant poise of the head which for forty years had dominated boards of directors. The square-set shoulders drooped wearily, and in the eyes was the tired, dumb look of a beaten man.

"Officer, it seems hardly necessary for me to express my thanks for the consideration you have shown in coming directly to me with this matter," he said at last. "Had you been so inclined you could have stirred up a nasty mess of it, and no one would have blamed you."

He stepped to a small table and, seating himself, produced check-book and pen.

"I trust this will reimburse you for any financial loss you may have incurred by reason of this most unfortunate affair," he went on; "and as for the rest, leave that to me. I have, I believe, some little influence at headquarters, and I shall personally call upon the inspector."

The officer glanced at the slip of paper which the other thrust into his hand. It was written in four figures. He looked up. Something in the old man's attitude--the unspoken pain in the eyes--the pathetic droop of the shoulders, struck a responsive

palms a drop on the shoulders, struck a responsive chord in the heart of the officer.

Impulsively he extended the hand in which the check remained unfolded.

"Here, Mr. Carmody, I can't take your money. You didn't get me right. I start out to knife you for what I can get, an' you wind up by treatin' me white. It wasn't your fault, nohow, an' I didn't know how you felt about--things."

There may have been just the shadow of a smile at the corners of Hiram Carmody's mouth as he waved a dismissal.

"We will consider the incident closed," he said.

At the door the officer turned to the younger man, who had been a silent listener.

"It's a pity to waste yourself that way. It's a punk game, kid, take it from me--they don't last! Where's your Broadway Bills of ten years ago? Stop an' think, kid. Where are they at?"

"My God," he muttered, as he passed down the broad stairway, "how many old fathers in New York is hidin' their feelin's behind a bold front, an' at the same time eatin' their hearts out with worry for their boys! An' folks callin' *them* good fellows!"

"Money ain't everything in this here world, after all,"

he added, as his gaze traveled over the paintings and tapestries that lined the great hall.

Above stairs an uncomfortable atmosphere of constraint settled upon father and son. Both felt the awkwardness of the situation.

Young Carmody was a man with a heart as warm as his ways were wild. His was an impulsive nature which acted upon first impressions. Loving alike a fight or a frolic, he entered into either with a zest that made of them events to be remembered. He glanced across to where his father stood beside the table toying with a jade ink-well, and noted the unwonted droop of the shoulders and the unfamiliar gaze of the gray eyes in which the look of arrogance had dulled almost to softness--a pathetic figure, standing there in his own house--alone--unloved--a stranger to his only son.

The boy saw for the first time, not the banker, the dictator of high finance--but the *man*. Could it be that here was something he had missed? That through the long years since the death of his wife, the sweet-faced mother whom the boy remembered so vividly, this strange, inscrutable old man had craved the companionship of his son--had loved him?

At that moment, had the elder man spoken the word--weakened, he would have called it--the course of lives would have been changed. But the

moment passed. Hiram Carmody's shoulders squared to their accustomed set, and his eyes hardened as he regarded his son.

"Well?" The word rang harsh, with a rising inflection that stung. The younger man made no reply and favored the speaker with a level stare.

"And *you* a Carmody!"

"Yes, I am a Carmody! But, thank God, I am only half Carmody! It is no fault of mine that I bear the Carmody name! At heart I am a McKim!"

The young man's eyes narrowed, and the words flashed defiantly from his lips. The shaft struck home. It was true. From the boy's babyhood the father had realized it with fear in his heart.

The beautiful, dashing girl he had wooed so long ago; had married, and had loved more deeply than she ever knew, was Eily McKim, descendant of the long line of Fighting McKims, whose men-children for five hundred years had loomed large in the world-wars of nations. Men of red blood and indomitable courage--these, who pursued war for the very love of the game, and who tasted blood in every clime, and under the flag of every nation. Hard-riding, hard-drinking, hard-fighting cavaliers, upon whose deeds and adventures the staid, circumspect Carmodys looked aghast. And this girl-wife, whose soft eyes and gentle nature had

.

won his love, had borne him a son, and by some freak of atavism had transmitted to him the turbulent spirit of the Fighting McKims.

Again the old man spoke, and his voice was the voice that Wall Street knew--and feared.

"I suppose you are well pleased with yourself. You are referred to as one of 'a bunch of souses.' You were 'pulling it too raw even for Broadway.' You are known to fame as 'Broadway Bill.' You are a sport! You, and your college friends. And last night you achieved the crowning success of your career--you 'soaked a cop'! You, the last of a line of men, who for a hundred years have dominated the finances of a nation! You, the last of the Carmodys, are Broadway Bill, *the sport!*"

The biting scorn of his father's tone was not lost upon the younger man, who paled to the lips.

"Where are the securities you were supposed to have delivered to Strang, Liebhardt & Co.?"

"Here, in my desk. I intended to deliver them on my way to the bank this morning. The boys blew in yesterday and it was up to me to show them around a bit."

"I will relieve you of the securities. The deal with Strang, Liebhardt & Co. is off. It depended upon the delivery of those bonds during banking hours yesterday."

yesterday.

Without a word William crossed to the desk and, withdrawing a packet sealed in a heavy manila envelope, handed it to his father.

"The bank no longer requires your services," went on the old man coldly. "That a Carmody should prove himself absolutely untrustworthy and unreliable is beyond my ken. I do not intend to take you to task for your manner of living. It is a course many have chosen with varying results. You have made your bed--now lie in it. I need only say that I am bitterly disappointed in my son. Henceforth we are strangers.

"Here is my personal check for ten thousand dollars. That is the last cent of Carmody money you will receive. Properly invested it will yield you a competence. Many men have builded fortunes upon less. As pocket money for a Broadway Bill it will soon be squandered."

Mechanically the younger man picked up the check from the table.

"I think, sir," he answered, "that you have succeeded in making yourself perfectly clear. As a Carmody, I am a failure. You spoke of an investment. I am about to make one of which any McKim would approve."

With slow, deliberate movements he tore the check

into tiny pieces and scattered them upon the carpet. "I shall leave your house," he continued, meeting the other's gaze squarely, "without a dollar of Carmody money, but with ten thousand dollars' worth of McKim self-respect. Good-by."

There was a note of cold finality in those last two words and the elder Carmody involuntarily extended his hand. He quitted the room abruptly as the boy, ignoring the civility, turned away.

An hour later William walked hurriedly down the steps of the Carmody mansion and, with never a backward glance, hailed a taxi and was whirled rapidly uptown.

CHAPTER III

THE FINAL KICK

It was Saturday, and Ethel Manton was lunching early that she might accompany her fifteen-year-old brother on a ride through the park.

A certain story in the morning paper arrested her attention, and she reread it with flushed face and tightening lips. It was well done, as newspaper stories go, this account of a lurid night on Broadway which wound up in a crescendo of brilliance with

the flooring of a policeman. No names were mentioned, but the initiated who read between the lines knew that only one man could have pulled off the stunt and gotten by with it.

"For goodness' sake, Eth, aren't you ever going to finish? You'll waste the whole afternoon over that old paper!"

Young Charlie had bolted his luncheon and waited impatiently in a deep window-seat overlooking the park. His sister laid down the paper with a sigh.

"Are the horses ready?" She asked the question in a dull, listless tone, so unlike her usual self that even Charlie noticed.

"Gee! You don't seem very keen about it. And look what a day! You look like you were going to a funeral."

Before the girl could reply he turned again to the window: "Look, a taxi is stopping and somebody is getting out. Oh, it's Bill Carmody! Ain't he a crackerjack, though? Say, Eth, why don't you marry Bill? He's just crazy about you--everybody says so, and----"

"Charlie!" The word was jerked out hysterically, and the boy was puzzled at the crimson of her face.

"Well, I don't care, it's so! And then I'd be a brother-in-law to Bill Carmody! Why he can lick

everybody down to the gym. He put on the gloves with *me* once," he boasted, swelling visibly, "just sparring, you know; but he promised to teach me the game. And football! There never was a half-back like Bill Carmody! Why he----"

"Do hush! He might hear you. Run along now. You ride on and I will overtake you. I--I must see Mr. Carmody alone."

"*Mr.* Carmody! So you two have had a scrap! Well, if I was a girl, and Bill Carmody wanted to marry *me*, you bet, I'd marry him before he got a chance to change his mind. You bet, when I grow up I'm going to be just like him--so there!"

The boy flounced defiantly out of the room, leaving the girl alone with a new fear.

Since the death of her parents she had bravely and capably undertaken the management of the household, and her chief care was this impulsive boy who was so dear to her heart.

"Look after Charlie as long as he shall need you." The words of her dying mother came to her vividly. "He is really a noble little fellow--but hard to manage."

And now, added to the sorrow that already seemed crushing her, was this new anxiety.

Charlie had set up an idol--and the fact that his idol was also her idol--although she never admitted it--struck fear to her heart. For the undiscerning eyes of the boy were blind to the feet of clay.

In the library across the hall, William Carmody paced nervously up and down, pausing at each turn to gaze abstractedly out of the window.

After what seemed an interminable wait, the portières parted and the girl stepped into the room. In her hand she carried a carefully folded newspaper. She crossed to the table and, regarding the man with a cold, disconcerting stare, waited for him to speak.

"Hello, Ethel! No, thank you, I have had luncheon. I----" His gaze encountered the unwavering blue eyes, and he suddenly dropped the air of flippant assurance. "Er, I came to see you," he added lamely.

"Yes?" There was little of encouragement in the word with its accompanying inflection.

"You see, I am leaving New York."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, I am going away." He paused, but receiving no answer, continued, "I am going away to--to make good. And I came to say good-by. When I return if--if you are still free I will have something

to tell you--something I have often told you before, but--well, things will be different, then."

"I suppose you said good-bye to your *other* friends last night?" Her glance rested for a moment on the folded newspaper, and the silky sneer of her retort was brutal--with the studied brutality of the female of the species who would inflict pain. The man winced under its sting.

"Last night cannot be recalled," he replied gravely. "Whatever happened then is past and gone. You are right; figuratively speaking, I *have* said good-bye to the others--to Broadway, and all it stands for. You alone know of my going. I am making no promises. If I fail no one will know--nor care. When I make good I will return--and then----"

The girl looked up. Their glances met, and in the depths of the steady gray eyes the soft blue ones read purpose--unflinching purpose to fight and win for the glory of an infinite love.

Her eyes dropped. She felt the hot blood mount to her face under the compelling magnetism of his gaze. She loved this man. In all the world no other could so move her. She loved--yet feared him. The very strength of him--the overmastering force of his personality--his barbaric disregard of conventionality at once attracted and frightened her.

In that moment she knew. deep down in her heart.

that if this man should take her in his arms and hold her close against the throbbing of his great heart, his lips find hers, and should he pour into her ears the pent-up torrent of his love, her surrender would be complete.

His was the master mind, and in all the years to come that mind would rule, and she, the weaker one, would be forced under the yoke of its supremacy. She prayed for strength.

Let those who believe that once the living flesh has turned to clay the spirit dies, ascribe to a trick of memory the vision of her dying mother that flashed before the eyes of the girl, and the whispered words: "Look after Charlie as long as he shall need you."

But those there are who know that in that momentary vision spoke in faint memory-whispers the gentle spirit-mother, who--ranking high in that vast army which, in the words of the immortal Persian,

"Before us passed the door of Darkness through,"

--would guide the footsteps of her loved ones.

Thus strength came and steeled the heart of one great little woman who battled alone against love for her right to rule and shape the destiny of lives. The momentary flush receded from her face, and when

her eyes again sought the man's, their glance was coldly repellent. She even forced a smile.

"Is it so amusing, then--my going?" he asked a little grimly.

"Yes, rather amusing to consider where a man would go and what he would do. A man, I mean, whose sole recommendation seems to be that he can 'lick' most anybody, and can 'drink more and stay soberer than any of the sports he travels with.'"

The dull red flooded the man's face at her words. Unconsciously he squared his shoulders and there was an unwonted dignity in his reply:

"I am well aware that my accomplishments are more in the nature of liabilities than assets. In spite of this I will make good--somewhere."

He stepped closer to the girl, and his voice grew harsh, almost rasping in its intensity. "I *can* beat the game. And I will beat it--now! Just to show you and your kind what a *man* can do--a man, I mean," he added, "whose sole recommendation seems to be that he can lick most anybody--and can drink more and stay soberer than any of the sports he travels with.' Incidentally, I am glad to know your real opinion of me. I once believed that you were different from the others--that in you I had found a woman who possessed a real soul."

He laughed, a short, grating laugh--deep down, as though rude fingers drew a protest from raw heart-strings--a laugh that is not good to hear.

"I even thought," he went on, "that you cared for me--a little. That you were the one woman who, at the last of things, would give a man a helping hand, a little word of encouragement and hope, perhaps, instead of the final kick."

He bowed stiffly and turned toward the door. "Good-by!" he said, and the heavy portières closed behind him.

In the room the girl, white as marble, heard the click of the front door, the roar of a newly cranked motor, and the dying *chug, chug* of the retreating taxi.

That afternoon Charlie Manton rode alone, and when he returned, hungry as a young wolf, to be told that his sister had retired with a sick headache, he drew his own conclusions, nodding sagely over his solitary dinner.

Later, as he passed her door on the way to his room, he placed his ear at the keyhole and listened a long time to her half-muffled sobs.

"Gee!" he muttered as he passed down the hall, "they must have had an awful scrap!" He turned and quietly retraced his steps. In the library he switched on the lights and crossed to the telephone.

On the night and crossed to the telephone.

"There isn't any sense in that," he said, speaking to himself. "Bill loves Eth--that's a cinch. And she does love him, too, even if she won't let on.

"She wouldn't stick up in her room all day bawling her eyes out if she didn't. I'll call Bill up and tell him so, then he'll come and they'll make up. I bet he's sorry, too, by now."

At the Carmody residence he was told that Bill was not in. He received the same answer from several clubs, at each of which he left explicit instructions for Mr. Carmody to call him up at the first possible moment.

Thereafter Charlie frequented the gymnasiums and made industrious inquiry, but it was many a day before he again saw his idol. Bill Carmody was missing from his accustomed haunts, and none could tell whither he had gone.

Those were days fraught with anxiety for the boy. Ethel, to whom he was devoted, went about the house listless and preoccupied, in spite of her efforts to appear cheerful. When he attempted to reason with her she burst into tears and forbade him to mention Bill Carmody's name in her hearing as long as he lived. Whereupon the youngster retired disconsolately to his room to think things over.

"Love's a bum thing," he told himself. "If they do get

married they die or get a divorce or something; and if they don't--well, Bill has prob'ly committed suicide and Eth is moping around, and most likely now she'll marry that dang St. Ledger." He made a wry face as he thought of St. Ledger.

"Runty little mollycoddle! Couldn't lick a chicken--him and his monocle. And that day the wind took his hat and rolled it through the mud, and he said: 'Oh, pshaw!' instead of damn it! Oh--*slush!* And I promised mother I'd take care of Eth."

He burrowed his face deep into the pillow, as, in spite of himself, tears came to his eyes.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE OR HATE

Thus a week passed, in the course of which the heart of the girl was torn by conflicting emotions. Love clashed with hate and self-pity with self-reproach. Was it true--what he had said? Had she administered the final kick to a man who was down--who, loving her--and deep down in her heart she knew that he did love her--had come to her in the extremity of his need for a word of encouragement?

Now that he was gone she realized how much he had meant to her. How, in spite of his reckless disregard of life's serious side, she loved him. Try as she would she could not forget the look of deep hurt that dulled his eyes at her words.

Had she not been justified? Had he not needed just that to bring him to a realization of his responsibilities? Had she not, at the sacrifice of her own love, spurred and strengthened his purpose to make good? Or, had she, by raising a barrier between them, removed his one incentive to great effort?

Over and over the girl pondered these things. One moment her heart cried out for his return, and the next she reiterated her undying hate for the man in whose power it was so sorely to wound her with a word.

And so she sat one evening before an open fire in the library which had been the scene of their parting. Mechanically she turned the pages of a novel, but her mind was elsewhere, and her eyes lingered upon the details of the room.

"He stood there," she mused, "and I here--and then--those awful words. And, oh! the look in his eyes that day as the portières closed between us--and he was gone. Where?"

Somehow the idea obsessed her that he had gone

to sea. She pictured him big and strong and brave, battling before the mast on some wallowing, storm-hectored trading ship outbound, bearing him away into the melting-pot of strange world-ways.

Would he come clean through the moil, winning honor and his place among men? And thus would he some day return--to *her*? Or would the sea claim him for her own, roughen him, and buffet him about through the long years among queer Far Eastern hell-ports where, jostling shoulder to shoulder with brutish men and the women who do not care, he would drink deep and laugh loud among the flesh-pots of society's discards?

The uncertainty was terrible to the girl, and she forced her thoughts into the one channel in which there was a ray of comfort.

"At least," she murmured, "he has ceased to be a menace to Charlie."

"Mr. Hiram Carmody, miss."

The old manservant who had been with the Mantons always, stood framed in the inverted V of the parted portières.

Ethel started. Why had he called? During the lifetime of her father the elder Carmody had been a frequent visitor in the Manton home.

Was it about Bill? Was he sick? Had there been an

accident, and was he hurt--possibly dead? There was an icy grip at her heart, though her voice was quite firm as she replied:

"I will see Mr. Carmody at once, Craddon."

As the man silently withdrew from the doorway a new thought came to her.

Could it be that Bill was still in New York? That his going away had been an empty threat? And was he now trying to bring about a reconciliation through the medium of his father? How she could despise him for that!

Her lips thinned, and there was a hint of formality in her greeting as she offered her hand to the tall, gray-haired man who advanced toward her.

"Well, well! Miss Ethel," he began, "all alone with a book and a cozy fire. That is what I call solid comfort." He crossed the room and extended his hands to the blaze.

"It is a long time since you have called, Mr. Carmody."

"Yes. We old fellows rarely drift outside the groove of our fixed orbit. One by one we drop out, and as each one passes beyond it shortens the orbit of the others. The circle is always contracting--never expanding. The last one of us will be found in his

dotage never venturing beyond the circle of his own fireside until he, too, shall answer the call."

The voice held a note of sadness which touched the girl deeply, and she suddenly noted that the fine patrician face had aged.

"You should not speak of being old," she said gently. "Why, you are called the Wizard of Wall Street."

"A man is only as old as he feels. Until recently I have considered myself a young man. But of late I feel that I am losing my grip."

"Isn't that a dangerous admission? If it should become known on the Street----"

"Ha!"--the heavy gray eyebrows met with a ferocity which belied the smile that curved the thin lips--"if it were but whispered upon the Street the wolves would be at my throat before morning. But they would have a fight on their hands! However, all that is beside the purpose. I suppose you are wondering why I called?"

The girl was momentarily at a loss for a reply. "Why, I--You know you are always welcome here."

"Yes, yes. But, as you must have surmised, I called with a definite object in view. A matter that concerns you and--er, my son."

The girl turned a shade paler.

"I do not understand," she replied.

"Nor do I. I have come to you at the risk of being thought a meddling old fool! But the fact is, I have several times lately heard your name mentioned in connection with William's, and recently there came into my possession this packet of letters addressed to my son in a feminine hand and bearing the Manton crest."

The girl's face flushed as she took the proffered packet and waited for him to continue.

"Fred Manton was my best friend," went on the old man, "and I won't see harm come to his daughter, if I can prevent it. You two may be just friends; you may be engaged--or married, for all I know. My son never deemed it worth while to take me into his confidence. In either case, I am here--and I will have my say. I shall put myself in the place of your father and speak as, I believe, he would have spoken. I may seem harsh and bitter toward my own son, but remember, Miss Ethel, I have had vastly more experience in the ways of the world than you have--and I know whereof I speak.

"Slight as is the difference between your ages, you are but an inexperienced girl, as the world knows experience, and William is a man--and a man, I am

sorry to say, who is no fit associate for a woman like you."

Surprised and perplexed the girl felt her anger rise against this man. Instinctively she rallied to Bill's defense:

"He is not bad at heart!" she said resentfully.

"What worse can you say?" returned Carmody with a harsh laugh. "Of all expressions coined to damn a man with faint praise, there is only one more effective: 'He means well.'"

Ethel was thoroughly angry now. She drew herself up, and her blue eyes darkened as she faced him.

"That is not so!" she cried. "Bill is *not* bad at heart! And he *does* mean well! Whose fault is it that he has grown up reckless and wild? Who is to blame? What chance has he had? What have you done for him? Filled his pockets with money and packed him off to school. Filled his pockets with money and sent him to college. Filled his pockets with money and shipped him abroad.

"Then, without consulting his taste or desire, you peremptorily thrust him into a business which he loathes--on an office boy's salary and an allowance out of all proportion to his requirements.

"You say he has never taken you into his confidence. Have you ever invited that confidence?

condemned. Have you ever invited that confidence? Have you ever sought his companionship--even his acquaintance?"

The man was astonished at her vehemence. Uncomfortably he found himself forced to the defensive.

"He had his chance. I placed him in the bank that he might learn the business as I learned it. If he had had the right stuff in him he would have made good. As it was, he attended to his duties in the most perfunctory and superficial manner. He showed not the slightest interest in the business. In fact, his position could have been ably filled by the veriest gutter-snipe. And *he* is the man who one day, in all probability, would have come into control of the Carmody millions! And he would have scattered them in a riot of dissipation the length and breadth of Broadway.

"But I have forestalled him. He is foot-loose--gone, God knows where, to follow the fortune of adventure, perhaps, at the ends of the earth. For in him, transmitted in some unaccountable manner through the blood of the gentlest, sweetest little woman who ever warmed a heart, is the restless spirit of the roistering, fighting McKims."

"Is it the boy's fault that he is a McKim?" returned the girl a little sharply. "Who chose his mother? Of all men you should be the last to speak disparagingly of a McKim. Turn the pages of

disparagingly of a McKim turn the pages of history and you will find written large in the story of the upbuilding of nations the name of McKim. Carmody gold is the cabala of Carmody suzerainty. But the McKim name has been carved deep in the annals of nations by sheer force of the personalities behind blades of naked steel.

"Even now the crying world-need for men--big men--is as great as in the days when the fighting McKims deserted their hearthstones to answer the call of the falchion's clash or the cannon's roar. And some day you will realize this--when your bank messenger makes good!"

The old man regarded her with a look of admiration.

"You love him!" he said quietly.

The girl started. Her eyes flashed and the play of the firelight gave an added touch of crimson to her cheeks.

"I do not love him! I--*I hate him!*" Her voice faltered, and the man saw that she was very near to tears.

"A strange hate, this, Miss Ethel. A strange and a most dangerous hate for a girl to hold against a man who is a *thief*."

CHAPTER V

"THIEF!"

"A man who is a thief!" The words fell distinctly from Carmody's lips with the studied quiet of desperation. Ethel stared wild-eyed at the speaker, and in the frozen silence of the room her tiny fists doubled until the knuckles whitened.

Noting the effect upon the girl, he continued, speaking more rapidly now that the dreaded word had been uttered.

"I had no wish to tell you this thing. It is a secret I would gladly have kept locked within my own breast. But I came here this evening with a purpose--to save, in spite of herself, if need be, the daughter of my dead friend from a life of suffering which would inevitably fall to the lot of any pure-hearted woman who linked her life with that of an unscrupulous scoundrel, in whom even common decency is dead, if, indeed, it ever lived."

"He is *not* a thief! He----" began Ethel vehemently, but the man interrupted her.

"Wait until you have heard the facts. Last week, on Friday, there was entrusted to my son's care for delivery a heavy manila envelope containing fifty

thousand dollars' worth of negotiable bonds. It was a matter of vital importance that these be delivered within a specified time. Ignoring this fact, he pocketed the bonds, and, in company with a number of his acquaintances, indulged in a drunken spree which culminated after midnight in a disgraceful street scene in the Broadway theatre district.

"The following morning, when I confronted him, he flouted me to my face, whereupon I virtually disinherited him. Not wishing to turn him away penniless, I handed him a check for a considerable amount which he saw fit to destroy melodramatically in my presence. Upon my request for the return of the securities, he handed me an envelope identical with that in which the bonds had been placed. I carried the packet to the bank where it was opened and found to contain not the bonds--but those letters.

"To avoid a scandal I made good the loss. I learned later, through investigation, that upon leaving home he came directly to this house, where he remained for upward of a half-hour.

"Further than this I know nothing of his movements except that he reentered the taxi and proceeded down-town. At Thirty-Fourth Street, where the chauffeur slowed down for instructions, he found the cab empty."

"And *these* are the facts upon which you base your accusation?" asked the girl coldly. "You, his own father!"

"To an unbiased mind the evidence allows but one interpretation."

"But his eyes! Oh, can't you see there has been some mistake? His eyes are not the eyes of a thief!"

"There has been no mistake. A most thorough search of the premises has failed to disclose a trace of the missing securities. In his desk from which he took the substituted packet were found several similar envelopes, but these contained only worthless rubbish--newspaper clippings of sporting events and the like.

"No, Miss Ethel, when William Carmody left my house that morning he carried with him those bonds. And he came here, knowing that he was a thief, with his pocket bulging with plunder!

"As I told you, I know nothing of the relations existing between you and my son. I only hope that he has gone forever out of your life, as he has gone out of mine."

The light died out of the girl's eyes and her voice sounded strangely dull as she replied:

"Yes, he has gone out of my life--maybe forever. He came to me here. to tell me that he was going

away to make good. And I--I was not big enough to see it. I sent him away with a sneer. Bill is no thief. For what he has been you are to blame--you and the Carmody money. For the first time in his life he has a fair chance. He has left New York the man you made him. He will return the man he makes himself. Oh! If--if I only----

"There, there, Miss Ethel, your loyalty is admirable, if misplaced----

"Don't speak to me of loyalty! I have been as narrow and as *mean* as--as *you* have!"

"My dear girl, you are overwrought. The sooner we learn that William Carmody has ceased to exist the better it will be for both of us. I bid you good-night."

The girl sank into the depths of her big chair and watched the sputtering little jet-flames lick futilely at the artificial logs of the fireplace. Believing herself alone, she was startled by the sound of footsteps hurrying noisily across the room. The next instant a tousle-headed boy with eyes ablaze was at her side working her hands like pump-handles.

"By Jimmy, Eth, you're a brick--the way you gave it to him! You bet I'll tell Bill how you stuck up for him."

"Charlie Manton! You were listening--

eavesdropping."

"I didn't! I wasn't! I mean I couldn't help hearing! The door of the den was open and I was in there studying. Old man Carmody is an old liar!"

"Charlie!"

"Well, he is, and you know it! I hate him! You bet he wouldn't dare call Bill a thief to his face! Bill could lick forty-seven like him with one hand tied behind his back. Bill is square. He wouldn't swipe a million dollars--let alone a rotten, measly fifty thousand!"

"Charlie Manton! What kind of talk is that? You ought to be ashamed!"

"Well, I ain't--so there! And I'm Bill's friend, and I ain't afraid to say so, either. You do love Bill--and you know it! You can claim you hate him till you're black in the face, but you can't fool *me*! What did you stick up for him for if you hated him? I bet old man Carmody swiped the bonds himself!"

"Stop right there! Aren't you ashamed to speak so disrespectfully of Mr. Carmody? He was an old friend of father's."

"I don't care if he was. I'm an old friend of Bill's, too. And Bill *ain't* a thief, no matter what he says!"

"You go to bed this minute. I am surprised and

mortified to think that you would be so contemptible as to listen to other people's affairs."

"Taint any worse than lying!"

The boy stamped angrily from the room, and the girl sat long by the fire and, one by one, fed letters to the flames.

CHAPTER VI

THE CROOKED GAME

"Clickity-click, clickity-click, clickity-click," the monotonous song of the rails told off the miles as the heavy train rushed westward between the endless cornfields of a flat middle State. To the well-built athletic young man who was one of the four occupants of the little end-room, smoking compartment, the outlook was anything but cheerful.

As far as the eye could reach long rows of shriveled husks, from which the season's crop of yellow ears had been torn, flapped dejectedly against their dried and broken stalks. Here and there a square of rich, black loam, freshly turned, bespoke the forehanded farmer; while in the fields of his neighbors straggling groups of cattle and hogs gleaned half-heartedly in

the standing roughage.

"Not much for scenery, is it?" The offensively garrulous passenger directed his remarks to the young man, who abstractedly surveyed the landscape. "No, sir," he continued, "you've got to go West for Scenery. Ever been West?"

The young man nodded without removing his gaze from the window.

"I live in Coloraydo," the other persisted. "Went out there for my health--and I stayed. Johnson's my name. I'm in the mining business."

His eyes swept the compartment to include the others in the too evident geniality of their glance.

"Now that we're all acquainted," he ventured--"how about a little game of seven-up, just to pass away the time? How about you, dad?"

Thus flippantly he addressed the ruddy-faced, middle-aged gentleman in gray tweeds, whose attention was apparently concentrated upon the lengthening ash of his cigar.

With enthusiasm undampened by the curtness of the latter's refusal, he turned to the remaining passenger--a youth upon whose lip sprouted a tenderly pruned mustache, so obviously new that it looked itchy.

"How about you, captain?" The top-heavy youth closed his magazine and unlocked a brain-cell.

"I don't mind." He ostentatiously consulted a very gold watch. "Must be in Chicago this evening," he muttered quite audibly, pulling a ten, twent, thirt frown that caused his labial foliage to rustle with importance.

He drew from his pocket a card upon which the ink was scarcely dry and handed it to the effervescent Johnson, who read aloud:

Mr. LINCOLN S. TARBEL

Municipal Investigator

"You see," explained its owner, "it has reached the ears of the managing editor of my paper in South Bend that vice in various forms flourishes in Chicago! Thereupon he immediately sent for me and ordered a sweeping investigation."

Further information was forestalled by the entrance of a suave-mannered individual who introduced himself as a cigar salesman, and who was readily induced to take a hand in the game.

The lightning-like glances that passed between the newcomer and the Western Mr. Johnson, while entirely unnoted by the investigator of municipal vice, aroused the interest of the athletic young man

to the point of assenting to make the fourth. Here, evidently, was something about to be pulled off, and he decided to be actively among those present.

The game progressed through several uneventful deals. Suddenly Johnson, scrutinizing a hand dealt him by the cigar salesman, emitted a low whistle.

"If we were playing poker now I'd have something to say!"

"Oh, I don't know! I've got some poker hand myself," opined the dealer. "Discard one, to make a five-card hand, and I bet you five dollars I beat you."

"You're on!" Each produced a bill which he handed to the athletic young man to hold.

"Three eights and a pair of deuces," boasted the Westerner, exposing the full hand upon the board.

"Beats three kings," admitted the other, ruefully laying down his hand. The winner pocketed the money with an exaggerated wink in the direction of the newspaper youth who had been an interested spectator.

The game progressed, and before many deals another challenge was passed and accepted between the two. This time it was the salesman who profited to the extent of twenty-five dollars which he received from the stakeholder with the remark

that he would bet his whole roll on a jack full any old day.

The elderly gentleman smoked in silence and amused himself by mentally cataloguing the players. Suddenly his attention became riveted.

What he saw jarred harshly upon his estimate of the athletic young man who, at the conclusion of his deal, dexterously slipped some cards beneath the table from his pile of tricks, then, bunching the pack, passed it to the Westerner for the next deal.

He was on the point of exposing this cheap bit of knavery when the young man glanced in his direction. Something in the steady gaze of the gray eyes, though for the life of him he could not have told what, stayed his purpose, and he settled into his seat, more puzzled than before.

"If it had been any one of the others," he thought to himself; "and then to think that he turns around and with a look virtually makes me a party to his tuppenny trickery!"

His reflections were cut short by a sharp exclamation from the investigator of vice who, in spite of his desire to appear composed, was evidently laboring under great excitement.

"I'll bet twenty-five dollars I've got the best poker hand this time!" He was staring at his tight-gripped

cards. Johnson looked his hand over--and with a careless:

"Here's where I get even," tossed the amount to the athletic young man, who laid his cards upon the table. The cigar salesman broke in:

"Hold on! I'm in on this, too! Got a pretty fair hand myself. And just to show you sports I'm game, I'll make it a hundred."

He passed a handful of bills to the stakeholder and glared defiantly at the newspaper person who was in the act of returning a bill-fold to his pocket.

"Why, that is all I've got!" he gasped, "and it's expense-money!"

"Well, of course," the other replied, "if you don't care to see my hand, and I don't mind telling you it's more than a middling good one----"

"I'll bet"--the hand that extracted the neatly folded bills from the leather case shook and the voice rose to a ludicrous falsetto--"I've got you beat, and if I had any more money with me I'd come back at you."

"You've got a watch there," remarked Mr. Johnson. "Let's see it. I ain't going to stay for the raise. My three sevens don't look as good as they did."

"I paid fifty dollars for it!" cried the youth, passing

the watch across the board. Both men examined it.

"Oh, well, I don't know anything about watches, but I'll take your word for it. Stick her up--here's the fifty."

"I've got *four* aces!" squealed the reporter as he spread them out face upward. He stared wildly at the other, and his hands made wet marks where they touched the board.

"No good," remarked his opponent blandly. "Mine's hearts--all in a row, with the jack at the top." One by one he laid them down--a straight flush. South Bend stared incredulously at the cards.

"All right, Mr. Stakeholder," laughed the salesman, "pass over the kale. Just slip out a five for your trouble."

"Just a minute." The voice of the stakeholder was quiet and his lips smiled. The two across the board bristled aggressively and the plucked one sniffled.

"Well"--there was an ugly note in the cigar salesman's voice--"a straight flush beats four aces, don't it?"

"Oh, yes, there is no question as to that. Are these the same cards we have been using?"

"Of course they are! What do you mean?" asked the dealer.

the dealer.

"Oh, nothing. I just wanted to know. Our friend here has the right to know that he got a square deal. Count the cards." The look of apprehension on the faces of the two men faded into smiles.

"Sure thing. That's fair enough," acquiesced the dealer, proceeding to gather the cards from the board. Slowly and deliberately he counted; "fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two," he finished. "Here, captain, count them yourself." He handed them to the youth, who mechanically ran them through.

"They are all here," he admitted.

"Now, that is funny," smiled the stakeholder, "because last deal I dropped several cards onto the floor. This gentleman saw me do it."

He nodded toward the elderly gentleman, who was now keenly interested, and reached under the table.

"See--here they are. And, by the way, the nine and ten of hearts are among them. And now, you cheap crooks," he added as he flung a handful of bills onto the board, "take your money and beat it!"

The two men opposite looked for an instant into the narrowing gray eyes, noted a certain tightening of the square jaw and the clenching of a pair of very capable fists, and tarried not upon further orders. Sweeping the money into their pockets they quit the

compartment, casting venomous back glances toward the young man whose lips could smile while his eyes threatened.

"Here is yours, kid. And let me put you wise to something. The first thing you do when you strike Chicago, buy a ticket to South Bend. They are waiting for you in the wicked town--they can see you coming. The next ones will spring a real live game, green goods, or wire tapping. They will roll you before you can locate a rescue mission. About the only form of vice they will give you time to investigate will be what the taxi boy does to you.

"The cold-deck stunt you just fell for, sonny, is so old it totters. It is the identical trick that started the coolness between Brutus and Julius Caesar."

CHAPTER VII

THE WRECK

The early darkness of late autumn settled over the flat country. Tiny lights twinkled from distant farmhouses as the Limited plowed through the night.

The athletic young man continued to stare moodily out of the window.

The black expanse of country became more thickly

The black expanse of country became more thickly studded with lights. They flashed in the foreground in regular constellations as the train whizzed with undiminished speed past tall block towers and tiny suburban stations.

Long parallel rows, narrowing to a point under a distant hazy nimbus, marked the course of the outreaching arteries of a great city. Warning bells clanged peremptorily at the lowered gates of grade crossings.

The car wheels crashed noisily over an ever-increasing number of frogs and switch points, an occasional brilliantly illuminated trolley car crept slowly over its rails, and the hundreds of green and red and yellow lights of the widening railroad yards lent a variety of color to the scene.

That infallible harbinger of an approaching terminal, the colored porter, had appeared in the doorway, whisk-broom in hand, when--suddenly--there was a grinding jar; the heavy coach trembled through its length, and from forward came a muffled roar followed by the tearing crash of riven metal.

The car reared upward--higher and higher it climbed to the accompaniment of the terrible crunching grind that proclaims undirected power and benumbs the brain with the horrid possibilities of energy uncontrolled. When almost perpendicular the sleeper toppled and crashed sidewise across

other tracks at right angles to its course.

New sounds supplanted the mighty noise of tearing and rending--little sounds--the sharp jangle of smashing glass, and the thin wail of an infant. These were borne to the young man's ears as from a distance.

It was very dark and he was conscious of a great weight which seemed to be crushing the breath from his body. He raised his arms and tore at the thing on his chest. It yielded slightly to the pressure of his hands but remained immovable. He reached above it and encountered metal--a large iron cylinder with projecting pipes twisted and bent. Frantically he tore at the weight, exerting to the utmost the mighty strength of his shoulders. Inch by inch he worked it sidewise, using the pipes as levers until at length it rolled free and settled with a crash among the wreckage at his side. The other--the thing that yielded--he lifted easily and sat up, filling his exhausted lungs with great drafts of cool air.

His head ached terribly. He passed his hand across his forehead and withdrew it wet and dripping. He struck a match and as the tiny flame flickered and went out he struck another and another.

At his side lay the torso of the young reporter, his head mashed by the heavy water-cooler. He shuddered as he realized that this was the thing he had lifted from his chest.

In the opposite corner the elderly man struggled to release his arm from the grip of a wedging timber. The body of the porter, doubled grotesquely, partially protruded from under a seat.

His last match died out and he crept to the side of the imprisoned man. A heave at the timber satisfied him as to the futility of accomplishing anything in the darkness and without tools.

He stood erect and groped for the door of the compartment which he located in the ceiling almost directly above him. Drawing himself through the aperture, he made the narrow passage, but such was the position of the car that it was only with the greatest difficulty he succeeded in worming his way along, using the dividing wall as a floor.

He gained the body of the coach, and from the darkness about him came groans and curses mingled with great gasping sobs, and that most terrible of all sounds, the shriek of a woman in the night-time.

He located a window and, smashing the glass with his elbow, crawled through.

From every direction men were running toward the scene of the wreck, calling to each other in hoarse, throaty bellows, while here and there in the darkness lanterns flashed.

Sick and dizzy he lowered himself to the ground and staggered across some tracks. He snatched a lantern from the hand of a bewildered switchman and stumbled again toward the overturned car.

Others swarmed upon it. He heard the blows of axes and the smashing of glass. Already an army of men were engaged in the work of rescue.

Inert forms were passed through windows into waiting arms to be deposited in long, ghastly rows upon the cinders of the road-bed, under the flaring torches. A cold, drizzling rain was falling and the smell of smoke was in the air.

A group of firemen hurried past carrying hand-extinguishers. The lantern-light gleamed wetly upon their black rubber coats and metal helmets, from under the brims of which their set faces showed grimly white. Far up the track an ambulance gong clanged frantically.

The young man reentered the coach through a window and made his way slowly toward the smoking compartment, pushing his lantern before him. Reaching the door, he peered over the edge.

Some one was kneeling beside the elderly man, working swiftly by the narrow light of an electric pocket lamp. As his eyes became accustomed to the dim light of the interior, he realized that the elderly man seemed to be resisting the efforts of the

other who knelt upon his unpinioned arm. From between the lips, which were forced wide apart, protruded the ends of a handkerchief--he was gagged!

The hands of the kneeling man worked rapidly, but not in the prying loose of the timber which lay across the other's arm. From the side pocket of his coat, where it evidently had been hurriedly thrust, dangled a watch chain which the young man recognized as belonging to the dead reporter.

Suddenly the atrocity of the situation dawned upon him. He had heard of such things, of the ghouls who haunt the scenes of great disaster, preying upon the bodies of the dead--robbing the helpless.

With a curse he seized the wirebound railway lantern. At the sound the man looked up--it was the cigar salesman. The young man swung the weapon with all his might. It cut the air in a descending arc, but the other avoided the blow and the heavy lantern crashed against the wall and went out.

Without an instant's hesitation he dived through the opening and met the fiend as he was rising to his feet. Together they rolled among the wreckage. While no match for his antagonist in size, the pickpocket was tough and wiry and apparently uninjured. He fought viciously, with the violence of desperation.

The athlete could hear the voice of the elderly man, who with his free hand had torn the gag from his mouth, roaring encouragement. He received a stinging blow on the cheek from which the warm blood gushed instantly. Knucks, he thought, the cur!

Suddenly his groping hand came in contact with the other's throat just above the rim of his collar. Instantly his fingers closed about yielding flesh, their ends biting deep between the muscles.

As the clutch tightened the man redoubled his efforts. His body writhed and he lashed out furiously with hands and feet. Blows rained upon the young man's head but he burrowed close, shielding his face--and always his grip tightened--the finger ends drawing closer and closer together.

He was only half-conscious now and the blows ceased to hurt. He experienced a sense of falling from a great height. His subconscious mind concentrated upon one idea--to maintain his hold. He must grip tighter and ever tighter.

The other ceased to struggle and lay limp beneath his body, but of this he knew nothing. The muscles of his arms were rigid, the clamped fingers, nearly together now, were locked, and all the world was a blank.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW FRIENDS

William Carmody opened his eyes to a sense of drowsy contentment and well-being. That the elegantly appointed room over which his glance traveled was not his room, disturbed him not at all.

He realized that his head was heavily bandaged and that the white-capped, linen-clad young woman at the window was a nurse. He watched her fingers move swiftly and surely in the fashioning of a small round of needlework.

Her face was turned from him but somehow he knew that she was young and, in a dreamy sort of way, hoped she was pretty. He thought of attracting her attention but decided to prolong the suspense--the chances were against it--so many girls are not.

He closed his eyes and tried to think. The fact that he was in a strange room with his head swathed in bandages, and that a young and possibly pretty nurse sat at the window, evidently for the purpose of ministering to him, suggested a hospital.

Young Carmody had never been in a hospital, but the atmosphere of this room did not in any way conform to his rather vague notion of what a hospital should be. There was no long row of white

beds all just alike, nor white walls, nor tiled floors over which people tip-toed to and fro and talked in hurried, low-voiced tones; nor was the air laden with the smell of drugs which he had always associated in his mind with such places. He must ask the nurse.

He was so drowsily comfortable that it was with an effort he opened his eyes. A rebellious lock of hair strayed from under her cap as she leaned over her work. The sunlight caught it and through the rich threads of its length shot tiny glints of gold.

"Ethel!" The name sprang involuntarily from his lips and even as he spoke he smiled at the thought. The girl laid aside her work and crossed to the bed.

"You called?" she asked, and the man realized vaguely that her voice was low and very pleasant.

"Yes--that is, no--I mean, you *are* pretty, aren't you?" He smiled frankly up at her, and somehow the smile was contagious--she even blushed slightly.

"You must excuse me this time," he continued, "I must have been thinking out loud."

"You seem to be a--well, a rather abrupt young man," she smiled. "But you must not try to think--yet. And my name is not Ethel."

"Oh, that's all right. You can't help that, you know--I mean, I think your name is very pretty--whatever

it is," he floundered. "The truth is, I don't seem to be able to say what I do mean. But really I am not a fool, although I don't suppose you will ever believe it."

"There, you have talked quite enough. The doctor said you must rest and not get excited." She smoothed the covers with little pats of her soft hands.

"But what I want to know," he persisted, with a frown of perplexity, "is, where am I?"

"You are all right," she soothed. "You are here."

"But why am I here?"

"Because. Now go to sleep like a good boy. The doctor will be here before long and he will hold me responsible for your condition."

Oddly enough her answers seemed eminently sufficient and satisfactory, and he closed his eyes and slept contentedly.

Hours later he was awakened by the opening of a door.

A tall, dark man, with a brown beard neatly trimmed to a point, entered closely followed by an elderly man who carried his arm in a sling, and whom young Carmody recognized as his fellow-passenger of the smoker.

passenger of the smoker.

At once the whole train of recent events flashed through his brain: the wild escapade on Broadway, the scene with his father, his parting with Ethel Manton, the wreck, and his fight in the dark--each in its proper sequence.

He was very wide awake now and watched the brown-bearded man eagerly as he picked up a chart from the table and scrutinized it minutely.

"How is the head?" the man asked, with his fingers on the pulse.

"Fine, doctor. Wouldn't know I had one if it were not for these bandages. And your arm, sir?" he added, with a smile of recognition toward the elderly man.

"Doing fairly, thank you. It is broken, but our friend here thinks it will come along all right."

The doctor, with a nod of approval returned the watch to his pocket and was preparing to leave when his patient detained him with a question.

"I have not been able to locate myself. This is not a hospital, is it?"

"Hardly," smiled the other, "although it answers the purpose admirably. This is the Brownstone Hotel."

"With rooms at twenty each!" asked the invalid

with rooms at twenty per! gasped the invalid.
"Doctor, some one has blundered. After buying my railroad ticket I had just four dollars left, and no chance in the world of getting hold of any more until I connect with a job."

The men laughed.

"I must be going," said the doctor. "You two can chat for a while. Don't tire yourself out, young man, and in a day or two you will be fit as a fiddle. Wish I had your physique! That system of yours is a natural shock absorber. We run across them once in a long while--half-killed one day and back the next hunting for more on the rebound."

At the door he paused: "Take care of yourself, eat anything that looks good to you, smoke if you want to, talk, read, sleep, and in the morning we will let you get up and stretch your legs. Good by!"

"Some doctor, that," laughed the patient. "Does a man good just to hear him talk. Most of them go away leaving the patient guessing whether the next visit will be from them or the undertaker--and rather hoping for the latter. But with this fellow the professional man is swallowed up in the human being--he fairly radiates life."

The other smiled as he settled himself into the chair near the bedside, vacated by the physician.

"Yes. he is a great doctor. Stands well toward the

head of his profession. We have no finer in the Northwest." Young Carmody's face clouded.

"But how am I to pay for all this? It is all well enough for you to laugh, but to me it is a serious matter. I----"

"Young man, you are my guest. I don't know who you are, nor where you came from, but, by gad, I know a man when I see one! From the time you sat in that game to save that poor young fool from being fleeced until you dove into that black hole and throttled that skunk----"

"They caught him, did they?"

"Caught him! They had to pry him loose! You have got the grip of the devil himself. The police surgeon told me they would have to put a whole new set of plumbing in his throat. Said he wouldn't have believed that any living thing, short of a gorilla, could have clamped down that hard with one hand.

"And there I had to lie pinned down and watch him go through a dead man's pockets--it was our friend the reporter. And then he turned around and calmly went through mine. Gad! If I'd had a gun! All the time he kept up a run of talk, joking about the wreck and the easy pickings it gave him.

"He was disappointed when he failed to find you--said he owed you something for gumming his game.

Well, he found you all right--and when he gets out of the hospital he is slated for twenty years in Joliet." The man paused and glanced at his watch.

"Bless my soul! It is after two o'clock! We will have luncheon served here."

"It is a peculiar situation," mused the invalid. "The last thing I remember is being in the thick of a railroad wreck, and here I wake up in bed, with a trained nurse in the room, to find myself the guest of a man whose name I do not even know."

"Appleton--H. D. Appleton, of Minneapolis. I am a lumberman--just returning from the National Lumberman's Convention in Buffalo. And yours?"

He was interrupted by a tap at the door and a couple of waiters entered bearing trays.

CHAPTER IX

BILL GETS A JOB

After luncheon, over cigars, the conversation again became personal. Appleton regarded the younger man thoughtfully.

"You spoke of being temporarily out of funds. Allow me to loan you what you require."

"Thank you, sir, but I could not think of it. I am already deeply indebted to you. If it were only a temporary embarrassment I wouldn't mind. But I have no definite plans. I must find work, and I freely confess I don't know exactly how to go about it. It might be a long time before I could repay the loan. Then, too, if a man is broke he will tackle the first job that comes along, whereas if he had money in his pocket he would be tempted to wait for something better, no matter what was offered."

"If you work it right you can easily get a couple of thousand out of the railroad company--damages, you know."

The younger man looked up quickly. "Not me," he smiled. "I have not sustained any loss to speak of. That crack on the head when the coach tipped over didn't even knock me out. And as for the pummeling I got afterward with the knucks--that was my own lookout--the railroad company is not to blame for that. No. Getting something for nothing is not playing the game--it savors too strongly of the methods of our friend the pickpocket."

As he talked the elder man subjected him to a careful scrutiny. He noted the deep-set, unwavering eyes, the smiling lips, and the firm, square set of the jaw.

"So you are really in earnest about going to work?"

"In earnest! Mr. Appleton, you have just witnessed a fair demonstration of the demands of my appetite," with a nod toward the array of empty dishes. "I am subject to those attacks on an average of three times a day. In my pocket are just four one-dollar bills. Can you guess the answer?"

The lumberman smiled.

"What kind of position were you thinking of? What is your business?"

"Haven't any. And I am not thinking of a position--what I want is a *job*."

"Know anything about lumber?"

"No."

The two smoked in silence while the waiters removed the remains of the luncheon. When the door closed behind them the lumberman spoke. He dropped the conversational tone and his words cut crisp and to the point:

"Young man, I can use you. If you are foot-loose and are willing to work, I will give you your chance. I am going to put it up to you straight and let you decide for yourself.

"I can use you in my office at a very fair salary. In two or three years you will, in all probability,

become a valuable clerk--later, a lumber salesman at a good salary and better commissions.

"Your duties will not be strenuous, and as you enlarge your acquaintance you will naturally assume the social position to which you are entitled.

"Or I can use you in the woods. Send you into a logging camp to learn the business where it starts. Up there the work is not easy. Instead of a salary you will receive wages--and you will earn them--every cent of them. There are no snap jobs in a logging camp. Everybody, from the boss down, works--and works hard. Instead of roast lamb and green peas you will eat salt pork and baked beans.

"You will be called a lumberjack--a social pariah. Your associates will be big men--some good and some bad--bad as they make them--and all rough. Good and bad, they would rather fight than eat, and they would rather watch others fight than fight.

"In summer you can loaf and blow in your wages, or you can go into the mills and learn how lumber is made--learn to tell at a glance whether a log will saw to the best profit into bridge timber or lath.

"It is no sinecure--the life of the logging camp. A hundred times you will be called upon to face battle, murder, and sudden death, and it will be up to you to make good.

"In the office I have clerks who will be found at the same desk twenty years from now. And in the woods I have hundreds of swampers, skidders, and sawyers who will always be swampers, skidders and sawyers. I have camp bosses who will always be camp bosses, and a few who will become lumbermen.

"But the man who comes up through that school is the man who learns the game--the man who eventually will sit behind locked doors and talk in millions, while the office-made salesman is out on the road dickering in car-loads."

He paused and relighted his cigar.

"And you are offering me the choice of these jobs?"

"Just so. Take your time. Think it over carefully and give me your answer in the morning."

"I have already made up my mind. If it is just the same to you I will go to the woods. I need the exercise," he grinned.

"By the way, you have not told me your name."

"Bill," he answered, and watched the blue smoke curl upward from the end of his cigar.

"Bill what?" Appleton regarded him through narrowing lids.

"Bill," he repeated. "Just Bill, for the present--and no references. Sometime--if I make good, perhaps--but surely Bill ought to be name enough for a lumberjack."

"Well, Bill, you are hired! Most men would call me a fool! Maybe I am--but it's got to be proven. I came up through the woods myself and I know men. It is my business to know men. A name is nothing to me--nor references. Both are easy to get. I hire men--not names. And as for references--I don't pay for past performances. It is up to you to make good!

"I like your eyes. There is honesty in those eyes--and purpose. Your mother's eyes, I should say." The young man turned his face away and the blood surged upward, reddening the skin below the white bandages.

Thoughts of his mother crowded his brain--the beautiful, gentle girl-mother, who used to snatch him up and hold him close--way back in the curly-locks days.

He remembered her eyes--deep, soft blue eyes that shone bright and mysterious with love for the little boy--so often such a bad, self-willed little boy--and he thought of the hurt in those eyes. It was his very worst punishment in the long ago--to read the pain and sorrow in those eyes.

"No, no, no!" he murmured. "Not her eyes--not mother's! Oh, I am glad that she did not live to know--" He stopped abruptly and faced the other, speaking quietly:

"Mr. Appleton, I am not a criminal--not a fugitive from justice--as you may have guessed. But I have been an--an awful fool!" The older man arose and extended his hand:

"Good-by, Bill. You better sleep now. I will see you in the morning."

As the door closed behind Appleton, the pleasant-voiced nurse appeared at the bedside. She straightened the covers, patted the pillows into shape, and fed the patient medicine out of a spoon. She hesitated when she finished and smiled down at him.

"Would you like to send any messages," she asked--
-"telegrams, to let your people know you are safe?"

Young Carmody returned the smile. The nurse looked into his face and knew that behind the smile was sadness rather than mirth.

"No," he said; "there is no one to tell." She leaned over and laid soft fingers on his bandaged brow.

"Isn't--isn't there a real Ethel--somewhere?" He did not resent the question of the sweet-faced nurse.

"Yes," he answered, "there *is* a real Ethel--but she would not care. Nobody cares."

CHAPTER X

NORTHWARD, HO!

Buck Moncrossen was a big man with a shrunken, maggoty soul, and no conscience.

He had learned logging as his horses learned it--by repetition of unreasoning routine, and after fifteen years' experience in the woods Appleton had made him a camp boss.

His camps varied from year to year in no slightest detail. He made no suggestions for facilitating or systematizing the work, nor would he listen to any. He roared mightily at the substitution of horses for oxen; he openly scoffed at donkey engines, and would have none of them.

During his years as a sawyer, by the very brute strength and doggedness of him, he had established new records for laying down timber. And now, as boss, he bullied the sawyers who could not equal those records--and hated those who could.

Arbitrary, jealous, malignant, he ruled his camps

with the bluff and bluster of the born coward.

Among the lumber-jacks, he was known and hated as a hard driver of men and a savage fighter. In the quick, brutish fights of the camps, men went down under the smashing blows of his huge fists as they would go down to the swing of a derrick-boom, and, once down, would be jumped upon with calked boots and spiked into submission.

It was told in the woods that whisky flowed unchallenged in Buck Moncrossen's camps. His crews were known as hard crews; they "hired out for tough hands, and it was up to them to play their string out."

At the first cry of "gillon" (stormy days when the crews cannot work) flat flasks and round black bottles circulated freely in the bunk-house, and the day started, before breakfast, in a wild orgy of rough horse-play, poker, and profanity.

But woe betide the man who allowed overindulgence to interfere with the morrow's work. Evil things were whispered of Moncrossen's man-handling of "hold-overs."

In the office, back in Minneapolis, if these things were known they were winked at. For Moncrossen was a boss who "got out the logs," and the details of his discipline were unquestioned.

On the Appleton holdings along Blood River the

On the Appleton holdings along Blood River the pine stood tall and straight and uncut.

In the years of plenty--those wasteful years of frenzied logging, when white pine lumber brought from twelve to twenty dollars a thousand and rival concerns were laying down only the choicest of logs--Appleton's crews were ordered to clean up as they went.

Toothpick logging it was called then, and H. D. Appleton was contemptuously referred to as "the toothpicker."

Twenty years later, with the market clamoring for white pine at any price, Appleton was selling white pine, while in the denuded forest the crews of his rivals were getting out cull timber and Norway.

And this fall Appleton sent Buck Moncrossen into the Blood River country with orders to put ten million feet of logs into the river by spring.

So it was that the few remaining inhabitants of Hilarity were aroused from their habitual apathy one early fall evening by the shrill shrieks of an engine whistle as Moncrossen's ten-car train, carrying crew and supplies for the new camp, came to a stop at the rusty switch. There was something reminiscent in this whistle-sound. It came as a voice from the past.

Time was, some eight or ten years before, when the

old No. 9 and her companion engine, No. 11, whistled daily and importantly into Hilarity, pushing long strings of "flats" onto the spurs; and then whistled out again with each car groaning and creaking under its towering pyramid of logs.

But that was in the days of Hilarity's prosperity--in the days when the little town was the chief loading point for two thousand square miles of timber.

It had been a live town then--work and wages and the spirit to spend--quick, hot life, and quick, cold death danced hand in hand to the clink of glasses.

Everything ran wide open, and all night long rough men sinned abysmally in their hell-envied play, and, crowding the saloons, laughed and fought and drank red liquor in front of long pine bars, where the rattle of chips and the click of pool-balls, mingled with lurid profanity, floated out through the open doors and blended with the incessant tintinnabulation of the dance-hall pianos.

These were the days of Hilarity's prosperity, when twenty train-loads of logs were jerked from her spurs by day, and the nights rang loud with false laughter.

A vanished prosperity--for now the little town stood all but deserted in its clearing, with the encircling hills denuded of all vegetation save a tangle of underbrush and a straggling growth of

stunted jack pine.

Even the "pig-iron loggers"--the hardwood men--had gleaned the last stick from the ridges, and Hilarity had become but a name on the map.

Only those remained who were old or crippled, and a few--a very few--who had undertaken to grub out tiny farms among the stumps.

Each evening these forlorn remnants were wont to forsake their stolid-faced wives and yammering offspring and pick their way through the solitary stump-dotted street, past windowless, deserted buildings which were the saloons and dance-halls of better days, to foregather around the huge stove in the rear of Hod Burrage's general store, which was decrepit Hilarity's sole remaining enterprise, and there to brag and maunder over the dead town's former glory.

The fact that certain of Hod's jugs never tilted to the filling of the vinegar bottles or molasses pails of the women, not only served to insure unflagging attendance, but the sale of their contents afforded the storekeeper a small but steady income which more than offset any loss incident to the preoccupied inroads upon his cracker barrel.

The sound of the once familiar whistle brought the men tumbling from Burrage's door, while up and down the deserted street aproned forms stood

framed in the doorways, beflanked by tousled heads which gazed wonder-eyed from behind tight-gripped skirts.

Not a person in town, except the very newest citizens, and they were too young to care--for nobody ever came to Hilarity except by the stork route--but recognized old No. 9's whistle.

Strange, almost apologetic, it sounded after its years of silence; not at all like the throaty bellow of derision with which the long, vestibuled coast trains thundered through the forsaken village.

A brakeman leaped from the cab and ran ahead. Stooping, he cursed the corroded lock of the unused switch which creaked and jarred to the pull of the lever as old No. 9 headed wheezily onto the rust-eaten rails of the rotting spur.

An hour later she puffed noisily away, leaving Moncrossen's crew encamped in the deserted cabins and dilapidated saloons of the worn-out town.

Moncrossen, by making use of old tote-roads, saved about forty of the eighty miles of road building which lay between Hilarity and the Blood River.

Toward the end of October the work was completed, the camp buildings erected, and a brush

and log dam thrown across the river at the narrows of a white water rapid.

Swampers and axe-men set to work building skidways and cross-hauls, and the banks of the river were cleared for the roll-ways. The ground was still bare of snow, but the sawyers were "laying them down," and the logs were banked at the skidways.

Then one morning the snow came.

Quietly it fell, in big, downy flakes that floated lazily to earth from the even gray of the cloud-spread sky, tracing aimless, zigzag patterns against the dark green background of the pines, and covering the brown needles of the forest floor and the torn mold of the skidways with a soft blanket of white.

The men sprang eagerly to their work--heartened by the feel of the snow. The tingling air was filled with familiar man-sounds--the resonant stroke of axes, and the long crash of falling trees, the metallic rattle of chains, the harsh rasp of saws, and the good-natured calls of men in rude banter; sounds that rang little and thin through the mighty silence of the forest.

Gradually the flakes hardened and the zigzag patterns resolved themselves into long, threadlike lines which slanted earthward with a soft, hissing sound.

Fast it fell, and faster, until the background disappeared, and all the world was a swift-moving riot of white.

It was a real snow now--a snow of value which buried the soft blanket of the feathery flakes under a stable covering which would pack hard under the heavy runners of the wide log sleds.

It lodged in thick masses in the trees whose limbs bent under the weight, and the woods rang to the cries of the sawyers when the tottering of a mighty pine sent a small avalanche hurtling through the lower branches, half-burying them in its white smother.

As the early darkness of the North country settled about them the men plowed heavily to the bunk-house through a foot and a half of fresh-fallen snow--and still it snowed.

CHAPTER XI

BILL HITS THE TRAIL

In a long-abandoned shack midway between Moncrossen's Blood River camp and Hilarity, Bill Carmody hugged close the rusty, broken stove.

All day he had tramped northward, guided through the maze of abandoned roads by the frozen ruts of Moncrossen's tote wagons, and it was long after dark when he camped in the northernmost of the old shacks with civilization, as represented by Hilarity's deserted buildings and the jug-tilting, barrel-head conclave of Hod Burrage's store, forty miles to the southward.

It had been a hard day--this first day of his new life in the Northland. And now, foot-sore, dog-tired, and dispirited, he sat close and fed sticks to his guttering fire which burned sullenly and flared red for want of draft.

The chinking had long since fallen from between the logs and the night wind whipped the smoke in stinging volleys from gaping holes in the rust-eaten jacket of the dilapidated air-tight.

Tears streamed from the man's smoke-tortured eyes, every muscle of his body ached horribly from the unaccustomed trail-strain, and his feet, unused to the coarse woolen socks beneath heavy boots, were galled and blistered until the skin hung in rolls from the edges of raw scalds.

He removed his foot-gear and the feel of the cold wind was good to his burning feet. He scowled resentfully at the galling newness of his high-laced boots and with a tentative finger explored his hurts.

Unbuckling his pack, he drew forth the ready prepared food with which he had supplied himself at the store. The pack had seemed trifling when he swung lightly into the trail that morning, but twelve hours later, when he stumbled painfully into the disused shack, it had borne upon his aching shoulders as the burden of Atlas.

Hungry as he was, he glared disgustedly at the flaunting label of the salmon can and the unappetizing loaf of coarse bread dried hard, rather than baked, from sodden dough, by Hod Burrage's slovenly spouse.

And as he glared he pondered the words of advice offered by the old man with the twisted leg who sat upon Burrage's counter and punctuated his remarks with quick, jerky stabs of his stout, home-made crutch.

'Tha' cann't fish ben't no good fr trail grub, son. Ye're a greener, you be. Better ye lay in what'll stay by ye--a bit o' bacon, like, or some bologny--an' a little tin coffee-pot yonder.

"Ye'll be thinkin' o' steppin' out the door wif ye're new boots an' ye're pack an' trippin' up to Blood River in maybe it's two walks, wif naught in ye're belly but a can o' cold fish an' a stun weight o' Mary Burrage's bread, which there ain't no more raisin' into it nor a toggle-chain.

"His plain ye're a greener, son; but take an old fool's advice an' get ye a pair o' the shoe-packs yonder to spell off the boots. Bran' new, they be, an' they'll gald ye're feet till ye'll be walkin' ankle-deep in hell again' night. F'r Oi'll be tellin' ye Blood River lays a fine two walks fr a *good* man, an' his boots broke in to the wear."

Now Bill Carmody was, by environment, undemocratic, and he resented being called a greener. Also the emphasis which old Daddy Dunnigan had placed upon the words "good man," in evident contrast to himself, rankled.

How he wished, as he sat in the cold discomfort of the shack, that he had heeded the timely and well-meant advice. His was not an arrogant nature, nor a surly--but the change in his environment had been painfully abrupt. All his life he had chosen for companions men whom he looked upon as his social equals, and he knew no others except as paid hirelings to do his bidding. And all his life money had removed from his pathway the physical discomforts incident to existence.

But all this was in the past. Unconsciously he was learning a lesson and this first lesson would be hard--but very thorough, and the next time he met Daddy Dunnigan he would take him by the hand. For here was a man--a good man--in the making. But a man new to his surroundings. A man who would learn hard--but quickly--and who would fight hard

against the very conditions which were to make him.

His perspective must first be broken on the wheel of experience, that he might know human nature, and the relative worth of men. His unplastic nature would one day be his chief bulwark; as now, it was his chief stumbling block. For in his chosen life-work he must take men--many men--rough men--of diverse codes and warring creeds, and with them build an efficient unit for the conquering of nature in her own fastnesses. And this thing requires not only knowledge and strength, but courage, and the will to do or die.

Alighting from the caboose of the local freight train on the previous evening, he entered Hod Burrage's door as he had entered the doors of trades-places all his life. To him, Hod Burrage was not a personality, but a menial existing for the sole purpose of waiting upon and attending to the wants of him, Bill Carmody. The others--the old men, and the crippled ones, and the hard-handed grubbers of stumps, who sat about in faded mackinaws and patched overalls--he regarded not at all.

He deposited his pack-sack on the floor where its canvas sides, outbulging with blankets and duffel, fairly shrieked their newness.

After some minutes of silence--a silence neither friendly nor hostile, during which Bill was conscious

that all eyes were turned upon him in frank curiosity, he spoke--and in speaking, inadvertently antagonized the entire male population of Hilarity. For in his speech was no word of greeting.

He addressed no one in particular, but called peremptorily, and with a trace of irritation, for a salesman.

Now, Hod Burrage was anything but a salesman. His goods either sold themselves or remained on their shelves, and to Mr. Burrage it was a matter of supreme indifference which. He was wont to remark to hesitating or undecided customers that "if folks didn't know what they wanted when they come into the store, they better keep away till they find out."

So, in answer to the newcomer's demand, Hod shifted his quid and, with exasperating deliberation, spat in the direction of a sawdust-filled box near which the other was standing.

Without rising from his seat in the one undamaged chair, he answered: "If it's the storekeeper you mean, I'm him." Then, as an after-thought. "Was they somethin' you wanted?"

Bill resented the implied rebuke in the storekeeper's words even more than he resented the bombardment of tobacco juice which barely missed his boots. Take it all in all he was having a rather

rough time of it.

The railway people had refused to stop their fast train at Hilarity for his special benefit, and he had been compelled to get off at the nearest division point, some forty miles to the westward, and continue his journey in the evil-smelling caboose of the local freight-train which crawled jerkily over the rails, and stopped to shunt cars at every siding.

Nearly the whole day had been consumed for the trip, during which time he had sat in the stuffy, superheated car, whose foul air reeked of cheap tobacco and drying garments, and listened to the guffaws of the train-crew as they regaled each other with vile stories and long accounts of revolting personal experiences among the dives of cities.

So now, tired, grimy, and with his head aching dully from the long breathing of foul air, he was in no humor for comprehensive amiability.

He made his few purchases and replied curtly to the questions of the storekeeper. It is doubtful if he would have replied at all but for the fact that he must have information in regard to the whereabouts of Moncrossen's Blood River camp.

There was a roar of merriment, which he answered with a scowl, when he inquired the location of the hotel.

"Jest help yourself, stranger," said Burrage, with a generous sweep of the arm which included all Hilarity not within the confines of the room. "They's about fifty buildin's, cabins, an' shacks along the street, an' you can take your pick. Rent's the cheapest thing they is in Hilarity--jest kick out the rats an' spread your blankets."

It was when Bill stooped to add the gaudy-labeled cans to his pack that Daddy Dunnigan, of the twisted leg, volunteered the bit of advice that fell upon his ears unheeded.

He was openly resentful now, having detected certain smiles, winks, and nudgings with which the assembled men called each other's attention to various details of his clothing and pack.

During the storekeeper's temporary cessation of vigilance while waiting upon his customer, the others had seized the opportunity to refresh themselves at his expense.

A thick, heavy tumbler, so cloudy and begrimed as to be almost opaque, was filled from a large jug placed conveniently upon a sack of potatoes, and passed from one to the other, each absorbing little or much as the thirst was upon him, and passing it on to his neighbor.

Daddy Dunnigan offered it to Bill along with the advice; but the latter ungraciously refused and, turning abruptly away, shouldered his pack and

turning abruptly away, shouldered his pack and proceeded to select his "hotel."

"Wonder who's he?" remarked Hod Burrage as he lazily resumed his seat.

"Too damned upity to suit me!" vociferated Creed, Hilarity's self-alleged bad man, with a fierce exhalation that dislodged a thin volley of cracker-crumbs from his overhanging mustache. "A heap too damned upity for this camp, says I."

He shook a hairy fist menacingly toward the door through which the man had departed. "It's lucky for him it was old Daddy there 'stead of me he wouldn't drink with or I'd of went to the floor with him an' taught him his manners."

"Naw ye wouldn't, Creed," said the old man. "Ye'd done jest loike ye done--set there atop yer barr'l an' blinked. An' when he'd went out ye'd blowed an' bragged an' blustered, an' then fizzled out like a wet fuse. 'Stead of which Oi predic' that the young feller's a real man--once he gets strung out. Anyways, Oi bet he does his foightin' whiles the other feller's there 'stead of settin' 'round an' snortin' folks' whisky full o' cracker-crumbs."

He gazed ruefully into his half-filled glass.

"Throw it out, Daddy, an' have one on me," offered Burrage, reaching for the jug.

With a sly wink toward the others, the old man drained the glass at a gulp and passed it innocently to be refilled.

"I'll let him go this time," rumbled Creed with a frown. "He's headin' for Buck Moncrossen's camp--Moncrossen'll break him!"

"Or he'll break Moncrossen!" interrupted Daddy, bringing his crutch down upon the floor. "The one camp'll not hold the two o' thim fr long. Heed ye now, Oi predic' there'll be hell a poppin' on Blood River, an' be this time a year fr now one o' thim two'll be broke fr good an' all, an', not to mention no names, it won't be yon stranger."

The strong liquor had loosened the tongue of the ordinarily silent old man and he continued:

"Oi caught his eye fair; an' 'tis the eye of a foightin' man--an eye, the loike o' which Oi ain't seen since Oi looked fr the last time in the dead eyes o' Captain Fronte McKim, in the second outbreak o' the wild Boh, Hira Kal, in the brown hills o' the Punjab."

The men listened expectantly, for when the liquor was right the old man could tell of strange wars in far climes.

"One night the little hillmen sneaked up on Captain Barkley's flyin' battery. They left his head an' his

men's stickin' atop a row o' stakes an' dragged the guns to a hilltop overlookin' the pass. An' in the mornin' they unlimbered, sweepin' our left wing.

'Fronte McKim was captain o' the Lights an' Oi was a corp'l. All that mornin' the Boh kep' pepperin' away, w' 'Miss Fanny,' the colonel he was, an' his parade-groun' staff o' book sogers, w' tables o' figgers an' the book o' rules an' maps an' a pair o' dividers, tryin' to figger out how to chase a bad Boh offen a hilltop w'out clim'in' the same.

"An' he lived a long time after, did Miss Fanny, to die in his bed o' some nice, fine disease, w' his fambly an' his Scotch an' sody gathered about him.

"An' he was put in a foine, big coffin w' a bran' new flag spread atop to keep off the dust, an' carried back to Englan' in a war-ship, w' the harbor guns firin' salutes--the whiles Fronte McKim lays back among the hills o' Punjab, wropped in his powder-burnt, shot-tore blanket.

"The hillmen an' their women an' the shiny hill kids give wide berth in passin', an' make low salaams to the grave o' the terrible fightin' *sahib* that put the fear o' God in the heart o' the wild Boh. An' it's as Captain Fronte would wished--Oi know'd um well.

"But, as Oi was sayin', the whiles Miss Fanny was tryin'--by nine times six is forty-seven an' trajectory an' muzzle v'locity an' fours right an' holler squares--

to wish the Boh often the hilltop so he could march us through the pass accordin' to Hoyle, Fronte McKim was off ahead among the rocks, layin' on his belly behint a ant-hill studyin' the hillside through his spyglass.

"Well, 'long 'bout noon he come gallopin' up, wī his big black horse all a lather, to where we was layin' in the scrub cursin' the flies an' the department an' the outbreaks o' Bohs.

"Come on, boys!" he hollers, wī the glitter in his eye; 'Oi found the way! All together now, an' we'll see the top o' yon hill or we'll see hell this day!"

"Wī that he tears loose a yell 'twould strike a chill to the heart o' an iceberg, an' wheels his horse into the open--an' us in the saddle an' follerin', all yellin' like a hellful o' devils turned loose for recess."

The old man shifted his crutch and sipped at his liquor.

"Most o' us seen the top o' the hill," he resumed, 'an' the brown hillmen, what of 'em wasn't layin' limp by the guns, a skitterin' through the scrub after a Boh who'd took off on a stray cavalry horse.

"But they was a many o' us as didn't--layin' sprawled among the rocks o' the bare hillside, an' their horses runnin' wild to keep up wī the charge. We found Captain Fronte wī his whole front blow'd out by a shell an' his shoulders kind o'

tumbled in where his lungs belonged--but thim eyes was lookin' straight at the hilltop.

"An' Oi looked in 'em long--for Oi loved him--an' was glad. 'Cause Oi know'd Captain Fronte McKim was seein' hell--an' enjoyin' it."

He set down the empty glass and favored Creed with a cold stare: "An' his eyes is like *that*--the stranger's--an' yours ain't, nor Moncrossen's."

CHAPTER XII

THE TEST

With only one-half of his journey behind him and the chill night-wind whipping through the unchinked crevices of the deserted shack; with the prospect of an unsavory supper of soggy sock-eye and a lump of frozen bread, Bill Carmody fervently wished himself elsewhere.

His mind lingered upon the long row of squat, fat-footed shoe-packs which the old man had indicated with his gnarled crutch. How good they would feel after the grinding newness of his boots! And coffee--he could see the row of tin pots hanging from their wires, and the long, flat slabs of bacon suspended from the roof-logs of the store.

He found himself, for the first time in his life, absolutely dependent upon his own resources. He cut the top from a can of salmon and thawed out his bread on the top of the dirty stove. He had no cup, so he used the salmon-can, limping in stockinged feet to the spring near the door, whose black waters splashed coldly in a tiny rivulet that found its way under the frozen surface of a small creek. The water was clear and cold, but tasted disgustingly fishy from its contact with the can.

As he entered the shack and closed the sagging door, his glance was arrested by an object half concealed in the cobwebbed niche between the lintel and the sloping roof-logs--an object that gleamed shiny and black in the dull play of the firelight. He reached up and withdrew from its hiding-place a round quart bottle, across whose top was pasted a familiar green stamp which proclaimed that the contents had been bottled in bond.

He carried it to the fire and with the sleeve of his mackinaw removed the accumulated dust from the label. "Old Morden Rye," he read aloud, holding it close to the firelight. And as he read his thoughts flew backward to past delights. Here was an old friend come to cheer him in the wilderness.

He was no longer cold nor hungry, and before his eyes danced the bright, white lights of the man-

made night of Broadway. His shoulders straightened and the sparkle came into his eyes. Forgotten was his determination to make good, and the future was a remote thing of no present moment nor concern. Once again he was Broadway Bill, the sport!

Carefully and deliberately he broke the seal and removed the cork-rimmed glass stopper, which he flung to a far corner of the room--for that was Bill's way--to throw away the cork. There was nothing small in his make-up; and for why is whisky, but to drink while it lasts? And one cannot drink through a cork-rimmed stopper. So he threw it away.

Only that day as he had laboriously stepped off the long miles he had thought with virtuous complacency of the completeness of his reformation.

He thought how he had refused to drink with Daddy Dunnigan from the smeared and cloudy glass half-filled with the raw, rank liquor, across the surface of which had trailed the tobacco-stained mustaches of the half-dozen unkempt men.

A week before he had refused to drink good whisky with Appleton--but that was amid surroundings against which he had fortified himself; surroundings made familiar by a little veneered table in the corner of the tile-floored bar of a well-known hotel. and while the spirit of his determination to quit

was strong upon him. Besides, it was good policy.

Therefore, he ordered ginger ale; but Appleton drank whisky and noted that the other eyed the liquor as the little beads rose to the top, and that as he looked he unconsciously moistened his lips with his tongue--just that little thing--as he looked at the whisky in Appleton's glass. By that swift movement Appleton understood, for he knew men--it was his business to know men--and then and there he decided to send Bill to Moncrossen's camp, where it was whispered whisky flowed freely.

Appleton had no son, and he felt strangely drawn toward the young man whose eyes had held him from the time of their first meeting. But he must prove his worth, and the test should be hard--and very thorough.

Appleton realized that to place him in any one of the other camps, where the ban was on whisky, and where each smuggled bottle was ferreted out and smashed, would be no test. It is no credit to a man to refrain from whisky where no whisky is.

But place a man who has created an appetite for whisky among men who drink daily and openly, and enjoy it; who urge and encourage him to do likewise; where whisky is continually before his eyes, and the rich bouquet of it in his nostrils, and that *is* a test.

Appleton knew this, and knowing, he sent Bill to Moncrossen, and smiled as he bet with himself on the outcome. But there is one other test--the supreme test of all, of which even Appleton did not know.

Place this same man alone, tired out, hungry, thirsty, and cold, with every muscle of his body crying its protest of aches against the overstrain of a long day's work; surround him with every attribute of physical discomfort; with the future stretching away in a dull gray vista of uncertainty, and the memory strong upon him that the girl--the one girl in all the world--has ceased to believe in him--has ceased to care; add to this the recollection of good times gone--times when good liquor flowed freely among good fellows, and at this particular psychological moment let him come suddenly and unexpectedly upon a bottle of whisky--good whisky, of a brand of which he has always approved--*that* is the acid test--and in writing this I know whereof I write.

And that is why Bill Carmody carefully and deliberately broke the seal and threw the cork away, and shook the bottle gently, and breathed deep of its fragrance, and smiled in anticipation as the little beads flew upward.

The fire had died down, and he set the bottle on the floor beside him and reached for the firewood. As he did so a long, sealed envelope, to the outside of which was tightly bound a photograph, fell to the

which was tightly bound a photograph, torn to the floor from the inner pocket of his mackinaw.

As he stooped to recover it his eyes encountered those of the picture gazing upward through the half-light. A flickering tongue of flame flared brightly for a moment and illumined the features, bringing out their expression with startling distinctness.

It was the face of the girl. The flame died out, leaving the pictured likeness half concealed in the soft semi-darkness of the dying embers.

It seemed hours that the man sat motionless, staring into the upturned eyes--those eyes into which he had so often gazed, but which were now lost to him forever. And as he looked, other thoughts crowded his brain; thoughts of his father, and the scorn of their parting; thoughts of the girl, of her words, and of his own boast: "*I can beat the game! And I will beat it--now!... And some day you will know.*"

His anger rose against the man whose own flesh and blood he was, who had driven him from home with words of bitter sarcasm, and against the girl and her sneering repudiation of him. He leaped to his feet and shook a clenched fist to the southward:

"I told you I would make good!" he roared, "and, by God, I will! I am a McKim--do you hear? I am a McKim--and I shall make good!"

He reached for the bottle and placed it beside him

on the pine table. He did not pour out the whisky, for he did not fear it--only if he drank it need he fear.

Just one little drink, and he was lost--and he knew this. And now he knew that he would never take that drink--and he looked at the bottle and laughed--laughed as the girl had laughed when she sent him from her forever.

"It's no go, old boy," he smiled, apostrophizing John Barleycorn. "I served you long--and well. But I quit. You would not believe that I quit, and came out here to get me. And you almost got me. Almost, but not quite, John, for I have quit for good and all. We can still be friends, only now I am the master and you are the servant, and to start out with, I am going to pour half of you over my blistered feet."

He recovered the packet from the floor and looked long at the picture. "And some day you will know," he repeated, as he returned it to his pocket.

Thus did the lonely girl in a far distant city unconsciously win a silent victory for the man she loved--and who loved her.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE TOTE-ROAD

Very early in the morning on the day of the storm which had been welcomed by the lumber-jacks of the Blood River camp, old Wabishke started over his trap-line.

The air was heavy with the promise of snow, and one by one the Indian took up his traps and hung them in saplings that they might not be buried.

After the storm, with the Northland lying silent under its mantle of white, and the comings and goings of the fur-bearers recorded in patterns of curious tracery, Wabishke would again fare forth upon the trap-line.

With wise eyes and the cunning of long practice, he would read the sign in the snow, and by means of craftily concealed iron jaws and innocent appearing deadfalls, renew with increased confidence in his "winter set," the world-old battle of skill against instinct.

On the crest of a low ridge at the edge of the old chopping where Moncrossen's new Blood River tote-road made a narrow lane in the forest, the Indian paused.

In the stump-dotted clearing, indistinct in the sullen dimness of the overcast dawn, rotted the buildings of the abandoned log-camp. From one of these
Wabishke decided to investigate, for in

SHOKE TOSE. WABISHKE decided to investigate, for in the Northland no smallest detail may pass unaccounted for. Swiftly he descended the ridge and, gliding silently into the aftergrowth of spindling saplings that reared their sickly heads among the stumps, gained the rear of the shack. Noiselessly he advanced, and, peering between the unchinked logs, surveyed the interior.

A man sat upon the floor near the stove and laboriously applied bandages to his blistered feet. Near by was a new pack-sack against which leaned a pair of new high-laced boots toward which the man shot wrathful glances as he worked.

"*Chechako*," muttered the Indian, and passed around to the door.

A popular-fiction Indian would have glided stealthily into the shack and, with becoming dignity, have remarked "How."

But Wabishke was just a common Indian--one of the everyday kind, that may be seen any time hanging about the trading-posts of the North-country--unimaginative, undignified--dirty. So he knocked loudly upon the door and waited.

"Come in!" called Carmody, and gazed in surprise at the newcomer, who stared back at him without speaking. Wabishke advanced to the stove, and, fumbling in the pocket of his disreputable mackinaw, produced a very old and black cob-

McKinnaw, produced a very old and black cor-
pipe, which he gravely extended toward the other.

"No, thanks!" said Bill hastily. "Got one of my own."

He eyed with disfavor the short, thick stem, about the end of which was wound a bit of filthy rag, which served as a mouthpiece for the grip of the yellow fangs which angled crookedly at the place where a portion of the lip had been torn away in some long-forgotten combat of the wilds.

"T'bacco," grunted the visitor, with a greasy distortion of the features which passed for a smile.

"Oh, that's it? Well, here you are."

Carmody produced a bright-colored tin box, which he handed to the Indian, who squatted upon his heels and regarded its exterior in thoughtful silence for many minutes, turning it over and over in his hand and subjecting every mark and detail of its lettered surface to a minute scrutiny.

Finally with a grunt he raised the lid and contemplated the tobacco, which was packed evenly in thin slices.

He stared long and curiously at his own distorted image, which was reflected from the unpainted tin of the inside of the cover, felt cautiously of the paraffined paper, and, raising the box to his nose,

sniffed noisily at the contents.

Apparently satisfied, he removed a dozen or more of the slices and ground them slowly between the palms of his hands. This done, he rammed possibly one-tenth of the mass into the bowl of his ancient pipe and carefully conveyed the remainder to his pocket.

"Match?" he asked. And Bill passed over his monogrammed silver match-box, which received its share of careful examination, evidently, however, not meeting the approval accorded the gaudy tobacco-box.

The Indian abstracted about one-half of the matches, which he transferred to the pocket containing the tobacco. Then, calmly selecting a dry twig from the pile of firewood, thrust the end through a hole in the broken stove, and after much noisy puffing at length succeeded in igniting the tightly tamped tobacco in his pipe-bowl.

"Thank you," said Bill, contemplating his few remaining matches. "You're a bashful soul, aren't you? Did you ever serve a term in the Legislature?"

The Indian's command of English did not include a word Bill had uttered; nevertheless, his mangled lip writhed about the pipe-stem in grotesque grin.

"Boots!" he grunted, eying the bandaged feet. "No

good! and he complacently wriggled the toes in his own soft moccasins. Bill noted the movement, and a sudden desire obsessed him to possess at any cost those same soft moccasins.

Wabishke, like most Indians, was a born trader, and he was quick to note the covetous glance that the white *chechako* cast toward his footgear.

"Will you sell those?" asked Bill, pointing toward the moccasins. The Indian regarded them thoughtfully, and again the toes wriggled comfortably beneath the pliable moose-skin covering. Bill tried again.

"How much?" he asked, touching the moccasins with his finger.

The Indian pondered the question through many puffs of his short pipe. He pointed to the new boots, and when Bill handed them to him he carefully studied every stitch and nail of each. Finally he laid them aside and pointed to the tobacco-box, which he again scrutinized and laid with the boots.

"Match," he said.

"Get a light from the fire like you did before, you old fraud! I only have a few left."

"Match," repeated the Indian, and Bill passed over his match-box, which was placed with the other

items. Wabishke pointed toward the pack-sack.

"Look here, you red Yankee!" exclaimed Bill. "Do you want my whole outfit for those things?"

The other merely shrugged and pointed first at the bandaged feet, and then at the boots. One by one, a can of salmon, a sheath-knife, and a blue flannel shirt were added to the pile, and still Wabishke seemed unsatisfied.

While the Indian pawed over the various articles of his pack, Bill found time to put the finished touches on his bandages, and, reaching under the table, drew forth the whisky bottle and poured part of its contents upon the strips of cloth.

At the sight of the bottle the Indian's eyes brightened, and he reached for it quickly. Bill shook his head and set the bottle well out of his reach.

"Me drink," the other insisted, and again Bill shook his head. The Indian seemed puzzled.

"No like?" he asked.

"No like," repeated Bill, and smiled grimly.

Wabishke regarded him in wondering silence. In his life he had seen many strange things, but never a thing like this--a white man who of his own choice drank spring-water from a fish-can and poured good whisky upon his feet!

good whisky upon his feet.

The Indian's eyes wandered from the pile of goods to the bottle, in which about one-fourth of the contents remained, and realized that he was at a disadvantage, for he knew by experience that a white man and his whisky are hard to part.

Selecting the can of salmon from the pile, he shoved it toward the man, who again shook his head. Then followed the match-box, the sheath-knife, and the shirt, until only the tobacco-box and the boots remained, and still the man shook his head.

Slowly the tobacco-box was handed back, and the Indian was eying the boots. Bill laughed.

"No. You'll need those. Just hand over the moccasins, and you are welcome to the boots and the booze."

The Indian hastily untied the thongs, and the white man thrust his bandaged feet into the soft comfort of the mooseskin moccasins. A few minutes later he took the trail, following the windings of Moncrossen's new tote-road into the North.

The air was filled with a light, feathery snow, and, in spite of the ache of his stiffened muscles, he laughed.

"The first bottle of whisky *I* ever entered on the right side of the ledger," he said aloud--and again he

laughed.

He was in the big timber now. The tall, straight pines of the Appleton holdings stretched away for a hundred miles, and formed a high wall on either side of the tote-road, which bent to the contour of ridge and swamp and crossed small creeks on rough log bridges or corduroy causeways.

Gradually the stiffness left him, and his aching muscles limbered to their work. His moccasins sank noiselessly into the soft snow as mile after mile he traversed the broad ribbon of white.

At noon he camped, and over a tiny fire thawed out his bread and warmed his salmon, which he washed down with copious drafts of snow-water. Then he filled his pipe and blew great lungfuls of fragrant smoke into the air as he rested with his back against a giant pine and watched the fall of the snow.

During the last hour the character of the storm had changed. Cold, dry pellets, hissing earthward had replaced the aimless dance of the feathery flakes, and he could make out but dimly the opposite wall of the rod-wide tote-road.

He returned the remains of his luncheon to his pack, eying with disgust the heel of the loaf of hard bread and the soggy, red mass of sock-eye that remained in the can.

"The first man that mentions canned salmon to me," he growled, "is going to get *hurt*!"

The snow was ankle-deep when he again took the trail and lowered his head to the sting of the wind-driven particles. On and on he plodded, lifting his feet higher as the snow deepened. As yet, in his ignorance of woodcraft, no thought of danger entered his mind. "It is harder work, that is all," he thought; but, had he known it, his was a situation that no woodsman wise in the ways of the winter trails would have cared to face.

During the morning he had covered but fifteen of the forty miles which lay between the old shack and Moncrossen's camp. Each minute added to the difficulties of the journey, which, in the words of Daddy Dunnigan was "a fine two walks for a good man," and, with the added hardship of a heavy snowfall, would have been a man's-sized job for the best of them equipped, as they would have been, with good grub and snowshoes.

Bill was forced to rest frequently. Not only were his softened muscles feeling the strain--it was getting his wind, this steady bucking the snow--but each time he again faced the storm and plowed doggedly northward.

Darkness found him struggling knee-deep in the cold whiteness, and, as he paused to rest in the shelter of a pile of tops left by the axe-men, the

foremost of the gray shadows that for the last two hours had dogged his footsteps, phantom-like, resolved itself into a very tangible pair of wicked eyes which smoldered in greenish points of hate above a very sharp, fang-studded muzzle, from which a long, red tongue licked suggestively at back-curved lips.

CHAPTER XIV

AT BAY

Bill Carmody was no coward; but neither was he a fool, and for the first time the seriousness of his position dawned upon him. Other shapes appeared and ranged themselves beside their leader, and as the man looked upon their gaunt, sinewy leanness, the slaving jaws, and blazing eyes, he shuddered. Here, indeed, was a very real danger.

He decided to camp. Fire, he remembered to have read, would hold the brutes at bay. Wood there was in plenty, and, quickly clearing a space in the snow, he soon had the satisfaction of seeing tiny tongues of flame crackle in a pile of dry branches.

He unslung his light axe and attacked the limbs of a dead pine that lay at the edge of the road.

After an hour's work his cleared space was flanked

After an hour's work his cleared space was flanked on either side by piles of dry firewood, and at his back the great pile of tops afforded shelter from the wind which swept down the roadway, driving before it stinging volleys of snow.

He spread his blanket and drew from his pack the unappetizing food. He warmed the remaining half-can of salmon and whittled at his nubbin of bread.

"Dinner is served, sir," he announced to himself, "dead fish with formaldehyde dressing, petrified dough, and *aqua nivis*." The storm continued, and as he smoked the gravity of his plight forced itself upon him.

The laggards had caught up, and at the edge of the arc of firelight a wide semicircle of insanely glaring eyeballs and gleaming fangs told where the wolf-pack waited.

There was a terrifying sense of certainty in their method. They took no chance of open attack, wasted no breath in needless howling or snarling, but merely sat upon their haunches beyond the circle of the firelight--waiting.

Again the man shuddered. Before him, he knew, lay at least fifteen miles of trail knee-deep with snow, and he had left but one small ration of unpalatable and unnutritious food.

"I seem to be up against a tough proposition," he

mused. "What was it Appleton said about battle, murder, and sudden death? It looks from here as if the old boy knew what he was talking about. But it is kind of rough on a man to roll them all up into one bundle and hand it to him right on the kick-off."

He had heard of men who became lost in the woods and died horribly of cold and starvation, or went down to the rush of the wolf-pack.

"As long as I stick to this road I won't get lost," he thought. "I may freeze to death, or starve, or furnish a cozy meal for the wolves yonder, but even at that I still have the edge on those others--I'm damned if I'm *lost*!"

And, strange as it may seem, the thought gave him much comfort.

He tossed more wood on the fire and watched the shower of sparks which shot high above the flames.

"To-morrow will be my busy day," he remarked, addressing the wolves. "Good night, you hell-hounds! Just stick around and see that nothing sneaks up and bites me."

He hurled a blazing firebrand among the foremost of the hungry hoard, but these did not retreat--merely leaped back, snarling, to lurk in the outer shadows.

Bill's sleep was fitful. The snow ceased to fall during

the early hours of the night, and the pair of blankets with which he had provided himself proved entirely inadequate protection against the steadily increasing cold.

Time and again he awoke and replenished the fire, for, no matter in what position he lay, one side of his body seemed freezing, while the other toasted uncomfortably in the hot glare of the flames. And always--just at the rim of the fire-light--sat the wolves, waiting in their ominous circle of silence.

But in the interims between these awakenings he slept profoundly, oblivious alike to discomfort and danger--as the dead sleep.

At the first hint of dawn Bill hastily consumed the last of his unpalatable food and resumed his journey.

Hour after hour he toiled through the snow, and always the wolf-pack followed, haunting his trail in the open roadway and flanking him in the deep shade of the evergreen forest, moving tirelessly through the loose snow in long, slow leaps.

Seventeen of them he counted--seventeen murderous, ill-visaged curs of the savage kill! And the leader of the pack was a very demon wolf. A monstrous female, almost pure white, huge, misshapen, hideous--the ultimate harridan of the wolf-breed--she stood a full two hands above the tallest of the male and five other evil crea-

The foot and half of a foreleg had been left between iron jaws where she had gnawed herself out of a trap, and the shrunken stub, depending from a withered shoulder, dragged over the surface of the snow, leaving a curious mark like the trail of a snake.

The remaining foreleg was strong and thick and, from redistribution of balance, slanted inward from the massive shoulder, which was developed out of all proportion to its mate, giving the great white brute a repulsive, lopsided appearance.

The long, stiff hair stood out upon her neck in a great ruff, which accentuated the fiendish ferocity of her, adding a hyena-like slope to her ungainly body. But it was in the expression of her face that she reached the climax of hideous malevolence.

One pointed ear stood erect upon her head, while the other, mangled and torn into a serried red excrescence, formed the termination of a broad, ragged scar which began at the corner of her mouth, giving her face the expression of a fiendish grin that belied the green glare of her venomous, opalescent eyes.

The loss of the leg seemed in nowise to hamper her freedom of action. She moved ceaselessly among the pack with a peculiar bounding gallop, fawning in subtle cajolery upon those in the forefront, slashing

strike majestically upon those in the forefront, slaking right and left among the laggards with vicious clicks of her long, white fangs; and always she watched the tiring man who found his own gaze fixed upon her in horrid fascination.

There was something sinister in the wolf-pack's noiseless pursuit. The brutes drew nearer as the man's pace slowed to the wearying of his muscles.

Instinctively he knew that at the last there would be no waiting--no delay. The very minute he sank exhausted into the snow they would be upon him--the great white leader and her rapacious horde--and in his imagination he could feel the viselike clench of iron jaws and the tearing rip with which the quivering flesh would be stripped from his bones.

At midday the man placed the sheath-knife in his belt and threw away the pack. Relieved of the burden, his shoulders felt strangely light. There was a new buoyancy in his stride.

But the relief was temporary, and as the sun sank early behind the pines his brain was again driving his wearied muscles to their work.

The wolves were following close in now, and the silence of their relentless persistence filled the man with a dumb terror which no pandemonium of howling could have inspired.

His advance was halting. Each step was a separate and conscious undertaking, and it was with difficulty that he lifted his moccasins clear of the snow.

Suddenly he stumbled. The leaders were almost upon him as he recovered and faced them there in the white reach of the tote-road. They halted just out of reach of the swing of his axe, and as the man looked into their glaring eyes a frenzy of unreasoning fury seized him.

His nerves could no longer stand the strain. Something seemed to snap in his brain, and through his veins surged the spirit of his fighting ancestors.

A sudden memory flash, as of deeds forgotten through long ages, and with it came strength--the very abandon of fierce, brute strength of a man with the mind to kill.

"Come on!" he cried. "Fight it out, you fiends! I may die, but I'll be damned if I'll be hounded to death! You may get me, but you'll *fight*! When a McKim goes down some one pays! And if it is die--By God! There'll be fun in the dying!"

With a weird primordial scream, as the first man might have screamed in the face of the first saber-tooth, he hurled his axe among them and sprang forward, flashing the cold, gray blade of his sheath-knife!

CHAPTER XV

THE WERWOLF

Now, as all men know, Bill Carmody had done a most foolish and insane thing.

But the very audacity of his act--and the god of chance--favored him, for as the axe whizzed through the air the keen edge of the whirling bit caught one of the larger wolves full on the side of the head.

There followed the peculiar, dull scrunching sound that stands alone among all other sounds, being produced by no other thing than the sudden crush of a living skull.

The front and side of the skull lifted and turned backward upon its hinge of raw scalp and the wolf went down, clawing and biting, and over the snow flowed thick red blood, and a thicker mucus of soft, wet brains.

At the sight and scent of the warm blood, the companions of the stricken brute--the gaunt, tireless leaders, who had traveled beside him in the van, and the rag-tag and bobtail alike--fell upon him tooth and nail, and the silence of the forest was shattered by the blood-cry of the most common

shattered by the blood-cry of the meat-getters.

Not so the great she-wolf, who despised these others that fought among themselves, intent only upon the satisfaction of their hunger.

Her purpose in trailing this man to destruction was of deep vengeance: the assuagement of an abysmal hatred that smoldered in her heart against every individual of the terrible man kind, whose cruel traps of iron, blades of steel, and leaden bullets had made her a monstrous, sexless thing, feared and unsought by mating males, hated of her own breed.

And now, at the moment she had by the cunning of her generalship delivered this man an easy prey to her followers, they deserted her and fell in swinish greed upon the first meat at hand.

So that at the last she faced her enemy alone, and the smoldering fury of her heart blazed green from her wicked eyes. She stood tense as a pointer, every hair of her long white coat bristlingly aquiver.

Suddenly she threw back her head, pointed her sharp muzzle to the sky, and gave voice to the long-drawn ululation which is the battle-cry of wolves.

Yet it was not the wolf-cry, for long ago the malformation of a healing throat-wound had distorted the bell-like cry into a hideous scream like the shriek of a soul foredamned, which quavered loud and shrill upon the keen air and ended in a

series of quick jerks, like stabs of horrible laughter.

And then, with tight-drawn lips and jaws agape, she hurled herself straight at the throat of the stumbling man.

Darkness was gathering when, a mile to the northward, Jake LaFranz and Irish Fallon, who were laboring with six big horses and a rough log drag to break out the trail, suddenly paused to listen.

Through the thin, cold air rang a sound the like of which neither had ever heard. And then, as if in echo, the long-drawn wail of the great white wolf.

They stared at each other white-lipped; for that last cry was a thing men talked about of nights with bated breath and deep curses. Neither had heard it before--nor would either hear it again--but each recognized the sound instinctively, as he would recognize the sound of Gabriel's trump.

"It's *her*!" gasped LaFranz. "God save us! It's Diablesse--the *loup-garou*!"

"'Tis none other--that last. But, man! Man! The first wan! Was it a human cry or from the throat of another of her hell-begotten breed?"

Without waiting to reply the Frenchman swung the big six-team in their tracks and headed them toward

camp. But Irish Fallon reached for him as he fumbled at the clevis.

"Howld on, ye frog-eater! Be a man! If 'twas human tore loose that yell he'll be the bether fer help, notwithstandin' there was more av foight nor fear in th' sound."

"No, no, no! It's *her*! It's Diablesse!" He crossed himself.

"Sure, an' ut is; bad cess to her altogether. But Oi got a hear-rt in me ribs o'good rid blood that takes relish now an' agin in a bit av a foight. An', man or baste, Oi ain't particular, so 'tis a good wan. Oi'll be goin' down th' thrail a piece an' see phwat's to see. Oi ain't axin' ye to go 'long. Ye poor prayer-dhrivin' haythen, wid yer limon av a hear-rt ye've got a yallar shtripe that raches to th' length an' width av ye. Ye'd be no good nohow.

"But 'tis mesilf ain't fearin' th' evil eye av th' werwolf--an' she is called be the name av th' divil's own.

"But listen ye here, ye pea-soup Frinchy! Ye'll not go shnakin' off wid thim harses. Ye'll bide here till Oi come back."

The other made a whimper of protest, but Irish Fallon reached out a great hairy hand and shook him roughly.

"Yez moind now, an' Oi mane ut! Here ye shtay. An' av ye ain't here, ye'd bether kape on goin'. F'r th' nixt toime Oi lay eyes on ye Oi'll br-reak ye in two! An' don't ye fergit ut!"

The big Irishman turned and swung down the tote-road, the webs of his rackets leaving a broad trail in the snow. LaFranz cowered upon the snow-plow and sought refuge in craven prayer and curses the while he shot frightened glances into the darkening forest.

He thought of cutting the horses loose and starting them for camp at a run. But, much as he feared the werwolf, he feared Irish Fallon more; for many were the tales of Fallon's man-fights when his "Irish was up."

When the white wolf sprang the man had nearly reached the snarling pack. Before him, scarcely six feet away, lay his axe, the blade smeared with blood and brains, to which clung stiff gray hairs.

Instinctively he ducked and, as the huge form flashed past, his right arm shot out straight from the shoulder. The long, clean blade entered just at the point of the brisket and, ranging upward, was buried to the haft as the knife was torn from his grasp.

One step and the man's fingers closed about the helve of his axe, and he whirled to meet the second

onslaught.

But there was small need. The great brute stood still in her tracks and, with lowered head, snapped and wrenched at the thing that bit into her very lungs.

The stag-horn plates of the protruding hilt were splintered under the clamp of the mighty jaws, and the long, gleaming teeth made deep dents in the brass beneath. Her lips reddened, and before her the snow was flecked with blood.

All this the man took in at a glance without conscious impression. He gripped his weapon and sprang among the fighting pack, which ripped and dragged at the carcass of the dead wolf.

Right and left he struck in a reckless fume of ferocity, which spoke of unreasoning fights in worlds of savage firstlings. And under the smashing blows of the axe wolves went down--skulls split, spines crushed, ribs caved in--a side at a stroke, and shoulders were cloven clean and deep to pink sponge lungs.

As if realizing that her hurt was mortal, the great she-wolf abandoned her attack on the knife-haft and, summoning her strength for a supreme effort, sprang straight into the midst of the red shambles.

The man, caught unawares, went down under the impact of her body. For one fleeting second he

stared upward into blazing eyes. From between wide-sprung rows of flashing fangs the blood-dripping tongue seemed to writhe from the cavernous throat, and the foul breath blew hot against his face. Instantly his strong fingers buried themselves in the shaggy fur close under the hinge of the jaw, while his other hand closed about the dented brass of the protruding knife-hilt.

With the whole strength of his arm he held the savage jaws from his face as he wrenched and twisted at the firmly embedded knife. Finally it loosened, and as the thick-backed blade was withdrawn from the wound it was followed by spurt after spurt of blood--bright, frothy blood, straight from the lungs, which gushed hot and wet over him.

Blindly he struck; stabbing, thrusting, slashing at the great form which was pressing him deeper and deeper into the snow. Again and again the knife was turned against rib and shoulder-blade, inflicting only shallow surface wounds.

At length a heavy, straight upthrust encountered no obstacle of bone, and the blade bit deep and deeper into living flesh.

As with a final effort the knife was driven home, a convulsive shiver racked the body of the great white wolf, and with a low, gurgling moan of agony her jaws set rigid, her muscles stiffened, and she toppled sidewise into the snow, where she lay

twitching spasmodically with glazing eyes.

Bill staggered weakly to his feet.

The uninjured wolves had vanished, leaving their dead upon the snow, while the wounded left flat, red trails as they sought to drag their broken bodies to the cover of the forest.

Irish Fallon rounded a turn of the tote-road. He brought up sharply and stared open-mouthed at the man who, sheath-knife in hand, stood looking down at an indistinct object which lay upon the blood-trampled snow.

Carmody turned and shouted a greeting, but without a word the Irishman advanced to his side until he, too, stood looking down at the thing in the snow. Suddenly Bill's hand was seized in a mighty grip.

"Man! 'Tis *her*, an' no mistake! She's done for at lasht--an' blade to fang, in open foight ye've knoifed her! Sure, 'tis a gr-rand toime ye've had altogether," he said, glancing at the carcasses, "wid six dead besides her an' three more as good as."

Bill laughed: "This wolf--the big white one--seems to enjoy a reputation, then?"

"R-r-reputation! R-r-reputation, is ut? Good Lord, man! Don't ye know her? 'Tis th' werwolf! D'abish, th' *loup-garou*, the Frinchies call her; an' the white

an' oup-garou, an' I think's can't, an' the white
divil, the Injuns--an' good rayson, fr to me own
knowledge she's kilt foive folks, big an' shmall, an'
some Injuns besides. They claim she's a divil, an'
phwin she howls, 'tis because some sowl has
missed th' happy huntin' grounds in th' dyin', an'
she's laughin'."

"I don't know that I blame them," said Bill. "She
favored me with a vocal selection. And, believe me,
she was no mocking-bird."

"Well, she looks dead, now," grinned Fallon; "but
we'd besht make sure. Owld man Frontenelle kilt
her wunst. Seven year back, ut was over on
Monish.

"He shot her clean t'rough th' neck an' dhrug her to
his cabin be th' tail. He was for skinnin' her flat fr th'
robe she'd make. He had her stretched out phwin
wid a flash an' a growl, she was at um, an' wid wan
clap av th' jaws she ripped away face an' half th'
scalp.

"They found um wanderin' blind on th' lake ice an'
carried um to Skelly's phwere he died in tin days'
toime av hydrophoby, shnarlin' an' bitin' at folks till
they had to chain um in th' shtoreroom."

As he spoke, Fallon picked up the axe, and with
several well-directed blows shattered the skull of
the werwolf against any possibility of a repetition of
the Frontenelle incident

"But come, man, get yer rackets an' we'll be hittin' the thrail fr camp. Sure, Frinchy'll be scairt shtiff av we lave um longer."

"Rackets?" asked Bill, with a look of perplexity.

"Yer shnow shoes, av coorse."

"Haven't got any. And I don't suppose I could use them if I had." The other stared at him incredulously.

"Not got any! Thin how'd ye git here?"

"Walked--or rather, stumbled along."

"Phwere from?"

"It started to snow as I left the old shack--the last one this way, I don't know how far back. It was there I traded my boots to an Indian for these." He extended a moccasined foot.

"'Tis a good job ye traded. But even at that--thirty-foive moile t'rough th' snow widout webs!" The Irishman looked at him in open admiration. "An' on top av that, killin' th' werwolf wid a knoife, an' choppin' her pack loike so much kindlin's! Green, ye may be--an' ignorant. But, frind, ye've done a man's job this day, an' O'im pr-roud to know yez."

Again he extended his hand and Bill seized it in a

strong grip. Somehow, he did not resent being called green, and ignorant--he was learning the North.

"Fallon's me name," the other continued, "an' be an accident av birth, Oi'm called Oirish, fr short."

"Mine is Bill, which is shorter," replied Carmody, smiling.

For just a second Irish hesitated as if expecting further enlightenment, but, receiving none, reached down and grasped the tail of the white wolf.

"'Tis a foine robe she'll make, Bill, an' in th' North, among white min an' Injuns, 'twill give ye place an' shtandin'--but not wid Moncrossen," he added with a frown.

"Come on along. Foller yez in behint, fr th' thrail'll be fair br-roke. Phwat wid two thrips wid th' rackets an' th' dhrag av th' wolf, 'twill not be bad. 'Tis only a mather av twinty minutes to phwere Frinchy'll bether be waitin' wid th' harses."

CHAPTER XVI

MONCROSSEN

They found LeFevre waiting in fear and trembling

They found Larranz waiting in fear and trembling. The heavy snow-plow was left in readiness for the morrow's trail-breaking, and the horses hitched to a rough sled and headed for camp.

"An' ye say Mither Appleton sint ye up to wor-rk in Moncrossen's camp?" The two were seated on the log bunk at the back of the sled while the Frenchman drove, keeping a fearful eye on the white wolf. For old man Frontenelle had been his uncle.

"Yes, he told me to report here."

"D'ye know Moncrossen?"

"No."

"Well, ye will, ag'in' shpring," Irish replied dryly.

"What do you mean?" asked Bill.

Irish shrugged. "Oi mane this," he answered. "Moncrossen is a har-rd man altogether. He hates a greener. He thinks no wan but an owld hand has any business in th' woods, an' 'tis his boast that in wan season he'll make a lumberjack or a corpse out av any greener.

"An' comin' from Appleton hisself he'll hate ye worse'n ever, fr he'll think ye'll be affther crimpin' his bird's-eye game. Take advice, Bill, an' kape on th' good side av um av ye can. He'll t'row ut into ye

wid all manner av dhirty thricks, but howld ye're timper, an' maybe ye'll winter ut out--an' maybe ye won't."

"What is a bird's-eye game?"

Fallon glanced at him sharply. "D'ye mane ye don't know about th' bird's-eye?" he asked.

"Not a thing," replied Bill.

"Thin listen to me. Don't ye niver say bird's-eye in this camp av ye expect to winter ut out."

Bill was anxious to hear more about the mysterious bird's-eye, but the sled suddenly emerged into a wide clearing and Irish was pointing out the various buildings of the log camp.

Bright squares of light showed from the windows of the bunk-house, office, and grub-shack, with its adjoining cook-shack, from the iron stovepipe of which sparks shot skyward in a continuous shower.

Fallon shouldered the wolf and, accompanied by Bill, made toward the bunk-house, while the Frenchman turned the team toward the stable.

"Ag'in' we git washed up, supper'll be ready," announced Irish, as he deposited the wolf carcass beside the door and entered.

Inside the long, low room, lined on either side by a

double row of bunks, were gathered upward of a hundred men waiting the supper call.

They were big men, for the most part, rough clad and unshaven. Many were seated upon the edges of the bunks smoking and talking, others grouped about the three big stoves, and the tobacco-reeking air was laden with the rumble of throaty conversation, broken here and there by the sharp scratch of a match, a loud laugh, or a deep-growled, good-natured curse.

Into this assembly stepped Irish Fallon, closely followed by Bill, the sight of whose blood-stained face attracted grinning attention. The two men passed the length of the room to the wash-bench, where a few loiterers still splashed noisily at their ablutions.

"I heard it plain, I'm tellin' you," some one was saying. "Way off to the south it sounded."

"That ain't no lie," broke in another, "I hearn it myself--jest before dark, it was. An' I know! Didn't I hear it that night over on Ten Fork? The time she got Jack Kane's woman, four year ago, come Chris'mus. Yes, sir! I tell you the werwolf's nigh about this camp, an' it's me in off the edges afore dark!"

"They say she never laughs but she makes a kill," said one.

"God! I was at Skelly's when they brought old man Frontenelle in," added a big man, whose heavy beard was shot with gray, as he turned from the stove with a shudder.

"They's some Injuns trappin' below; she might of got one of them," opined a short, stockily built man who, catching sight of the newcomers, addressed Fallon:

"Hey, Irish, you was down on the tote-road; did you hear Diabliesse?"

Fallon finished drying his face upon the coarse roller-towel and turned toward the group who waited expectantly. "Yis, Oi hear-rd her, all roight," he replied lightly. "An' thin Oi *see'd* her."

Others crowded about, hanging upon his words. "An' thin, be way av showin' me contimpt," he added, "Oi dhrug her a moile or more t'rough th' woods be th' tail."

Loud laughter followed this assertion; but not a few, especially among the older men, shook their heads in open disapproval, and muttered curses at his levity.

"But me frind Bill, here," Irish continued, "c'n tell ye more about her'n phwat Oi kin. He's new in th' woods, Bill is; an' so damned green he know'd navther th' manein' nor use av th' rackets. So he

gad, he come widout 'em. Mushed two whole days t'rough th' shnow.

"But, listen; no mather how ignorant, nor how much he don't know, a good man's a man--an' to pr-rove ut he jumps wid his axe roight into th' middle av th' werwolf's own an' kills noine, countin' th' three cripples Oi finished.

"But wid D'ablish herself, moind, he t'row'd away his axe an' goes to a clinch wid his knoife in his fisht. An' phwin 'tis over an' he picks himsilf up out av th' shnow an' wipes th' blood from his eyes--her blood--fr he comes out av ut widout scratch nor scar--D'ablish lays at his feet dead as a nit."

Fallon gazed triumphantly into the incredulous faces of the men, and, with a smile, added, "'Twas thin Oi dhrug her be th' tail to th' sled, affther shmashin' her head wid th' axe to make sure."

"An' where is she now, Irish?" mocked one. "Did she jump off the sled an' make a get-away?"

Over at the grub-shack the cook's half-breed helper beat lustily upon the discarded saw-blade that hung suspended by a wire, and the men crowded noisily out of the doors.

"Oi'll show ye affther supper, ye damned shpalpeen, how much av her got away!" shouted Irish, who waited for Bill to remove the evidence of his fight

before piloting him to the grub-shack.

A single table of rough lumber covered with brown oilcloth extended the full length of the center of the room. Above this table six huge "Chicago burners" lighted the interior, which, as the two men entered, was a hive of noisy activity.

Men scuffled for places upon the stationary benches arranged along either side of the table. Heavy porcelain thumped the board, and the air was filled with the metallic din of steel knives and forks being gathered into bearlike hands.

Up and down the wide alleys behind the benches hurried flunkies bearing huge tin pots of steaming coffee, and the incessant returning of thick cups to their saucers was like the rattle of musketry.

But the thing that impressed the half-famished Bill was the profusion of food; never in his life, he thought, had he beheld so tempting an array of things to eat. Great trenchers of fried pork, swimming in its own grease, alternated the full length of the table with huge pans of baked beans.

Mountains of light, snowy bread rose at short intervals from among foot-hills of baked potatoes, steaming dishes of macaroni and stewed tomatoes, canned corn, peas, and apple sauce, and great yellow rolls of butter into which the knives of the men skived deeply.

The two passed behind the benches in search of vacant places when suddenly an undersized flunky stumbled awkwardly, dropping the coffee-pot, which sent a wash of steaming brown liquid over the floor.

Instantly a great, hulking man with a wide, flat face and low forehead surmounted by a thick thatch of black hair, below which two swinish eyes scintillated unevenly, paused in the act of raising a great calk-booted foot over the bench.

The thick, pendulous lips under his ragged mustache curled backward, exposing a crenate row of jagged brown teeth. He stepped directly in front of the two men and, reaching out a thick hand caught the unfortunate flunky by the scruff as he regained his balance.

From his lips poured an unbroken stream of vile epithets and soul-searing curses while he shook the whimpering wretch with a violence that threatened serious results, and ended by pinning him against the log wall and drawing back his huge arm for a terrific shoulder blow.

The vicious brutality of the attack following so trivial an offense aroused Bill Carmody's anger. The man's back was toward him, and Bill grasped the back-drawn arm at the wrist and with an ungente jerk whirled the other in his tracks.

The man released the flunky and faced him with a snarl. "Who done that?" he roared.

"I did. Hit me. I tripped him."

Bill's voice was dead level and low, but it carried to the farthest reaches of the room, over which had fallen a silence of expectation. Men saw that the hard gray eyes of the stranger narrowed ominously.

"An' who the hell are *you*?" The words whistled through the bared teeth and a flush of fury flooded the man's face.

"What do you care? I tripped him. Hit me!" and the low, level tone blended into silence. It seemed a *thing*--that uncanny silence when noise should have been.

There were sounds--sounds that no one heeded nor heard--the heavy breathing of a hundred men waiting for something to happen--the thin creak of the table boards as men leaned forward upon hands whose knuckles whitened under the red skin, and stared, fascinated, at the two big men who faced each other in the broad aisle.

The swinish eyes of the brutish man glared malignantly into the gray eyes of the stranger, in which there appeared no slightest flicker of rage nor hate, nor any other emotion.

Only a cold, hard stare which held something of terrible intensity, accentuated by the little fans of whitening wrinkles which radiated from their corners.

In that instant the other's gaze wavered. He knew that this man had lied; and he knew that every man in the room knew that he had lied. That he had deliberately lied into the row and then, without raising his guard, had dared him to strike.

It was inconceivable.

Had the man loudly shouted his challenge or thrown up his guard when he dared him to strike, or had his eye twitched or burned with anger, he would have unhesitatingly lunged into a fight to the finish.

But he found himself at a disadvantage. He was up against something he did not understand. The calm assurance of the stranger--his fists were not doubled and his lips smiled--disconcerted him.

A strange, prickly chill tingled at the back of his neck, and in his heart he knew that for the first time in his life he dared not strike a man. He cast about craftily to save his face and took his cue from the other's smile. With an effort his loose, thick lips twisted into a grin.

"G'wan with yer jokin', stranger," he laughed.

"Y'u damn near made me mad--ter a minute," and he turned to the table.

Instantly a clatter of noise broke forth. Men rattled dishes nervously in relief or disappointment, and the room was filled with the rumble of voices in unmeaning chatter. But in the quick glances which passed from man to man there was much of meaning.

"God, man, that was Moncrossen!" whispered Fallon, when the two found themselves seated near the end of the table. Bill smiled.

"Was it?" he asked. "I don't like him."

CHAPTER XVII

A TWO-FISTED MAN

A half-hour later when Bill sought out the boss in the little office, the latter received him in surly silence; and as he read Appleton's note his lip curled.

"So you think you'll make a lumberjack, do you?"

"Yes." There was no hesitation; nothing of doubt in the reply.

"My crew's full," the boss growled. "I don't need no men, let alone a greener that don't know a peavey from a bark spud. Wha'd the old man send you up here for, anyhow?"

"That, I presume, is *his* business."

"Oh, it is, is it? Well, let me tell you first off--I'm boss of this here camp!" Moncrossen paused and glared at the younger man. "You get that, do you? Just you remember that what I say goes, an' I don't take no guff offen no man, not even one of the old man's pets--an' that's *my* business--see?"

Bill smiled as the scowling man crushed the note in his hand and slammed it viciously into the wood-box.

"Wants you broke in, does he? All right; I'll break you! Ag'in' spring you'll know a little somethin' about logs, or you'll be so damn sick of the woods you'll run every time you hear a log chain rattle; an' either way, you'll learn who's boss of this here camp."

Moncrossen sank his yellow teeth into a thick plug of tobacco and tore off the corner with a jerk.

"Throw yer blankets into an empty bunk an' be ready fer work in the mornin'. I'll put you swampin' fer the big Swede--I guess that 'll hold you. Yer wages is forty-five a month--an' I'm right here to see that you earn 'em."

see that you can't cut

"Can I buy blankets here? I threw mine away coming out."

"Comin' out! Comin' in, you mean! Men come *in* to the woods. In the spring they go *out*--if they're lucky. Get what you want over to the van; it'll be charged ag'in yer wages." Bill turned toward the door.

"By the way," the boss growled, "what's yer name--back where you come from?"

"Bill."

"Bill what?"

"No. Just Bill--with a period for a full stop. And that's *my* business--see?" As Moncrossen encountered the level stare of the gray eyes he leered knowingly.

"Oh, that's it, eh? All right, *Bill!* 'Curiosity killed the cat,' as the feller says. An' just don't forget to remember that what a man don't know don't hurt him none. Loggin' is learned *in* the choppin's. Accidents happens; an' dead men tells no tales. Them that keeps their eyes to the front an' minds their own business gen'ally winters through. That's all."

Bill wondered at the seemingly irrelevant utterances

of the boss, but left the office without comment.

On the floor of the bunk-house Irish Fallon, assisted by several of the men, was removing the skin from Diabliesse, while others looked on.

The awkward hush that fell upon them as he entered told Bill that he had been the subject of their conversation. Men glanced at him covertly, as though taking his measure, and he soon found himself relating the adventures of the trail to an appreciative audience, which grinned approval and tendered flasks, which he declined.

Later, as he helped Fallon nail the wolfskin to the end of the bunk-house he told him of the interview with Moncrossen. The Irishman listened, frowning.

"Ye've made a bad shtar-rt wid um," he said, shaking his head. "Ye eyed 'im down in th' grub-shack, an' he hates ye fer ut. How ye got by wid ut Oi don't know, fer he's a scr-rapper from away back, an' av he'd sailed into ye Oi'm thinkin' he'd knocked th' divil out av ye, fer he's had experience, which ye ain't. But he didn't dast to, an' he knows ut, an' he knows that the men knows ut. An' now he'll lay fer a chanst to git aven. Ut's th' besht ye c'n do--loike he says, kape th' two eyes av ye to th' front an' moind yer own business--only kape wan eye behint ye to look out fer throuble. Phwat fer job did he give yez?"

"I am to start swamping, whatever that is, for the big Swede."

The Irishman grinned.

"Oi thought so; an' may God have mercy on yer sowl."

"What is the matter with the Swede?"

"Mather enough. Bein' hand an' glove wid Moncrossen is good rayson to suspicion any man. Fer t'is be the help av Shtromberg that Moncrossen kapes a loine on th' men an' gits by wid his crooked wor-rk.

"He ain't long on brains nohow, Moncrossen ain't, an' he ain't a good camp-boss nayther, fer all he gits out th' logs.

"Be bluff an' bullyin' he gits th' wor-rk out av th' crew; but av ut wasn't that Mистер Appleton lets um pay a bit over goin' wages, he'd have no crew, fer th' men hate um fer all they're afraid av um.

"Th' rayson he puts ye shwampin' fer th' big Swede is so's he'll kape an eye on yez. As long as ye do yer wor-rk an' moind yer own business ye'll get along wid him as well as another. But, moind ye, phwin th' bird's-eye shtar-rts movin' ye don't notice nothin,' or some foine avenin' ye'll turn up missin'."

"What is this bird's-eye thing?" asked Bill. "What

has it got to do with Moncrossen--and me?"

The Irishman considered the question and, without answering, walked to the corner of the bunk-house near which they were standing and peered into the black shadow of the wall. Apparently satisfied, he returned again to where Bill was standing.

"Come on in th' bunk-house, now," he said. "I want to locate Shtromberg an' wan or two more. We'll sit around an' shmoke a bit, an' phwin they begin rollin' in ye'll ask me phwere is th' van, fer ye must have blankets an' phwat not. Oi'll go along to show ye, an' we'll take a turn down th' tote-road phwere we c'n talk widout its gittin' to th' ears av th' boss."

Wondering at the man's precautions for secrecy, he followed, and for a half-hour listened to the fireside gossip of the camp. He noticed that Fallon's glance traveled over the various groups as if seeking some one, and he wondered which of the men was Stromberg.

Suddenly the door was flung open and a huge, yellow-bearded man stamped noisily to the stove, disregarding the curses that issued from the bunks of those who had already turned in.

This man was larger even than Moncrossen, with protruding eyes of china blue, which stared weakly from beneath heavy, straw-colored eyebrows. Two hundred and fifty pounds, thought Bill, as the man,

snorting disagreeably, paused before him and fixed him with an insolent stare.

"Hey, you! Boss says you swamp for me," he snorted. Bill nodded indifferently.

"You know how to swamp good?" he asked. Bill studied the toes of his moccasins and, without looking up, replied with a negative shake of his head.

"I learn you, all right. In couple days you swamp good, or I fix you."

Bill looked up, encountered the watery glare of the blue eyes, and returned his gaze to the points of his moccasins. The voice of the Swede grew more aggressive. He snorted importantly as the men looked on, and smote his palm with a ponderous fist.

"First thing, I duck you in waterhole. Then I slap you to peak an' break off the peak." The men snickered, and Stromberg, emboldened by the silence of his new swamper, continued:

"It's time boys was in bed. To-morrow I make you earn your wages."

Bill rose slowly from his seat, and as he looked again into the face of the big Swede his lips smiled. But Fallon noticed, and others, that in the steely oint of the gray eyes was no hint of smile, and they

green of the guy's eyes was no hint of crime, and they watched curiously while he removed his mackinaw and tossed it carelessly onto the edge of a near-by bunk from where it slipped unnoticed to the floor.

Stromberg produced a bottle, drank deep, and returned the flask to his pocket. He rasped the fire from his throat with a harsh, grating sound, drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and kicked contemptuously at the mackinaw which lay almost at his feet.

As he did so a long, thick envelope, to which was tightly bound the photograph of a girl, slipped from the inner pocket. Instantly he stooped and seized it.

"Haw, haw!" he roared, "the greener's got a woman. Look, she's a----"

"Drop that!" The voice was low, almost soft in tone, but the words cut quick and clear, with no hint of gentleness.

"Come get it, greener!" The man taunted as he doubled a huge fist, and held the photograph high that the others might see.

Bill came. He covered the intervening space at a bound, springing swiftly and straight--as panthers spring; and as his moccasined feet touched the floor he struck. Once, twice, thrice--and all so quickly that the onlookers received no sense of repeated effort.

The terrific force of the well-placed blows, and their deadly accuracy, seemed to be consecutive parts of a single, continuous, smoothly flowing movement.

In the tense silence sounds rang sharp--the peculiar smack of living flesh hard hit, as the first blow landed just below the ear, the dull thump of a heavy body blow, and the clash of teeth driven against teeth as the sagging jaw of the big Swede snapped shut to the impact of the long swing that landed full on his chin's point.

The huge form stiffened, spun half-way around, and toppled sidewise against a rack of drying garments, which fell with a crash to the floor.

Without so much as a glance at the ludicrously sprawled figure, Bill picked up his mackinaw and returned the envelope to the pocket.

"Irish," he asked, "where is the van? I must get some blankets. My nurse, there, says it's time to turn in."

"Oi'll go wid ye," said Fallon, and a roar of laughter followed them out into the night.

CHAPTER XVIII

"BIRD'S-EYE" AND PHILOSOPHY

Bill quickly made his purchases, and shouldering the roll of blankets, followed Irish to the head of a rollway, where the two seated themselves on the bunk of a log sled.

"Oi don't know how ye done ut," Fallon began. "Twas th' handiest bit av two-fisted wor-rk Oi iver see'd. 'Tis well ye've had ut out wid Shtrömberg. Fer all his crookedness, he's a bether man thin th' boss, an' he'll not be layin' that lickin' up ag'in yez. 'Twas a foight av his own pickin', an' he knows ye've got him fäded.

"Aven av he w'ud of befoor, he'll see to ut that no har-rm comes to ye now t'rough fault av his own, fer well he knows the men 'ud think 'twas done to pay ye back, an' he'll have no wish to play th' title role at a hangin'.

"From now on, 'tis only Moncrossen ye'll have to watch, fer ye're in good wid th' men. We undershtand ye now. Ye see, in th' woods we don't loike myshtery an', whiles we most av us know that Moncrossen's givin' Appleton th' double cross, 'tis none av our business, an' phwin we thought ye'd come into th' woods undher false pretinces to catch um at ut, they was more or less talk.

"Mesilf was beginnin' to think ye'd come into th' woods fer th' rist cure. ve read about in th' papers.

seein' ye'd loafed about fer maybe it's foive hours an' done nothin' besides carve up th' werwolf an' her pack, eye down th' boss in his own grub-shack, an' thin top off th' avenin' be knockin' th' big Swede cold, which some claims he c'ud put th' boss himself to th' brush, wunst he got shtar-rted. But now we know phy ye're here. We're pr-rroud ye're wan av us."

"What do you mean--you know why I am here? I am here because I needed a job, and Appleton hired me."

"Sure, lad. But, ye moind th' picture in yer pocket. 'Twas a woman."

"But----"

"'Tis none av our business, an' 'tis nayther here nor there. Av there's a woman at th' bottom av ut, 'tis rayson enough--phwativer happens."

Bill laughed.

"You were going to tell me about the bird's-eye," he reminded.

"Ut's loike this: Here an' yon in th' timber there's a bird's-eye tree--bird's-eye maple, ye know. 'Tis scarce enough, wid only a tree now an' again, an' ut takes an expert to spot ut.

"Well, th' bird's-eye, being around a hundred

well, in bird's-eye brings around a hundred dollars a thousan', an' divil a bit av ut gits to Appleton's mills.

"Moncrossen's got a gang--Shtromberg's in ut, an' a Frinch cruiser named Lebolt, an' a boot-leggin' tree-spotter named Creed, that lives in Hilarity, an' a couple av worthless divils av sawyers that's too lazy fer honest wor-rk, but camps t'rough th' winter, trappin' an sawin' bird's-eye an calico ash on other men's land.

"Shtromberg'll skid till along toward sphring phwin he'll go to teamin'. Be that toime th' bird's-eye logs'll be down, here an' there in th' woods beyant th' choppin's, an' Shtromberg'll haul um an' bank um on some river; thin in th' summer, Moncrossen an' his men'll slip up, toggle um to light logs so they'll float, an' raft um to th' railroad phwere there'll be a buyer from th' Eastern vaneer mills waitin'.

"Ut's a crooked game, shtealin' Appleton's logs, an' haulin' um wid Appleton's teams, an' drawin' Appleton's wages fer doin' ut.

"Now, bechune man an' man, th' big Swede's th' brains av th' gang. He's a whole lot shmar-rter'n phwat he lets on. Such ain't th' nature av men, but 'tis th' way av women."

Irish thoughtfully tamped his pipe-bowl, and the flare of the match between his cupped palms brought out his honest features distinctly in the

though out his honest features distinctly in the darkness. Bill felt a strong liking for this homely philosopher, and he listened as the other eyed him knowingly and continued:

"Tis be experience we lear-m. An' th' sooner a man lear-rns, th' bether ut is fer um, that all women know more thin they let on--an' they've always an ace fer a hole car-rd bekase av ut.

"Fer women run men, an' men politics, an' politics armies, an' armies th' wor-rld--an' at th' bottom av ut all is th' wisdom an' schemin' av women.

"Phwin a man fools a woman, he's a fool--fer she ain't fooled at all. But, she ain't fool enough to let on she ain't fooled, fer well she knows that as long as she knows more thin he thinks she knows, she holds th' edge--an' th' divil av ut is, she does.

"Take a man, now; phwin ye know um, ye know um. He's always willin' to admit he's as shmar-rt as he is, or a damn soight shmar-rter, which don't fool no wan, fer 'tis phwat they expect.

"A man c'n brag an' lie about phwat he knows, an' phwere he's been, an' phwat he's done; an' noine toimes out av tin, ye cud trust him to th' inds av th' earth wid ye're lasht dollar.

"But wanst let um go out av his way to belittle himsilf an' phwat he knows, an' Oi w'udn't trust him wid a bent penny as far as Oi cud t'row a bull be th'

tail fer 'tis done wid a purpose. 'Tis so wid Shtromberg."

Fallon arose, consulted his watch, and led the way toward the bunk-house.

"So now ye know fer phwy Moncrossen hates ye," he continued. "He knows ye're a greener in th' woods, but he knows be this toime ye'll be a har-rd man to handle, an' he fears ye. Oi've put ye wise to th' bird's-eye game so ye c'n steer clear av ut, an' not be gittin' mixed up in ut wan way or another."

"I am much obliged, Fallon, for what you have told me," replied Bill quietly; "but inasmuch as I am working for Appleton, I will just make it my business to look after his interests in whatever way possible. I guess I will take a hand in the bird's-eye game myself. I am not afraid of Moncrossen and his gang of thieves. Anyway, I will give them a run for their money."

Fallon shrugged.

"D'ye know, Oi thought ye'd say that. Well, 'tis ye're own funeral. Tellin' ye about me, Oi ain't lost no bird's-eye trees, mesilf, but av ye need help--Be th' way, th' bunk above mine's empty; ye moight t'row ye're blankets in there."

CHAPTER XIX

A FRAME-UP

In the days that followed Bill threw himself into the work with a vigor that won the approval of the men. A "top" lumber crew is a smooth-running machine of nice balance whose working units are interdependent one upon another for efficiency. One shirking or inexperienced man may appreciably curtail the output of an entire camp and breed discontent and dissatisfaction among the crew. But with Bill there was no soldiering. He performed a man's work from the start--awkwardly at first, but, with the mastery of detail acquired under the able tutelage of Stromberg, he became known as the best swamper on the job.

Between him and the big Swede existed a condition of armed neutrality. Neither ever referred to the incident of the bunk-house, nor did either show hint of ill-feeling toward the other. The efficiency of each depended upon the efforts of the other, and neither found cause for complaint.

With the crew working to capacity to supply Appleton's demand for ten million feet of logs, there was little time for recreation. Nevertheless, Bill bought a pair of snowshoes from a passing Indian and, in spite of rough weather and aching muscles, utilized stormy days and moonlight nights in

perfecting himself in their use.

He and Fallon had become great chums and contrary to the Irishman's prediction, instead of hectoring the new man, Moncrossen left him severely alone.

And so the routine of the camp went on until well into February. The clearing widened, the timber line receded, and tier upon tier of logs was pyramided upon the rollways. As yet Bill had made no progress--formulated no definite plan for the detection and ultimate exposure of the gang of bird's-eye thieves.

Occasionally men put up at the camp for a short stay. Creed and Lebolt were the most frequent visitors, but neither gave evidence of being other than he appeared to be--Creed a hunter seeking to dispose of venison taken out of season, and Lebolt a company cruiser engaged in estimating timber to the northward.

It was about this time that Bad Luck, that gaunt specter that lurks unseen in the shadows and hovers over the little lives of men for the working of harm, swooped down upon the camp and in a series of untoward happenings impaired its efficiency and impregnated the atmosphere with the blight of discontent.

An unprecedented thaw set in, ruining the skidways

and reducing the snow of the forest to a sodden slush that chilled men to the bone as they floundered heavily about their work.

Reed and Kantochoy, two sawyers, were caught by a "kick-back." One of the best horses was sweenied. A teamster who fell asleep on the top of his load awoke in the bottom of a ravine with a shattered arm, a dead horse, and a ruined log-sled. Bill's foot was mashed by a rolling log; and last, and most far-reaching in its effect, the cook contracted spotted fever and died in a reverse curve.

Moncrossen raged. From a steady eighty thousand feet a day the output dropped to seventy, sixty, fifty thousand--and the end was not in sight. Good-natured banter and friendly tussles among the men gave place to surly bickering and ugly fist-fighting, and in spite of the best efforts of the second cook the crew growled sullenly or openly cursed the grub.

Then it was that Moncrossen knew that something must be done--and that something quickly. He shifted Stromberg and Fallon to the sawing crew, made a skidder out of a swamper, and filled his place with a grub-shack flunky.

Then one afternoon he dropped in upon Bill in the bunk-house, where that young man sat fuming at his inaction with his foot propped up on the edge of a bunk.

"How's the foot?" growled the boss.

"Pretty sore," answered Bill, laying aside a magazine. "Swelling is going down a bit."

"Ever handle horses?"

"Yes, a few."

The boss cleared his throat and proceeded awkwardly.

"I don't like to ask no crippled man to work before he's able," he began grudgingly. "But things is goin' bad. What with them two pilgrims that called themselves sawyers not bein' able to dodge a kick-back, an' Gibson pickin' a down-hill pull on an iced skidway for to go to sleep on his load, an' your gettin' pinched, an' the cook curlin' up an' dyin' on us, an' the whole damned outfit roarin' about the grub, there's hell to pay all around."

He paused and, receiving no answer, shot a crafty look at the man before him.

"Now, if you was able," he went on, "you c'd take the tote-sled down to Hilarity an' fetch us a cook. It seems like that's the onliest way; there ain't nary 'nother man I c'n spare--an' he's a good cook, old Daddy Dunnigan is, if he'll come. He's a independent old cuss--work if he damn good an' feels like it. an' if he don't he won't.

"If you think you c'n tackle it, I'll have the blacksmith whittle you out a crutch, an' you c'n take that long-geared tote team an' make Hilarity in two days. They's double time in it for you," he added, as a matter of special inducement.

Bill did not hesitate over his decision.

"All right; I think I can manage," he said. "When do I start?"

"The team'll be ready early in the mornin'. If you start about four o'clock you c'n make Melton's old No. 8 Camp by night without crowdin' 'em too hard. It's the first one of them old camps you strike, and you c'n stable the horses without unharnessin'; just slip off the bridles an' feed 'em."

Bill nodded. At the door Moncrossen halted and glanced at him peculiarly.

"I'm obliged to you," he said. "For a greener, you've made a good hand. I'll have things got ready."

Bill was surprised that the boss had paid him even this grudging compliment, and as he sat beside the big stove, puzzled over the peculiar glance that had accompanied it.

In a few minutes, however, he dismissed the matter and turned again to his six-months-old magazine. Could he have followed Moncrossen and

Could he have followed Moncrosien and overheard the hurried conversation which took place in the little office, he would have found food for further reflection, but of this he remained in ignorance; and, all unknown to him, a man left the office, slipped swiftly and noiselessly into the forest, and headed southward.

"'Tis a foine va-acation ye're havin' playin' nurse fer a pinched toe, an' me tearin' out th' bone fer to git out th' logs on salt-horse an' dough-gods 't w'd sink a battle-ship. 'Tis a lucky divil ye ar-re altogither," railed Fallon good-naturedly as he returned from supper and found Bill engaged in the task of swashing arnica on his bruised foot.

"Oh, I don't know. I'll be back in the game tomorrow."

"To-morry!" exclaimed Irish, eying the swollen and discolored member with a grin. "Yis; ut'll be to-morry, all right. But 'tis a shame to waste so much toime. Av ye c'd git th' boss to put ye on noight shift icin' th' skidways, ye wudn't have to wait so long."

"It's a fact, Irish," laughed Bill. "I go on at 4 a.m. tomorrow."

"Fure a.m., is ut? An' phwat'll ye be doin'? Peelin' praties fer that dommed pisener in th' kitchen. Ye've only been laid up t'ree days an' talk av goin' to work. Man! Av Oi was lucky enough to git squose like that. O'd make ut leest a month av Oi had to

loike that, Oid make it last a month av O had to
pour ink on me foot to kape up th' color."

"I'm going to Hilarity for a cook," insisted Bill.
"Moncrossen says there is a real one down there--
Daddy Dunnigan, he called him."

"Sure, Dunnigan'll not come into th' woods. An' phy
shud he? Wid money in th' bank, an' her majesty's--
Oi mane, his ribs's pension comin' in ivery month,
an' his insides broke in to Hod Burrage's whisky--
phwat more c'd a man want?"

"The boss thinks maybe he'll come. Anyway, I am
going after him."

"Ye shud av towld um to go to hell! Wor-rgin' a
man wid a foot loike that is croolty to animals; av ye
was a harse he'd be arrested."

"He didn't tell me to go. He is crowded for men; the
grub is rotten; something has to be done; and he
asked me if I thought I could make it."

Irish pulled thoughtfully at his pipe, and slowly his
brows drew together in a frown.

"He said ye c'd make ut in two days?" he inquired.

"Yes. The tote-road is well broken, and forty miles
traveling light with that rangy team is not such an
awful pull."

"An' he could be phyvys to come. I'll be Makool's

An he towid ye pihwere to camp. It'll be mition's
awld No. 8, where ye camped comin' in?"

"Yes."

Fallon nodded thoughtfully, and Bill wondered what was passing in his mind. For a long time he was silent, and the injured man responded to the hearty greetings and inquiries of the men returning from the grub-shack.

When these later had disposed themselves for the evening, the Irishman hunched his chair closer to the bunk upon which Bill was sitting.

"At Melton's No. 8, Oi moind, th' shtables is a good bit av a way from th' rist av th' buildin's, an' hid from soight be a knowl av ground."

"I don't remember the stables, but they can't be very far; they are in the clearing, and Moncrossen had the blacksmith make me a crutch."

"A crutch, is ut? A crutch! Well, a man ud play hell makin' foorty moiles on a crutch in th' winter--no mather how good th' thrail was broke."

"Forty miles! Look here, Irish--what are you talking about? I thought your bottle had been empty for a week."

"Impty ut is--which me head ain't. Listen: S'posin'--just s'posin', moind yez O'im sayin'--a man wid a

bum leg was camped in th' shack av Melton's No. 8, an' th' harses in th' shtable. An' s'posin' some one shnaked in in th' noight an' stole th' harses on um an' druv 'em to Hilarity, an' waited fr th' boss to sind fr 'em. An' s'posin' a wake wint by befoor th' boss c'd sind a man down to look up th' team he'd sint fr a cook, wid orders to hurry back. An' s'posin' he found th' bum-legged driver froze shtiff on th' tote-road phwere he'd made out to hobble a few moiles on his crutch--phwat thin? Why, th' man was a greener, an', not knowin' how to handle th' team, they'd got away from um."

Bill followed the Irishman closely, and knew that he spoke with a purpose. His eyes narrowed, and his lips bent into that cold smile which the men of the camp had come to know was no smile at all, but a battle alarm, the more ominous for its silence.

"Do you mean that it is a frame-up? That Moncrossen----" Fallon silenced him with a motion.

"Whist!" he whispered and glanced sharply about him, then leaned over and dug a stiffened forefinger into the other's ribs. "Oi don't mane nothin'. But 'tis about toime they begun bankin' their bird's-eye.

"Creed et dinner in camp, but he never et supper. Him an' th' boss made medicine in th' office *after* th' boss talked to ye. Put two an' two together an' Oi've towld ye nothin' at all; but av ye fergit ut Oi'll see that phwat th' wolves lave av th' bum-legged

teamster is buried proper an' buried deep, an' Oi'll blow in tin dollars fr a mass fr his sowl.

"Av ye *don't* fergit ut, ye moight fetch back a gallon jug av Hod Burrage's embalmin' flood, fr me inwards is that petrified be th' grub we've been havin' av late, they moight mishtake ut fr rale liquor. Good-by, an' good luck--'tis toime to roll in."

CHAPTER XX

A FIRE IN THE NIGHT

The sledding was good on the tote-road.

The thaw that ruined the iced surface of the skid-ways was followed by several days of freezing weather that put a hard, smooth finish on the deep snow of the longer road, over which the runners of the box-bodied tote-sled slipped with scarcely any resistance to the pull of the sharp-shod team.

Bill Carmody, snugly bundled in robes in the bottom of the sled, idly watched the panorama of tree-trunks between which the road twisted in an endless succession of tortuous windings.

It was not yet daylight when he rounded the bend which was the scene of his fight with the werwolf.

But by the thin, cold starlight and the pale luminosity of the fading aurora, he recognized each surrounding detail, and wondered at the accuracy with which the trivialities of the setting had been subconsciously impressed upon his memory.

It was here he had first met Fallon, and he remembered the undisguised approval in the Irishman's voice and the firm grip of the hand that welcomed him into the comradery of the Northmen as he stood, faint from hunger and weary from exertion, staring dully down at the misshapen carcass of Diabliesse.

"Good old Irish," he muttered, and smiled as he thought of himself, Bill Carmody, proud of the friendship of a lumberjack.

He had come to know that in the ceaseless whirl of society the heavier timbers--the real men are thrown outward--forced to the very edges of the bowl, where they toil among big things upon the outskirts of civilization.

He pulled off his heavy mitten and fumbled for his pipe. In the side-pocket of his mackinaw his hand encountered an object--hard and cold and unfamiliar to his touch.

He withdrew it and looked at the wicked, blue-black outlines of an automatic pistol. Idly he examined the clip, crowded with shiny, yellow

cartridges. He recognized the gun as Fallon's, and smiled as he returned it to his pocket.

"Only in case of a pinch," he grinned, and glanced approvingly at the fist that doubled hard to the strong clinch of his fingers.

Hour after hour he slipped smoothly southward, relieving the monotony of the journey by formulating his plan of action in case the forebodings of Fallon should be realized.

Personally he apprehended no trouble, but he made up his mind that trouble coming should not find him unprepared.

When at last the team swung into the clearing of Melton's old No. 8, the stars winked in cold brilliance above the surrounding pines, and the deserted buildings stood lifeless and dim in the deepening gloom.

Bill headed the horses for the stable which he found, as Irish had told him, located at some distance from the other buildings and cut off from sight by a knoll and a heavy tangle of scrub that had sprung up in the clearing.

He climbed stiffly and painfully from the sled-box, and with the aid of his crutch, hobbled about the task of unhitching the horses. He watered them where a plume of thin vapor disclosed the

whereabouts of a never-freezing spring which burred softly between its low, ice-encrusted banks.

It proved a difficult matter, crippled as he was, to handle the horses, but at length he got them into the stable, chinked the broken feed-boxes as best he could, and removed the bridles, hanging them upon the hames.

He closed the door and, securing his lantern, blankets, and lunch-basket, made his way toward the old shack where he had spent his first night in the timber land.

The sagging door swung half open, and upon the rough floor the snow-water from the recent thaw had collected in puddles and frozen, rendering the footing precarious.

Bill noted with satisfaction that there still remained a goodly portion of the firewood which he had cut and carried in upon his previous visit, and he soon had a fire roaring in the rusty stove.

He was in no hurry. He knew that any attempt to make away with the team would be delayed until the thief believed him to be asleep, and his plans were laid to the minutest detail.

Setting the lantern upon the table, he proceeded to eat his lunch, after which he lighted his pipe, and for an hour smoked at the fireside. In spite of the rain

an hour smoked at the fireside. In spite of the pain of his injured foot his mind wandered back to the events of his first visit to the shack.

There, in the black shadow of the pile of firewood, lay the empty whisky bottle where the Indian had tossed it after drinking the last drop of its contents.

Carmody stared a long time at this silent reminder of his first serious brush with King Alcohol, then, from the inner pocket of his mackinaw, he drew the sealed packet and gazed for many minutes at the likeness of the girl--dimming now from the rub of the coarse cloth of the pocket.

Suddenly a great longing came over him--a longing to see this girl, to hear the soft accents of her voice and, above all, to tell her of his great love for her, that in all the world there was no woman but her, and that each day, and a hundred times each day, her dear face was before his eyes, and in his ears, ringing above the mighty sounds of a falling forest, was the soft, sweet sound of her voice.

He could not speak to her, but she could speak to him, even if it were but a repetition of the words of the letters he already knew by heart, but which had remained sealed in the envelope ever since the day he bid farewell to Broadway--and to *her*.

His fingers fumbled at the flap of the heavy envelope. He could at least feast his eyes upon the lines traced by her pen and press his lips to the

lines traced by her pen and press his lips to the page where her little hand had rested.

His foot throbbed with dull persistence. He was conscious of being tired, but he must not sleep this night. Rough work possibly, at any rate, a man's work, awaited him there in the gloom of the silent clearing.

Again his eye sought the whisky bottle and held. His fingers ceased to toy with the flap, for in that moment the thought came to him that had the bottle not been empty, had it been filled with liquor--strong liquor--with the pain in his foot and the stiffness of his tired muscles and the work ahead--well, he might--for the old desire was strong upon him--he might take a drink.

"Not yet," he muttered, and returned the packet to his pocket unopened. "I told her I would beat the game. I've bucked old John Barleycorn's line and scored a touchdown; the hardest of the fighting is past, but there is just a chance that I might miss goal."

Bill looked at his watch; it was eight o'clock. He stood up, wincing as his injured foot touched the floor, and hobbled across the room where he wrenched a rough, split shelf from the wall. This, together with some sticks of firewood, he rolled in a blanket, placing it near the stove. He added more wood until the bundle was about the size and shape of a man, and covered it with his other two

of a man, and covered it with his other two blankets. Filling the broken stove with wood he blew out the lantern and limped silently out into the night.

Two hours later Creed, bird's-eye spotter and bad man of the worn-out little town of Hilarity, knocked the ashes from his pipe and held a glowing brand to the dial of his watch.

"The greener should be asleep by now," he muttered, and, rolling his blanket, kicked snow over the remnant of his camp-fire, picked up his rifle, and ascended the steep side of a deep ravine lying some two hundred yards to the westward of the clearing where Bill Carmody had encamped for the night.

After leaving Moncrossen's office on the previous afternoon he had traveled all night, and reached Melton's old No. 8 in the early morning.

All day he had slept by the side of his fire in the bottom of the ravine, and in the evening had lain in the cover of the scrub and watched the greener stable the horses and limp to the deserted shack.

At heart Creed was a craven, a bullying swashbuckler, who bragged and blustered among the rheumy-eyed down-and-outers who nightly foregathered about Burrage's stove, but who was servile and cringing as a starved puppy toward Moncrossen and Stromberg, who openly despised him

They made good use of his ability to "spot" a bird's-eye tree as far as he could see one, however, an ability shared by few woodsmen, and which in Creed amounted almost to genius.

The man had never been known to turn his hand to honest work, but as a timber pirate and peddler of rotgut whisky among the Indians, he had arisen to comparative affluence.

His hate for the greener was abysmal and unreasoning, and had been carefully fostered by Moncrossen who, instinctively fearing that the new man would eventually expose his nefarious double-dealing with his employer, realized that at the proper time Creed could be induced to do away with the greener under circumstances that would leave him, Moncrossen, free from suspicion.

In the framing of Bill Carmody, Stromberg had no part. Moncrossen could not fathom the big Swede, upon whose judgment and acumen he had come to rely in the matter of handling and disposing of the stolen timber.

Several times during the winter he had tentatively broached plans and insinuated means whereby the Swede could "accidentally" remove his swamper from their path.

The reversing of a hook which would cause a log to

roll just at the right time on a hillside; the fling of a link; the snapping of a weakened bunk-pin, any one of these common accidents would render them safe from possible interference.

But to all these suggestions Stromberg turned a deaf ear. The boss even taunted him with the knock-out he had received at the hands of the greener.

"That's all right, Moncrossen," he replied; "I picked the fight purpose to beat him up. It didn't work. He's a better man than me--or you either--an' you know it. Only he had to lick me to prove it. He chilled your heart with a look an' a grin--an' the whole crew lookin' on.

"But beatin' up a man is one thing an' murder is another. Appleton's rich, besides he's a softwood man an' ain't fixed for handlin' veneer, so I might's well get in on the bird's-eye as let you an' Creed an' Lebolt steal it all. But I ain't got to the point where I'd murder a good man to cover up my dirty tracks--an' I never will!"

And so, without consulting Stromberg, Moncrossen bided his time and laid his plans. And now the time had come. The plan had been gone over in detail in the little office, and Creed in the edge of the timber stood ready to carry it out.

Stealthily he slipped into the dense shadows of the scrub and made his way toward the shack where a

thin banner of smoke, shot with an occasional yellow spark, floated from the dilapidated stovepipe that protruded from the roof.

The hard crust rendered snowshoes unnecessary, and his soft moccasins made no sound upon the surface of the snow.

Gaining the side of the shack, he peered between the unchinked logs. The play of the firelight that shone through the holes of the broken stove sent flickering shadows dancing over the floor and walls of the rough interior.

Near the fire, stretched long and silent beneath its blankets, lay the form of a man. Creed shifted his position for a better view of the sleeper. His foot caught in the loop of a piece of discarded wire whose ends were firmly frozen into the snow, and he crashed heavily backward into a pile of dry brushwood.

It seemed to the frightened man as if the accompanying noise must wake the dead. He lay for a moment where he had fallen, listening for sounds from within. He clutched his rifle nervously, but the deathlike silence was unbroken save for his own heavy breathing and the tiny snapping of the fire in the stove.

Cautiously he extricated himself from the brush-heap, his heart pounding wildly at the snapping of

each dry twig. It was incredible that the man could sleep through such a racket in a country where life and death may hang upon the rustle of a leaf.

But the silence remained unbroken, and, after what seemed to the cowering man an eternity of expectant waiting, he crawled again to the wall and glanced furtively into the interior. The form by the fire was motionless as before--it had not stirred.

Then, as he looked, a ray of firelight fell upon the white label of the black whisky bottle that lay an easy arm's reach from the head of the sleeper. A smile of comprehension twisted the lips of his evil face as he leered through the crevice at the helpless form by the fireside.

"Soused to the guards," he sneered, "an' me with ten years scairt offen my life fer fear I'd wake him." He stood erect and, with no attempt at the stealth with which he had approached the shack, proceeded rapidly in the direction of the stable.

It was but the work of a few moment to bridle the horses, lead them out, and hitch them to the sled.

Tossing the horse-blankets on top of the big tarpaulin which lay in the rear of the sled-box ready for use in the covering of supplies, he settled himself in front and pulled the robes about him.

He turned the team slowly onto the tote-road and

glanced again toward the shack. A spark, larger than the others, shot out of the stovepipe and lodged upon the bark roof, where it glowed for a moment before going out. The man watched it in sudden fascination.

He halted the team and stared long at the spot where the spark had vanished in blackness, but which in the brain of the man appeared as an ever-widening circle of red, which spread until it included the whole roof in its fiery embrace, and crept slowly down the log walls.

So realistic was the picture that he seemed to hear the crackle and roar of the leaping flames. He drew a trembling hand across his eyes, and when he looked again the shack stood silent and black in the half-light of the starlit clearing.

"God!" he mumbled aloud. "If it had only happened thataway----" He passed his tongue over his dry, thick lips. "Why not?" he argued querulously. "Moncrossen said 'twa'nt safe to bushwhack him like I wanted to--said how I ain't got nerve nor brains to stand no investigation.

"But if he'd git burnt up in the shack, that's safer yet. He got that booze somewhere--some one knows he had it. He got spifficated, built a roarin' fire in the old stove--an' there y'are, plain as daylight. No brains! I'll show him who's got brains--an' there won't be no investigation, neither."

He drew the team to the side of the tote-road and, slipping the halters over the bridles, tied them to a stout sapling and made his way toward the shack.

One look satisfied him that the sleeper had not stirred, and noiselessly he slipped the heavy hasp of the door over the staple and secured it with the wooden pin.

He collected dry branches, piling them directly beneath the small, square window which yawned high in the wall. Higher and higher the pile grew until its top was almost on a level with the sill.

His hands trembled as he applied the match. Tiny tongues of flame struggled upward through the branches, lengthening and widening as fresh twigs ignited, and in his ears the crackle and snap of the dry wood sounded as the rattle of musketry.

His first impulse as the flames gained headway was to fly--to place distance between himself and the scene of his crime. But he dared not go. His knees shook, and he stared with blanched face in horrid fascination as the flames roared and crackled through the brushwood.

They were curling about the window now, and the whole clearing was light as day. He slunk around the corner and gained the shadow of the opposite wall. Fearfully he applied his eye to a crevice--the form by the stove had not moved

him by the stove had not moved.

The air of the interior was heavy with smoke and tiny flames were eating their way between the logs. The smoke thickened, blurring and blotting out the prostrate figure. He glanced across at the window. Its aperture was a solid sheet of flame--he was safe!

With a low, animal-like cry Creed sprang away and dashed in the direction of the team. With shaking fingers he clawed at the knots and slipped the halters.

Leaping into the sled, he grabbed up the lines and headed the horses southward at a run. Behind him the sky reddened as the flames licked hungrily at the dry logs of the shack.

"It's his own fault! It's his own fault!" he mumbled over and over again. "Serves him right fer gittin' soused an' buildin' up a big fire in a busted stove. 'Twasn't no fault of his that spark didn't catch the roof. Serves him right! Maybe it did catch--maybe it did. 'Taint my fault no-how--it must 'a' caught--I seen it thataway so plain! Oh, my God! Oh, my God," he babbled, "if they git to askin' me!

"It was thisaway, mister; yes, sir; listen: I was camped in the ravine, an' all to wunst I seen the flare of the fire an' I run over there; but 'twas too late--the roof had fell in an' the pore feller must 'a' been cooked alive. It was terrible, mister--terrible!

"An' I run an' hitched up the team an' druv to Hilarity hell bent fer a potlatch--that's the way of it--s'elp me God it is! If you don't b'lieve it ask Moncrossen--ask Moncrossen, I mean, if he didn't have no booze along--he must 'a' been drunk--an' him crippled thataway!

"Oh, Lordy, Lord! I ain't supposed to know it was the greener, let alone he was crippled! I'm all mixed up a'ready! They better not go askin' me questions lessen they want to git me hung--Goda'm'ity! I'd ort to done like Moncrossen said!"

So he raved in a frenzy of terror as the horses sped southward at a pace that sent the steam rising in clouds from their heaving sides.

And under the big tarpaulin in the rear of the sled-box the greener grinned as he listened, and eyed the gibbering man through a narrow slit in the heavy canvas.

CHAPTER XXI

DADDY DUNNIGAN

It was broad daylight when Creed pulled the team up before a tumbled-down stable in the rear of one

of the outstraggling cabins at the end of Hilarity's single street. Hastily he unhitched and led the horses through the door.

As he disappeared Bill slipped from under the canvas and limped stiffly around the corner of the stable, and none too soon, for as Creed returned to the sled for the oats and blankets the cabin door opened, and a tall, angular woman appeared, carrying an empty water-pail.

"So ye've come back, hev ye?" she inquired in a shrewish voice. "Well, ye're jest in time to fetch the water an' wood. Where d'ye git that rig?" she added sharply, eying the sled.

"None o' yer damn business! An' you hurry up an' cook breakfast ag'in' I git back from Burrage's, er I'll rig you!"

"Yeh, is that *so*? Jest you lay a finger on me, you damn timber-thievin' boot-legger, an' I'll bust you one over the head with the peaked end of a flatiron! Where ye goin' ter hide when the owner of them team comes a huntin' of'em? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shet up!" growled the man so shortly that the woman, eying him narrowly, turned toward the rickety pump, which burbled and wheezed as she worked the handle, filling the pail in spasmodic splashes.

"One of Monaghan's teamsters got hurt in the

One of Moncrossen's teamsters got burnt up in the shack at Melton's No. 8, an' I found the team in the stable an' druv 'em in," he vouchsafed as he brushed by the woman on his way to the street. "Twouldn't look right if I shet up about it; I'll be back when I tell Burrage."

"Fetch some bacon with ye," called the woman as she filled her dirty apron with chips. She paused before lifting the pail from the spout of the wooden pump and gazed speculatively at the tote-sled.

"He's lyin'," she said aloud. "He's up to some fresh devilment, an' 'pears like he's scairt. Trouble with Creed is, he ain't got no nerve--he's all mouth. I sure was hard up fer a man when I tuk *him*--but he treats me middlin' kind, an' I'd kind of hate to see him git caught--'cause he ain't no good a liar, an' a man anyways smart'd mix him up in a minit."

She lifted the pail and pushed through the door of the cabin.

"Nice people," muttered Bill as he cast about for an exit.

Keeping the stable in line with the window of the cabin, he made his way through a litter of tin cans and rubbish, gaining the shelter of the scrub, where he bent a course parallel with the street.

He was stiff and sore from his cramped position in the sled. and his foot pained sharply. His progress

was slow, and he paused to rest on the edge of a small clearing, in the center of which, well back from the highway, stood a tiny cabin.

In the doorway an old man, with a short cutty-pipe between his lips, leaned upon a crutch and surveyed the sky with weatherwise eyes.

Bill instantly recognized him as the old man with the twisted leg who tendered the well-meant advice upon the night of his first arrival in the little town, and his face reddened as he remembered the supercilious disregard with which he had received it.

For a moment he hesitated, then advanced toward the door. The old man removed his cutty-pipe and regarded him curiously.

"Good morning!" called Bill with just a shade of embarrassment.

"Good marnin' yersilf!" grinned the other, a twinkle in his little eyes.

"May I ask where I will find a man called Daddy Dunnigan?"

"In about foive minutes ye'll foind um atein' breakfast wid a shtrappin' young hearty wid a sore fut. Come an in. Oi'm me own housekaper, cook, an' bottle-washer; but, av Oi do say ut mesilf, Oi've seen wor-rse!"

"So you are Daddy Dunnigan?" asked Bill as he gazed hungrily upon the steaming saucers of oatmeal, the sizzling ham, and the yellow globes of fresh eggs fried "sunny side up."

"Ye'll take a wee nip befoor ye eat?" asked his host, reaching to the chimney-shelf for a squat, black bottle.

"No, thanks," smiled Bill. "I don't use it."

"Me, nayther," replied the other with a chuckle; "Oi misuse ut," and, pouring himself a good half tin cupful, swallowed it neat at a gulp.

The meal over, the men lighted their pipes, and Bill broached the object of his visit. The old man listened and, when Bill finished, spat reflectively into the wood-box.

"So Buck Moncrossen sint ye afther me, did he?"

"Yes. He said you were a good cook, and I can certainly bear him out in that; but he said that you would only work if you damn good and felt like it, and if you didn't you wouldn't." The old man grinned.

"He's roight agin, an' Oi'll be tellin' ye now Oi damn good an' don't feel loike wor-rkin' fr Moncrossen, th' dirthy pirate, takin' a man's pay wid wan hand an' shtealin' his timber wid th' other. He'd cut th'

throat av his own mither fr th' price av a dhrink.

"An' did he sind ye down afoot an' expict me to shtroll back wi' ye, th' both av us on crutches?"

"No, I have a team here," laughed Bill. "They are in Creed's stable."

"Creed's!" The old man glanced at him sharply. "Phwat ar-re they doin' at Creed's?"

"Well, that is a long story; but it sums up about like this: I see you know Moncrossen--so do I. And Moncrossen is afraid I will crab his bird's-eye game--and I will, too, when the proper time comes.

"But he saw a chance to get rid of me, so he sent me after you, probably knowing that you would not come; but it offered an excuse to get me where he wanted me. Then he framed it up with Creed to steal the team in the night while I was camped at Melton's No. 8, and leave me to die bushed.

"I built a fire in the shack, ate my supper, rigged up a dummy near the fire, and then went out to the sled and crawled under the tarp. After making sure that I was asleep Creed stole the team as per schedule, but he did not stop at that. He decided to make sure of me, so he locked the door on the outside and fired the shack. I remained under the tarp, and as Creed was going my way I let him do the driving. While he put up the team I slipped out the back

way, and here I am."

"Th' dirty, murderin' hound!" exclaimed the old man, chuckling and weaving his body from side to side in evident enjoyment of the tale.

"An' phwat'll ye do wid um now ye're here?" The old man sat erect and stared into the face of his guest, whose eyes had narrowed and whose lips had curved into an icy smile.

"First, I'll give him the damndest licking with my two fists that he ever got in his life; then I'll turn him over to the authorities."

Daddy Dunnigan leaned forward and, laying a gnarled hand upon his shoulder, shook him roughly in his excitement:

"Yer name, b'y? Phwat is yer name?" His voice quavered, and the little eyes glittered between the red-rimmed lids, bright as an eagle's. The younger man was astonished at his excitement.

"Why, Bill," he replied.

"Bill or Moike or Pat--wurrah! Oi mane yer rale name--th' whole av ut?"

"That I have not told. I am called Bill."

"Lord av hiven! I thocht ut th' fir-rst toime Oi seen ye--but now! Man! B'y. Wid thim eyes an' that

shmile on yer face, d'ye think ye c'd fool owld
Daddy Dunnigan, that was fir-rst corp'l t'rough two
campaigns an' a scourge av peace fr Captain
Fronte McKim?

"Who lucked affther um loike a brother--an' loved
um more--an' who fought an' swore an' laughed an'
dhrank wid um trough all th' plague-ridden counthry
from Kashmir to th' say--an' who wropped um in
his blanket fr th' lasht toime an' helped burry um
wid his eyes open--fr he'd wished ut so--on th'
long, brown slope av a rock-pocked Punjab hill,
ranged round tin deep wid th' dead naygers av Hira
Kal?"

Bill stared at the man wide-eyed.

"Fronte McKim?" he cried.

"Aye, Fronte McKim! As sh'u'd 'a' been ginerall av
all Oirland, England, an' Injia. Av he'd 'a' been let
go he'd licked th' naygers fir-rst an' diplomated
phwat was lift av um. He'd made um shwim off th'
field to kape from dhroundin' in their own blood--
an' kep' 'em good afftherward wid th' buckle ind av
a surcingle.

"My toime was up phwin he was kilt, an' Oi quit.
F'r Oi niver 'listed to rot in barracks. Oi wint back
to Kerry an' told his mither, th' pale, sad Lady
Constance--God rist her sowl!--that sint foor b'ys
to th' wars that niver come back--an' wud sint foor

more if she'd had 'em.

"She give me char-rge av th' owld eshtate, wid th' big house, an th' lawn as wide an' as grane as th' angel pastures av hiven--an' little Eily--his sishter--th' purtiest gur-rl owld Oirland iver bred, who was niver tired av listhenin' to tales av her big brother.

"Oi shtayed till th' Lady Constance died an' little Eily married a rich man from Noo Yor-rk--Car-rson, or meby Carmen, his name was; an' he carried her off to Amur-rica. 'Twas not th' same in Kerry affther that, an' Oi shtrayed from th' gold camps av Australia to th' woods av Canada."

The far-away look that had crept into the old man's eyes vanished, and his voice became gruff and hard.

"Oi've hear-rd av yer doin's in th' timber--av yer killin' th' werwolf in th' midst av her pack--an yer lickin' Moncrossen wid a luk an' a grin--av yer knockin' out Shtromberg wid t'ree blows av yer fisht.

"Ye might carry th' name av a Noo York money-grubber, but yer hear-rt is th' hear-rt av a foightin' McKim--an' yer eyes, an' that smile--th' McKim smile--that's as much a laugh as th' growl av a grizzly--an' more dangerous thin a cocked gun."

The old man paused and filled his pipe, muttering and chuckling to himself. Bill grasped his hand, wripping it in a mighty grin.

winging it in a mighty grip.

"You have guessed it," he said huskily. "My name does not matter. I am a McKim. She was my mother--Eily McKim--and she used to tell me of my uncle--and of you."

"Did she, now? Did she remember me?" he exclaimed. "God bless th' little gur-rl. An' she is dead?" Bill nodded, and Daddy Dunnigan drew a coarse sleeve across his eyes and puffed hard at his short pipe.

"And will you go back with me and work the rest of the winter for Moncrossen?"

The old man remained silent so long that Bill thought he had not heard. He was about to repeat the question when the other laid a hand upon his knee.

"Oi don't have to wor-rk fr no man, an' Oi'll not wor-rk fr Moncrossen. But Oi'd cross hell on thin ice in July to folly a McKim wanst more, an' if to do ut Oi must cook fr Appleton's camp, thin so ut is. Git ye some shleep now whilst Oi loaf down to Burrage's."

CHAPTER XXII

CREED SEES A GHOST

When Bill awoke, yellow lamplight flooded the room and Daddy Dunnigan was busy about the stove, from the direction of which came a cheerful sizzling and the appetizing odor of frying meat and strong coffee.

For several minutes he lay in a delicious drowse, idly watching the old man as he hobbled deftly from stove to cupboard, and from cupboard to table.

So this was the man, he mused, of whom his mother had so often spoken when, as a little boy, he had listened with bated breath to her tales of the fighting McKims.

He remembered how her soft eyes would glow, and her lips curve with pride as she recounted the deeds of her warrior kin.

But, most of all, she loved to tell of Captain Fronte, the big, fighting, devil-may-care brother who was her childish idol; and of one, James Dunnigan, the corporal, who had followed Captain Fronte through all the wars, and to whose coolness and courage her soldier brother owed his life on more than one occasion, and whose devotion and loyalty to the name of McKim was a byword throughout the regiment, and in Kerry.

"And now," thought Bill, "that I have found him, I will never lose sight of him. He needs someone to

"I am not a soldier, I am a man."

look after him in his old age."

Over the little flat-topped stove the leathern old world-rover muttered and chuckled to himself as he prodded a fork into the browning pork-chops, shooting now and then an affectionate glance toward the bunk.

"Saints be praised!" he muttered. "Oi'd av know'd um in hiven or hell, or Hong-Kong. Captain Fronte's own silf, he is, as loike as two peas. An' the age av Captain Fronte before he was kilt, phwin he was th' besht officer in all th' British ar-rmy--or an-ny ar-rmy.

"Him that c'd lay down th' naygers in windrows all day, an' dhrink, an' play car-rds, an' make love all noight--an' at 'em agin in th' marnin'! An' now Oi've found um Oi'll shtay by um till wan av us burries th' other. For whilst a McKim roams th' earth James Dunnigan's place is to folly um.

"An', Lord be praised, he's a foightin' man--but a McKim that don't dhrink! Wurrah! Maybe he wasn't failin' roight, or th' liquor didn't look good enough fer um. Oi'll thry um agin."

Bill threw off the blankets and sat up on the edge of the bunk.

"That grub smells good, Daddy," he sniffed.

"Aye, an 'twill tashte good, too, av ye fly at ut

befure ut gits cold. Ye've had shleep enough fer two min--Captain Fronte'd git along fer wakes at a toime on foorty winks in th' saddle."

"I am afraid I will have a hard time living up to Captain Fronte's standard," laughed Bill, as he adjusted his bandages.

"Well, thin, O'll tell yez th' fir-rst thing Captain Fronte'd done phwin his two feet hit th' flure: he'd roar fer a dhrink av good liquor. An' thin he'd ate a dozen or two av thim pork-chops, an' wash 'em down wid a gallon av black coffee--an' he'd be roight fer an-nything from a carouse wid th' brown dancin' Nautch gir-rls, to a brush in th' hills wid their fightin' brown brothers.

"Th' liquor's waitin'--ut moightn't be as good as ye're used, but O've seen Captain Fronte himself shmack his lips over worse. An' as fer th' tin cup--he'd dhrink from a batthered tomaty can or a lady's shlipper, an' rasp th' dhregs from his t'roat wid a cur-rse or a song, as besht fitted th' toime or th' place he was in."

The old man began to pour out the liquor: "Say phwin," he cried, "an' O've yit to see th' McKim 'twud hurry th' wor-rd."

Bill crossed to the old man, who, propped against the table, watched the contents of the bottle gurgle and splash into the huge tin cup, and laid a hand

upon his arm.

"That will do, Daddy," he said.

The man ceased to pour and peered inquisitively into the cup. "Taint half full yit!" he protested, passing it to Bill, who set it before him upon the table, where the rich fumes reached his nostrils as he spoke:

"This whisky," he began, "smells good--plenty good enough for any man. But, you don't seem to understand. I don't drink whisky--good whisky, or bad whisky, or old whisky, or new whisky, or red, white, and blue whisky--or any other kind of booze.

"I have drunk it--bottles of it--kegs of it--barrels of it, I suppose, for I played the game from Harlem to the Battery. And then I quit."

"Ye ain't tellin' me ye're timperence?" The old man inquired with concern as he would have inquired after an ailment.

"No; that is, if you mean am I one of those who would vote the world sober by prohibiting the sale of liquor. It is a personal question which every man must meet squarely--for himself--not for his neighbor. I am not afraid of whisky. I am not opposed to it, as an issue. In fact, I respect it, for, personally, it has given me one peach of a scrap--

and we are quits."

The old man listened with interest.

"Ye c'n no more kape a McKim from foightin' thin ye c'n kape a dacoit from staylin," he chuckled. "So ye tur-med in an' give th' crayther himsilf a foight--an' ye win ut? An' phwat does th' gir-rl think av ut?"

"What!"

"Th' gir-rl. Is she proud av ye? Or is she wan av thim that thinks ut aisy to quit be just lavin' ut alone? For, sure, ut niver intered th' head av man--let alone a McKim, to tur-m ag'in' liquor, lessen they was a gir-rl at th' bottom av ut. An' phwin ar-re ye goin' to be marrit? For, av she's proud av ye, ye'll marry her--but av she takes ut as a mather av coorse--let some wan ilse git stung."

Bill regarded the old man sharply, but in his bearing was no hint of jesting nor raillery, and the little eyes were serious.

"Yes, there *was* a girl," said Bill slowly; "but she--she does not know."

"So ye've had a scrap wid her, too! But, tell me ye didn't run away from ut--ye're goin' back?" Bill made no reply, and the old man conveyed the food to the table, muttering to himself the while:

"Sure they's more foightin' goin' on thin Oi iver

thought to see ag'in. Ut ain't rid war, but ut ain't so bad--werwolves, Moncrossen, booze, Creed, a bit av a gir-rl somewheres, Shtromberg--th' wor-rld is growin' bether affther all, an' Oi'm goin' to be in th' thick av ut!"

Supper over, Bill donned mackinaw, cap, and mittens.

"Phwere ye goin'?" asked Dunnigan.

"To find Creed."

"Wait a bit, 'tis early yit. In half an hour he'll be clost around Burrage's shtove, tellin' th' b'ys about th' bur-rnt shack at Melton's."

Bill resumed his chair.

"Oi've been thinkin' ut out," continued Daddy, between short puffs at his cutty-pipe. "Ye'll have no fun lickin' Creed--'tis shmall satisfaction foightin' a man that won't foight back. An-ny-how, a black eye or a bloody nose is soon minded. An' av ye tur-m um over to th' authorities ye ain't got much on um, an' ye can't pr-rove phwat ye have got.

"But listen: Creed's a dhrivlin' jobbernowl that orders his comin's be th' hang av th' moon, an' his goin's be th' dhreams av his head. He thinks y're dead. Now, av ye shtroll into Burrage's loike nothin' out av th' oordinary has happened, he'll think ye're a ghost, an' th' fear in his heart will shtay him."

ghost-an' in fear in his heart will shay by um.

"Oi'll loaf down there now, same as ivery noight. In about a half an hour ye'll come limp'in' in an' ask fer Dunnigan, an' will he cook out th' sayson fer Moncrossen? 'Twill be fun to watch Creed. He'll be scairt shtiff an' white as a biled shirt, or he'll melt down an' dhribble out t'rough a crack av th' flure."

And so, a half-hour later, Bill Carmody for the second time pushed open Hod Burrage's door and made his way to the stove.

The scene in no wise differed from the time of his previous visit. Slabs of bacon still hung from the roof logs beside the row of tin coffee-pots; the sawdust-filled box was still the object of intermittent bombardment by the tobacco-chewers, the uncertainty of whose aim was mutely attested by the generous circumference of brown-stained floor of which the box was the center.

Grouped about the stove, upon counter, barrel-head, and up-ended goods box, were the same decaying remnants of the moldering town's vanishing population.

The thick, cloudy glass with its sticky edges still circulated for the common good, and above the heads of the unkempt men the air reeked gray with the fumes of rank tobacco.

Only the man who entered had changed. In his

bearing was no hint of superiority nor intolerance; he advanced heartily, hailing these men as equals and friends. Near the stove he halted, leaning upon his crutch, and swept the group with a glance.

"Good evening! Do any one of you men happen to be named Dunnigan?"

From the moment the tap of Bill's crutch sounded upon the wooden floor, Creed, who had paused in the middle of a sentence of his highly colored narrative, stared at the newcomer as one would ordinarily stare when a person known to be dead casually steps up and bids one good evening.

His mouth did not open, his lower jaw merely sagged away from his face, exposing his tongue lying thick and flabby upon yellow teeth. His out-bulging eyes fixed the features of the man before him with a glassy, unwinking stare, like the stare of a fish.

Into his brain, at first, came no thought at all merely a dumb sense of unreasoning terror under which his muscles went flaccid, and out of control, so that his body shrank limp and heavy against its backing of bolt-goods.

Then, suddenly a rush of thoughts crowded his brain, tangled thoughts, and weird--of deep significance, but without sequence nor reason.

What had they told of this man in the woods? How he had battled hand to claw with the werewolf and received no hurt. How he had cowed the boss with a look, and laid the mighty Stromberg cold in the batting of an eye.

He himself had, but twenty hours since, seen this man lying helpless upon the floor of a locked shack, ringed round with roaring flames, beyond any human possibility of escape.

And here he stood, crippled beyond peradventure of trail-travel, yet fresh and unfatigued, forty miles from the scene of his burning! A thin trickle of ice crept downward along his spine and, overmastering all other emotions, came the desire to be elsewhere.

He slid from the counter and, as his feet touched the floor, his knees crumpled and he sprawled his length almost at the feet of the man who could not die.

As a matter of fact, Creed aged materially during his journey to the door, but to the onlookers his exit seemed a miracle of frantic haste as he clawed and scrambled the length of the room on hands and knees in a maudlin panic of terror.

And out into the night, as he ran in the first direction he faced, the uppermost thought in his mind was a blind rage against Moncrossen.

The boss himself was afraid of this man, yet he had sent him, Creed, to make away with him--alone--in the night! The quavering breath left his throat in long moans as he ran on and on and on.

"Your friend seems to have been in something of a hurry," ventured Bill, as Burrage gave a final twist to the old newspaper in which he was wrapping Fallon's jug.

The storekeeper regarded his customer quizzically and spat with surprising accuracy into the box.

"Yes," he replied dryly, "Creed, he's mostly in a hurry when they's strangers about. But to-night he seemed right down *anxious* thataway."

CHAPTER XXIII

HEAD-LINES

The brute in Moncrossen held subservient the more human emotions, else he must surely have betrayed his surprise when, twelve hours ahead of schedule, the greener swung the long-geared tote team to a stand in front of the office door.

Not only had he made the trip without mishap, but accomplished the seemingly impossible in persuading Daddy Dunnigan to cook for a log

camp, when in all reason the old man should have scorned the proposition in a torrent of Irish profanity.

Moncrossen dealt only in facts. Speculation as to cause and effect found no place in his mental economy. His plan had miscarried. For that Creed must answer later. The fact that concerned him now was that the greener continued to be a menace to his scheme.

Had Creed in some manner bungled the job? Or had he passed it up? He must find out how much the greener knew. The boss guessed that if the other had unearthed the plot, he would force an immediate crisis.

And so he watched narrowly, but with apparent unconcern, while Bill climbed from the sled, followed by Daddy Dunnigan. On the hard-packed snow of the clearing the two big men faced each other, and the expression of each was a perfect mask to his true emotions.

But the greener knew that the boss was masking, while Moncrossen accepted the other's guileless expression at its face value, and his pendulous lips widened into a grin of genuine relief as he greeted the arrivals.

"Hullo! You back a'ready? Hullo, Dunnigan! I'm sure glad you come; we'll have some real grub fer a

change.

"Hey, LaFranz!" he called to the passing Frenchman. "Put up this team an' pack the gear to the bunk-house."

As the man drove away in the direction of the stable, Moncrossen regarded the others largely.

"Come on in an' have a drink, boys," he invited, throwing wide the door. "How's the foot?"

"Better," replied Bill. "It will be as good as ever in a week."

"I'm glad of that, 'cause I sure am cramped fer hands. I'll let Fallon break you into sawin' an put Stromberg to teamin'; he's too pot-gutted fer a sawyer."

Moncrossen produced a bottle as the others seated themselves.

"What--don't drink?" he exclaimed, as Bill passed the bottle to Dunnigan. "That's so; b'lieve I did hear some one say you didn't use no booze. Well, every man to his own likin'. Me--about three good, stiff jolts a day, an' a big drunk in the spring an' fall, is about my gait. Have a *seegar*." Bill accepted the proffered weed and bit off the end.

"How!" he said, with a short sweep of the arm; then scratching a match on the ring of his chair

then, scratching a match on the rung of his chair, lighted the unsavory stogie.

Thus each man took measure of the other, and Daddy Dunnigan tilted the bottle and drank deep, the while he took shrewd measure of both.

It was in the early afternoon of the following day that Bill Carmody tossed aside his magazine and yawned drowsily. Alone in the bunk-house, his glance roved idly over the room, with its tiers of empty bunks and racks of drying garments.

It rested for a moment upon his bandaged foot propped comfortably upon Fallon's bunk, directly beneath his own, and strayed to the floor where just under its edge, still wrapped in the soiled newspaper, sat the gallon jug that Fallon suggested in case the greener saw fit to heed his warning.

Bill smiled dreamily. Unconsciously his lips spelled out the words of some head-lines that stared at him from the rounded surface of the jug:

POPULAR MEMBERS OF NEW YORK'S FOUR HUNDRED TO WED.

"Wonder who?" thought Bill. Reaching for his crutch, he slipped the end through the handle of the

jug and drew it toward him. He raised it to his lap and the words of the succeeding line struck upon his brain like an electric shock:

Engagement of Miss Ethel Manton and Gregory St. Ledger Soon to be Announced.

Feverishly his eyes devoured the following lines of the extended heading:

Time of Wedding Not Set. Will Not Take Place Immediately, 'Tis Said. Prospective Bridegroom to Sail for Europe in Spring.

And then the two lines of the story that appeared at the very bottom, where the paper folded under the edge of the jug:

New York, February 1. (Special to *Tribune*.)-
-As a distinct surprise in élite circles will come the announcement of the engage

He tilted the jug in frenzied eagerness to absorb every detail of the bitter news, and was confronted by the rough, stone bottom which had worn through the covering, leaving mangled shreds of paper, whose rolled and mutilated edges were undecipherable.

Vainly he tried to restore the tattered remnants, but soon abandoned the hopeless task and sat staring at the head-lines.

Over and over again he read them as if to grasp their significance, and then, with a full realization of their import, he closed his eyes and sat long amid the crumbled ruin of his hopes.

For he had hoped. In spite of the scorn in her voice as she dismissed him, and the bitter resentment of his own parting words, he loved her; and upon the foundation of this love he had builded the hope of its fulfillment.

A hope that one day he would return to her, clean and strong in the strength of achievement, and that his great passion would beat down the barrier and he would claim her as of right.

Suddenly he realized that as much as upon the solid foundation of his own great love, the hope depended upon the false substructure of her love for him.

And the false substructure had crumbled at the test. She loved another; had suddenly become as unattainable as the stars--and was lost to him forever.

The discovery brought no poignant pain, no stabbing agony of a fresh heart-wound; but worse--the dull, deep, soul-hurt of annihilation; the hurt that damns men's lives.

He smiled with bitter cynicism as his thoughts dwelt upon the little love of women, the shifting love, that rests but lightly on the heart, to change with the changing moon. And upon the constancy of such love he had dared to build his future!

"Fool!" he cried, and laughed aloud, a short, hard laugh--the laugh that makes God frown. From the water-pail at his side he drew the long-handled dipper and removed the cork from the jug and tilted the jug, and watched the red liquor splash noisily from its wide mouth.

From that moment he would play a man's game; would smash Moncrossen and his bird's-eye men; would learn logs and run camps, and among the big men of the rough places would win to the fore by the very force and abandon of him.

He had beaten the whisky game; had demonstrated his ability to best John Barleycorn on his own terms and in his own fastnesses.

And now he would drink whisky--much whisky or little whisky as he saw fit, for there was none to gainsay him--and in his life henceforth no woman could cause him pain.

He raised the dipper to his lips, and the next instant it rang upon the floor, and over the whole front of him splashed the raw liquor, and in his nostrils was the fume and reek of it.

Unmindful of his injury, he leaped to his feet and turned to face Daddy Dunnigan, who was returning his crutch to his armpit.

"Toimes Oi've yanked Captain Fronte from th' road av harm," the old man was saying, and the red-rimmed, rheumy eyes shone bright; "wanst from in front av a char-rge av the hillmen an' wanst beyant Khybar. But Oi'm thinkin' niver befoor was Oi closter to th' roight place at th' roight toime thin a minit agone.

"Whisky is made to be dhrank fer a pastime av enj'ymint--not alone--wid a laugh loike that. Ye've got th' crayther on th' run, but ye must give no quarter. Battles is won not in th' thruse, but in th' foightin'.

"No McKim iver yit raised th' white flag, an' none iver died wid his back to th' front. Set ye down, lad, an' think it over."

He finished speaking and hobbled toward the door, and, passing out, closed it behind him. Alone in the bunk-house Bill Carmody turned again to the jug and fitted the cork to its mouth, and with his crutch pushed it under the edge of Fallon's bunk.

Hours later, when the men stamped in noisily to the wash-bench, he was sitting there in the dark--thinking.

The results of Daddy Dunnigan's cooking were soon evident in the Blood River camp. Men no longer returned to the bunk-house growling and cursing the grub, and Moncrossen noted with satisfaction that the daily cut was steadily climbing toward the eighty-thousand mark.

The boss added a substantial bonus for each day's "top cut," and in the lengthening days an intense rivalry sprang up between the sawyers; not infrequently Bill and Fallon were "in on the money."

It was nearly two weeks after the incident, that Creed came to Moncrossen with his own story of what happened that night at Melton's No. 8, and the boss knew that he lied.

As they talked in the little office the greener, accompanied by Fallon, passed close to the window.

At the sight of the man the spotter's face became

pasty, and he shrank trembling and wide-eyed, as from the sight of a ghost, and Moncrossen knew that his abject terror was not engendered by physical fear.

He flew into a rage, cursing and bullying the craven, but failed utterly to dispel the unwholesome fear or to shake the other's repeated statement that at a few minutes past ten o'clock that night he had seen the greener lying hopelessly drunk upon the floor of the shack with the flames roaring about him, and at six o'clock the next evening had seen him hobble into Burrage's store, forty miles to the southward, fresh and apparently unharmed save for his injured foot.

Moncrossen's hatred of the greener rested primarily upon the fear that one day he would expose him to Appleton; added to this was a mighty jealousy of his rapid rise to proficiency and the rankling memory of the scene of their first meeting in the grub-shack.

But his fear of him was a physical fear--a fear born of the certain knowledge that, measured by his own standards, the greener was the better man.

And now came the perplexing question as to how the man had reached Hilarity when Creed was known to have arrived there with the team eight hours after the burning of the shack.

The boss had carefully verified so much of Creed's story by a guarded pumping of Dunnigan, and the crafty old Irishman took keen delight in so wording his answers, and interspersing them with knowing winks and quirks of the head, as to add nothing to the boss's peace of mind.

While not sharing Creed's belief in the greener's possession of uncanny powers, nevertheless he knew that, whatever happened that night, the greener knew more than he chose to tell, and as his apprehension deepened his rage increased.

Hate smoldered in the swinish eyes as, in the seclusion of the office, he glowered and planned and rumbled his throaty threats.

"The drive," he muttered. "My Bucko Bill, you're right now picked for the drive, an' I'll see to it myself that you git yourn in the river."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LOG JAM

The feel of spring filled the air; the sun swung higher and higher; and the snow turned dark and lay soggy with water. With the increasing warmth of the longer days, men's thoughts turned to the drive.

They talked of water-front streets, with their calk-riddled plank sidewalks and low-fronted bars; of squalid back wine-rooms, where for a week they would be allowed to bask, sodden, in the smiles of the painted women--then, drugged, beaten, and robbed, would wake up in a filthy alley and hunt up a job in the mills.

It was all in a lifetime, this annual spring debauch. The men accepted it as part of the ordered routine of their lives; accepted it without shame or regret, boasting and laughing unblushingly over past episodes--facing the future gladly and without disgust.

"You mind Jake Sonto's place, where big Myrtle hangs out? They frisked Joe Manning fer sixty bucks last year. I seen 'em do it. What! Me? I was too sleepy to give a cuss--they got mine, too."

And so the talk drifted among them. Revolting details of abysmal man-failings, brutal reminiscences of knock-out drops, robbery, and even murder, furnished the themes for jest and gibe which drew forth roars of laughter.

And none sought to avoid the inevitable; rather, they looked forward to it in brutish anticipation, accepting it as a matter of course.

For so had lumber-jacks been drugged, beaten, and robbed since the first pine fell--and so will they

continue to be drugged, beaten, and robbed until the last log is jerked, dripping, from the river and the last white board is sawed.

On the night of the 8th of April the cut was complete, and on the morning of the 9th ten million feet of logs towered on the rollways along the river, ready for the breaking up of the ice.

Stromberg had banked the bird's-eye to his own satisfaction, and Moncrossen selected his crew for the drive--white-water men, whose boast it was that they never had walked a foot from the timber to the mills; bateau men, who laughed in the face of death as they swarmed over a jam; key-log men, who scorned dynamite; bend watchers, whose duty it is to stay awake through the long, warm days and prevent the formation of jams as the drive shoots by--each selected with an eye to previous experience and physical fitness.

For, among all occupations of men, log driving stands unique for its hardships of peril, discomfort, and bone-racking toil.

From the breaking out of the rollways until the last log slips smoothly into its place in the boom-raft, no man's life is safe.

Yet men fight for a place on the drive--for the privilege of being soaked to the bone for days at a time in ice-cold water; of being crushed to a pulp

between grinding logs; of being drowned in white-water rapids, where a man must stand, his log moving at the speed of an express train, time and again shooting half out of water to meet the spray of the next rock-tossed wave; of making hair-trigger decisions, when an instant's hesitation means death, as his log rushes under the low-hanging branches of a "sweeper."

For pure love of adventure they fight--and that a few more dollars may find their way into the tills of the Jake Sontos of the water-front dives. For among these men the baiting of death is the excitement of life, and their pleasures are the savage pleasures of firstlings.

Those who were not of the drive were handed their vouchers and hauled to Hilarity, while those who remained busied themselves in the packing and storing of gear; for, in the fall, the crew would return to renew the attack on the timber.

Followed, then, days of waiting.

The two bateaux--the cook's bateau, with its camp stove and store of supplies; and the big bateau, with its thousand feet of inch and a half manila line coiled for instant use, whose thick, flaring sides and floor of selected timber were built to override the shock and battering of a thousand pitching logs--were carried to the bank ready for launching.

The sodden snow settled heavily, and around the base of stumps and the trunks of standing trees appeared rings of bare ground, while the course of the skidways and cross-hauls stood out sharp and black, like great veins in the clearing.

Each sag and depression became a pond, and countless rills and rivulets gurgled riverward, bank-full with sparkling snow-water.

Over the frozen surface of the river it flowed and wore at the shore-bound ice-floor. And then, one night, the ice went out.

Titanically it went, and noisily, with the crash and grind of broken cakes; and in the morning the river rushed black, and deep, and swollen, its roiled waters tearing sullenly at crumbling banks, while upon its muddy surface heaved belated ice-cakes and uprooted trees.

At daylight men crowded the bank, the bend watchers strung out and took up their positions, and white-water men stood by with sharp axes to break out the rollways.

The first rollway broke badly.

A thick-butted log slanted and met the others head-on as they thundered down the bank, tossing them high in the air whence they fell splashing into the river, or crashed backward among the tumbling

logs, upending, and hurling them about like jack-straws.

The air was filled with the heavy rumble of rolling logs as other rollways tore loose at the swift blows of the axes, where, at the crack of toggle-pins, men leaped from in front of the rolling, crushing death; and the surface of the river became black with bucking, pitching logs which shot to the opposite bank.

Coincident with the snapping of the first toggle-pin, the branches of a gigantic, storm-blasted pine, whose earth-laded butt dragged heavily along the bottom of the river, became firmly entangled in the low-hanging limbs of a sweeper, and swung sluggishly across the current.

Against this obstruction crashed the leaping, upending logs of the wrecked rollway. Other logs swept in and wedged, forcing the heavy butt and the riven trunk of the huge tree firmly against the rocks at the head of the rapid.

Rollway after rollway tore loose and the released logs, swept downward by the resistless push of the current, climbed one upon another and lodged. Higher and higher the jam towered, the interlocking logs piling in hopeless tangle.

Moncrossen was beside himself. Up and down the bank he rushed, bellowing orders and hurling curses

at the men who, gripping their peaveys, swarmed over the heaving jam like flies.

The bateau men, forty of them, lifted the heavy boat bodily, and working it out to the very forefront of the jam, lowered it into the water, while other men made the heavy cable fast to the trunk of a tree. Close under the towering pile the bateau was snubbed with a short, light line, and the men clambered shoreward, leaving only Moncrossen, Stromberg, Fallon, and one other to search for the key-log.

It was a comparatively simple jam, the key to which was instantly apparent to the experienced rivermen, in two large logs wedged in the form of an inverted V. The quick twist of a peavey inserted at the vertex of the angle, and the drive should move.

Fallon and Stromberg, past masters both of the drive made ready while the other stood by to cast off the light line and allow the bateau to swing free on the main cable.

Moncrossen clambered to the top to shout warning to those who swarmed over the body of the jam and along the edges of the river.

At the first bellowed orders of the boss, Bill Carmody had leaped onto the heaving jam and, following in the wake of others, began picking his way to the opposite shore.

New to the game, he had no definite idea of what was expected of him, so, with an eye upon those nearest him, he determined to follow their example.

To watch from the bank and see men whose boast it is that they "c'd ride a bubble if their calks wouldn't prick it," leap lightly from log to rolling log; hesitate, run its length, and leap to another as it sinks under them, nothing looks simpler.

But the greener who confidently tries it for the first time instantly finds himself in a position uncomfortably precarious, if not actually dangerous.

Bill found, to his disgust, that the others had gained the opposite bank before he had reached the middle, where he paused, balancing uncertainly and hesitating whether to go ahead or return.

The log upon which he stood oscillated dizzily, and as he sprang for another, his foot slipped and he fell heavily, his peavey clattering downward among the promiscuously tangled logs, to come to rest some six feet beneath him, where the white-water curled foaming among the logs of the lower tier.

Bill glanced hastily about him, expecting the shouts of laughter and good-natured chaffing which is the inevitable aftermath of the clumsy misadventure of a riverman. The bateau men were just gaining the shore and the attention of the others was engaged elsewhere. so that none noticed the accident. and.

with a grin of relief, Bill clambered down to recover his peavey.

And Moncrossen, peering over the top of the jam, took in the situation at a glance--the river apparently clear of men, and the greener, invisible to those on shore, crawling about among the logs in the center of the pile.

It was the moment for which he had waited. Even the most careful planning could not have created a situation more to his liking. At last the greener was "his."

"There she goes!" he roared, and turning, slid hastily from the top and leaped into the waiting bateau.

"Let 'er go!" he shouted.

Fallon and Stromberg leaped forward and simultaneously their peaveys bit into the smaller of the two key-logs.

Both big men heaved and strained, once, twice, thrice, and the log turned slowly, allowing the end of the other to pass.

The logs trembled for an instant, then, forced by the enormous weight behind them, shot sideways, crossed each other, and pressed the tree-trunk deep under the boiling water.

A mighty quiver ran through the whole mass of the

A mighty quiver ran through the whole mass of the jam, it balanced for a shuddering instant, then with a mighty rush, let go.

Over the side of the bateau tumbled Fallon and Stromberg, sprawling on the bottom at the feet of the boss, while the man in the bow cast off the light line.

The next instant the heavy boat leaped clear of the water, overriding, climbing to the very summit of the pounding, plunging logs which threatened each moment to crush and batter through her sides and bottom.

The strong, new line was singing taut to the pull of the heavy bateau which was being gradually crowded shoreward by the sweep of the down-rushing logs.

Suddenly a mighty shout went up from those on the bank. The men in the bateau looked, and there, almost in the middle of the stream, was the greener leaping from log to log of the wildly pitching jam.

They stared horror-stricken, with tense, blanched faces. Each instant seemed as if it must be his last, for they knew that no man alive could hope to keep his feet in the mad rush and sweep of the tumbling, tossing drive.

Yet the greener was keeping his feet. Time and again he recovered his balance when death seemed

imminent, and amid wild shouts and yells of encouragement, climbing, leaping, running, stumbling, he worked his way shoreward.

He was almost opposite the bateau now, and Stromberg, hastily coiling the light line, leaped into the bow. Then, just when it seemed possible the greener might make it, a huge log shot upward from the depths and fell with a crash squarely across the log upon which he was riding.

A cry of horror went up from half a hundred throats as the man was thrown high in the air and fell back into the foaming white-water that showed here and here through the thinning tangle of logs.

The next instant a hundred logs passed over the spot, drawn down by the suck of the rapid.

CHAPTER XXV

"THE-MAN-WHO-CANNOT-DIE"

During the infinitesimal interim between the shock which hurled him into the air, and the closing of the waters of Blood River over his head, Bill Carmody's brain received a confusion of flashlike impressions: The futile shouting and waving of arms upon the man-crowded bank of the river; the

sudden roar of the rapid; the tense face of Fallon; the set jaw of big Stromberg as he stood ready to shoot out the line; and, above all, the leering eyes and sneering lips of Moncrossen.

The accident happened a scant sixty feet from the side of the straining bateau, and the features of its occupants were brought out strongly in the clear morning light.

As he disappeared beneath the surface Bill drew a long breath and, opening his eyes, looked upward. A couple of swift strokes and his head emerged where a small patch of light showed an open space.

Reaching out he grasped the rough bark of a log, shook the icy water from his eyes, and reviewed his situation. His first thought was of the bateau, but a shoreward glance revealed only the swiftly gliding trunks of the forest wall with the bateau and the gesticulating crowd but a blur in the distance.

Near him floated smoothly a huge forked trunk from whose prongs protruded the stubs of lopped limbs. Releasing his hold, he swam toward the big log which floated butt foremost among its lesser neighbors, and, diving, came up between the forks and gripped firmly a limb stub.

On every hand thousands of logs floated quietly, seemingly motionless as logs on the bosom of a mill-pond. Only the rushing walls of pine on either

side of the narrow river-aisle spoke of the terrific speed of the drive.

Suddenly, as the great forked log swept around a bend, the peril of his situation dawned upon him in all its horror. The dull roar changed to a mighty bellow where the high-tossed white-water leaped high among the submerged rocks of the rapid, and above its thunder sounded the heavy rumble of the shock and grind of thousands of wildly pitching logs.

Only for a moment did he gaze out over the heaving forefront of the drive. His log shot forward with the speed of a bullet as it was seized in the grip of the current; the next moment it leaped clear of the water and plunged blindly into the whirling tossing pandemonium of the white-water gut.

Bill clung desperately to the stub, expecting each moment to be his last. Close in the fork he was protected on either side from the hammering blows of the caroming timber. All about him the air was filled with flying logs which ripped the bark from each other's sides, while the shock and batter of the wild stampede threatened momentarily to tear loose his grip.

It seemed to the desperate man that hours passed as he clung doggedly to the huge trunk which trembled and shivered and plunged wildly at the pounding impact, when suddenly it brought up

against a half-submerged rock, stopped dead, grated and jarred at the crash of following logs, poised for an instant, and then slanted into deeper water, while up the man's leg shot a twisting, wrenching pain, sickening--nerve-killing in its intensity.

His grasp relaxed and his whole body went limp and lifeless as the big log overrode the last rock barrier and was caught in the placid, slowly revolving water of a shore eddy.

Half concealed by the naked tangle of underbrush on the verge of a low bluff where the rock-ribbed rapid broke suddenly into smooth water, an old Indian woman and a beautiful half-breed girl of twenty crouched close, watching the logs plunge through the seething white-water.

The dark eyes of the girl shone with excitement, but this was no new sight to the eyes of the older woman who in times past had watched other drives on other rivers. As she looked her frown deepened and the hundred little weather wrinkles in the tight-drawn smoke-darkened skin showed thin and plain, like the crisscross cracks in old leather.

The shriveled lips pressed tight against the hard, snag-studded gums, and in the narrow, lashless black eyes glowed the spark of undying hate.

The sight of the rushing logs brought bitter

memories. These were things of the white man--and, among white men, only Lacombe was good--and Lacombe was dead.

Young Lacombe, who came into the North with a song on his lips to work for the great company whose word is law, and whose long arm is destiny. Lacombe, who, in the long ago had won her, Wah-ta-na-ta, the daughter of Kas-ka-tan, the chief, who was called the most beautiful maiden among all the tribes of the rivers.

The old crone drew her blanket about her and shuddered slightly as she glanced from her own withered, clawlike hands, upon which dark veins stood out like the cords of a freight bale, to the fresh beauty of the young girl at her side who gazed in awed fascination upon the rush of the pounding logs.

Lacombe was dead, and Pierre, his son, who was her first-born, was dead also; and his blood was upon the head of the men of the logs. For he had left the post and gone among white men, and she, the mother who bore him, and Lacombe, his father, had seen him no more.

Years slipped by, bringing other children; Jacques, in whom the white blood of Lacombe was lost in the blending, and the girl who crouched at her side.

Long after, from the lips of a passing *Bois br lé*,

she heard the story of Pierre's death--how, crazed by whisky and the taunts of a drunken companion, he had leaped upon a passing log and plunged into the foaming white chute of the dreaded Saw Tooth rapid through which no man had passed and lived.

Sacré. He was brave! For he came nearly to the end of the rapid, standing upon his log--but, only nearly to the end--for there he was dashed and broken upon the rocks in the swirl of the leaping white-water, and here was she, his mother, gazing at other logs in the rush of other rapids.

She started at the sudden clutch at her blanket and glanced sharply at the girl who strained forward upon the very edge of the bluff and stared, not at the rapid, but straight downward where a few logs revolved lazily in the grip of the shore eddy.

The girl was pointing excitedly with a tapering white-brown finger to the fork of a great log where, caught on a sharp limb stub, was the striped sleeve of a mackinaw, from the end of which protruded a hand, while after the log, trailing sluggishly in the V of the fork, was the lifeless body of a man.

As she looked a light of exultation gleamed in the sharp old eyes. Here was vengeance! For the life of her son--the life of a white man.

She noted with satisfaction that the body was that of a large man. It was fitting so. For her Pierre had

been tall, and broad, and strong--she would have been disappointed in the meaner price of a small man's life.

Suddenly she leaped to her feet and ran swiftly along the bluff seeking a place to descend.

Even among the men of the logs, who are bad, one man stands alone as the archfiend of them all.

And now--it is possible, for he is a big man--she, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, the mother of Pierre and of Jeanne, maybe is permitted to stoop close and breathe upon the dead face of this man the weird curse of the barren lands--almost forgotten, now, even among her own people--the blighting curse of the "Yaga Tah!"

In the telling, the *Bois br  lé* had mentioned the name of the drunken lumber-jack who had baited her Pierre to his death, and in the old woman's brain the name of Moncrossen was the symbol of all black deviltry.

After the death of Lacombe, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta had stolen Jeanne from the mission that she might forget the ways of the white man, and returned to her people.

Jeanne, whose soft skin, beneath the sun tan, was the white skin of Lacombe, and who was the most beautiful among all the women of the North, with her straight lithe body and dark mysterious eyes--

her straight, fine body, and calm, mysterious eyes eyes which, in color, were the eyes of the wood folk, but in whose baffling, compelling depths slumbered the secrets of an alien race.

Jacques, she could understand, for in thought and deed and body he was Indian--a whelp of her own breed. But the girl, she did not understand, and her love for her was the idolatrous love with which she had loved Lacombe.

Through many lean years they lived among the tepees of the Indians, but, of late, they had come to the lodge of Jacques, who had become a trapper and guide.

His lodge, of necessity, must be pitched not too far from the lumber camps of the white men, whose laws make killing deer in winter a crime--and pay liberally for fresh venison.

Swiftly she descended a short slope of the bluff, uttering quick, low whines of anticipation. For Jacques, Blood River Jack he was called by the white men, had told her that Moncrossen was boss of the camp at the head of the rapid.

All through the winter she had kept the girl continually within her sight, for she remembered the previous winter when this same Moncrossen had accidentally come upon their lodge on the south fork of Broken Knee, and the look in his eyes as he gazed upon the beauty of Jeanne.

She remembered the events that followed when Jacques was paid liberally by the boss to make a midwinter journey to the railroad, and the low sound in the night when she awakened to find the girl struggling in the bear-like grasp of the huge lumberjack, and how she fought him off in the darkness with a hatchet while Jeanne fled shrieking into the timber.

Now she stood upon the brink, and beside her stood the girl in whose dark eyes flashed a primitive tiger-hate--for she, too, remembered the terror of that night on the south fork of Broken Knee.

And, although she knew nothing of the wild death-curse of the Yaga Tah, she could at least stoop and spit upon the dead face of the one worst white man.

Almost touching their feet lapped the brown, bubble-dotted waters of the river, and close in, at a hand's reach from the bank, the logs passed sluggishly in the slow swing of the shore eddy.

The eyes of the pair focused in intense eagerness upon the great forked log which poised uncertainly at the outer edge of the whirl.

For a breathless moment they watched while it seemed that the great log with its gruesome freight must be swept out into the main current of the stream. Sluggishly it revolved, as upon an axis, and

then, in the grip of a random cross-current, swung heavily shoreward.

The form of the old woman bent forward and, as the log drifted slowly past, a talon-like hand shot out and fastened upon the bit of striped cloth, and the next moment the two were tugging and hauling in their efforts to drag the limp body clear of the brown waters.

Seizing upon the heavy calked boots they worked the body inch by inch up the steep slope, and the dry lips of the old squaw curled in a snaggy grin as she noted the shattered leg and the toe of the boot twisted backward--a grin that deepened into a grimace of sardonic cruelty at the feel of the grating rasp of the shattered bone ends.

After frequent pauses they returned to their task, and at each jerk water gushed from the man's wide-sprung jaws.

At last, panting with exertion, they gained the top of the bank. With glittering eyes the old squaw stooped swiftly and turned the body upon its back. The unseeing eyes stared upward, water ceased to gush from the open mouth, and the lolling tongue settled flabbily between the mud-smeared lips.

A cry of savage disappointment escaped her, for the face into which she looked was not the face of Moncrossen!

The curse of the Yaga Tah died upon her lips, for this curse may be breathed but once in a lifetime, and if, as Father Magnus said, "God is good," she might yet live to gaze into the dead face of the one worst white man, and chant the curse of the Yaga Tah.

So she stifled the curse and contented herself with gloating over the battered body of the man of logs which the churning white-water of the Blood River rapid had tossed at her feet, even as the seething white-water of the Saw Tooth had tossed the body of her Pierre at the feet of the white men.

At her side the girl gazed curiously at the exanimate form. In her heart was no bitterness against the people of her father--no damning of the breed for the sins of the individual.

Lacombie, she knew, was good--the one good white man--old Wa-ha-ta-na-ta called him. And Moncrossen was bad.

Between these two extremes were the unnumbered millions of whom Lacombie used to tell her in the long Northern twilight, when, as a little girl, she would creep upon his knees as he sat before the door of the log trading-post, and his arms would steal about her, and a far-away look would creep into his blue eyes.

Often he spoke of beautiful women of mighty

Often he spoke of beautiful women, of mighty tepees of stone; of bridges of iron, and of trains which rushed along the iron trails at the speed of the flight of a bird, and spat fire and smoke, and whose voice shrieked louder than the mate-call of the *loup-cervier*.

And she would listen, round-eyed, until the little head would droop slowly against the great chest, and the words would rumble softly and blend bewilderingly with the wheezing of the black pipe and the strong smell of rank tobacco.

Sometimes she would wake up with a start to hear more, and it would be morning, and she would be between the blankets in her own little bunk, and Wa-ha-ta-na-ta would come and laugh, and pinch her fat legs, and croon strange Indian songs in low minor keys.

There were stories, too; stories of Kas-ka-tan, the chief, of the Crazy Man of the Berry Moon; of Zuk, the lost hunter; of the Maiden of the Snows, whose heart was of ice, and whose voice was the splashing of tiny waters, and of the mighty Fire God, whose breath alone could move the heart of the Maiden of the Snows, so that in the springtime when he spoke to her of love, her laughter was heard in the tiny rills of the woodland.

But it was of Lacombe's tales she thought most. Only she could never stay awake to hear the end,

and the next night there would be other tales of other wonders, and all without end.

So in her heart grew a strange unrest, a wild, irrepressible longing to see these things in the wonderful country of the white men, to whom, in time of sickness and death, came smiling, round-faced priests, with long black clothes and many buttons; instead of hideous medicine-men, with painted faces and strings of teeth and shriveled claws.

As she gazed upon the form of the white man, a soft wistfulness stole into her eyes. Unconsciously, she drew closer, and the next instant threw herself upon the body, tearing frantically at the shirt-front.

Sounded the tiny popping of buttons and the smooth rip of flannel, and a small, white-brown hand slipped beneath the tattered cloth and pressed tight against the white skin of the mighty chest.

For a long moment it rested there while the old woman looked on in wonder. Then the girl faced her, speaking rapidly, with shining eyes:

"He is not dead!" she gasped. "There is life in the heart that moves! See! It is not the face of Moncrossen, but of the great *chechako* of whom Jacques told us. The man who is hated of Moncrossen. Who killed Diablesse, the *loup-garou*, with a knife.

"The man whom Creed fears, and of whom he spoke the night he came whining to the tepee with his heart turned to water within him, and told Jacques of how this man lay helpless in the flames of the burning shack, and the next day walked unscorched into the store at Hilarity.

"He is The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die. Quick! Help me, and together we will bring him to life!"

The old squaw held aloof, scowling.

"Lacombie is dead," she muttered. "There is no good white man. The men of the logs are bad. Where is Pierre, thy brother? And where are the fathers of the light-skinned breeds of the rivers?

"Who bring sorrow and death among the women of my people? Whence comes the whisky that is the curse of the red men of the North? Would you warm the rattlesnake in your bosom, to die from its poisoned tooth? All men die! Lacombie, who was good, is dead. And this one who, being a man of logs, is bad, will die also. Come away while yet there is time!"

The girl sprang to her feet and, with uplifted hand, faced Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, and in her eyes was the compelling light of prophecy.

"Is it not enough, O Wa-ha-ta-na-ta," she cried, "that Moncrossen, the evil one, hates this man? He

is M's'u Bill, The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die. Neither by wolves nor fire nor water can he die, nor will he be killed in the fighting of men. But one day he will kill Moncrossen, that thou mayest lay upon the head of the evil one the black curse of the Yaga Tah! And then will the blood of Pierre, thy son, be avenged."

At the words, the smoldering black eyes of the old squaw wavered, they swept the limp form upon the ground, and returned a long, searching gaze into the blazing eyes of the girl. With a low guttural throat-sound, she dropped to her knees, and together they bent to their task. At the end of an hour the breath fluttered irregularly between the bearded lips and the gray eyes closed of their own accord.

As the two women rested, the sound of shouting voices was borne to their ears. The old woman started, listening.

"Back from the river!" she cried, "soon will come men who, with long, sharp poles, will push out the logs from the eddies, and from the still waters of the bends, and, should the men of Moncrossen find this man they will kill him--for all men die! Did not Lacombe die?"

CHAPTER XXVI

MAN OR TOY MAN?

The newspaper prediction of the forthcoming announcement of the engagement of Miss Ethel Manton and Gregory St. Ledger was published, not without color of authority, nor was it entirely out of keeping with appearances.

As the gay calendar of society's romp and rout drew toward its close, the names of these two became more and more intimately associated. It was an association assiduously cultivated by young St. Ledger, and earnestly fostered and abetted by the St. Ledger sisters who, fluttering uncertainly upon the outermost rim of the circle immediately surrounding society's innermost shrine, realized that the linking of the Manton name with the newer name of St. Ledger, would prove an open sesame to the half-closed doors of the Knickerbockers.

Despite two years' residence in the most expensive suite of a most expensive hotel, nobody seemed to know much about the St. Ledgers. It was an accepted fact that they were islanders from somewhere, variously stated to be Jamaica, The Isle of Pines, and Barbadoes, whose wealth was founded upon sugar, and appeared limitless.

St. Ledger *père*, tall and saturnine, divided his time about equally between New York and "the islands."

The two girls, ravishingly beautiful in their dark, semi-mysterious way, had been brought from some out-of-the-way French convent to the life of the great city, where to gain entrée into society's holy of holies became a fetish above their gods.

There was no *mère* St. Ledger, and vague whisperings passed back and forth between certain bleached out, flat-chested virgins, whose forgotten youth and beauty were things long past, but whose tenure upon society was as firm and unassailable as Plymouth Rock and the silver leg of Peter Stuyvesant could make it.

It was hinted that the high-piled tresses of the sisters matched too closely the hue of the raven's wing, and that the much admired "waves" if left to themselves would resolve into decided "kinks."

They were guarded whisperings, however, non-committal, and so worded that a triumphantly blazoned "I told you so!" or a depreciatory and horrified: "You misunderstood me, *dear*," hung upon the pending verdict of the powers that be.

Gregory St. Ledger, in so far as any one knew, was neither liked nor disliked among men; being of the sort who enjoy watching games of tennis and, during the later hours of the afternoon, drive pampered Pekingese about the streets in silver-mounted electrics.

He enjoyed, also, a baby-blue reputation which successfully cloaked certain spots of pale cerise in his rather negligible character.

He smoked innumerable scented cigarettes, gold as to tip and monogram, which he selected with ostentatious unostentation from a heavy gold case liberally bestudded with rubies and diamonds.

He viewed events calmly through a life-size monocle, was London tailored, Paris shod, and New York manicured; and carried an embossed leather check-book, whose detachable pink slips proved a potent safety factor against undue increment of the St. Ledger exchequer.

Thus equipped, and for reasons of family, young St. Ledger decided to marry Ethel Manton; and to this end he devoted himself persistently and insidiously, but with the inborn patience and diplomacy of the South Islander.

Bill Carmody he hated with the snakelike hate of little men, but shrewdly perceiving that the girl held more than a friendly regard for him, enthusiastically sang his praises in her ears; praises that, somehow, always left her with a strange smothering sensation about the heart and a dull resentment of the fact that she cared.

With the disappearance of young Carmody, St. Ledger redoubled his attentions. The young man

found it much easier than did his sisters to be numbered "among those present" at the smart functions of the élite.

When New York shivered in the first throes of winter, a well-planned cruise in mild waters under soft skies on board the lavishly appointed and bountifully supplied St. Ledger yacht, whose sailing list included a carefully selected and undeniably congenial party of guests, worked wonders in the matter of St. Ledger's social aspirations.

At the clubs, substantial and easily forgotten loans to members of the embarrassed elect, coupled with vague hints, rarely failed to pay dividends in the form of invitations to ultra-exclusive *affaires*.

At the hostelry the St. Ledger *soirées*, if so glitteringly bizarre as to draw high-browed frowns from the more reserved and staid of the thinning old guard of ancestor-worshippers, nevertheless, were enthusiastically hailed and eagerly attended by the younger set, and played no small part in the insinuation of "those St. Ledgers" into the realms of the anointed.

Thus the winter wore away, and, at all times and in all places Gregory St. Ledger appeared as the devoted satellite of Ethel Manton, who entered the social m~~é~~lée without enthusiasm, but with dogged determination to let the world see that the disappearance of Bill Carmody affected her not at

all.

She tolerated St. Ledger, even encouraged him, for he amused and offered a welcome diversion for her thoughts.

She was a girl of moods whose imagination carried her into far places in the picturing of a man--her man--big, and strong, and clean; fighting bare-fisted among men for his place in the world, and alone conquering the secret devil of desire that he might claim the right to her love.

Then it was, curled up in the big armchair in the library, the blue eyes would glow softly and tenderly in the flare of the flickering firelight, and between parted lips the warm breath would come and go in short stabbing whispers to the quick rise and fall of the rounded bosom, and the little fists would clench white in the tense gladness of it.

But there were other times--times when the dancing wall-shadows were dark specters of ill-omen gloating ghoulishly before her horror-widened eyes as her brain conjured the picture of the man--battered, broken, helpless, with bloated, sottish features, and bleared eyes--a beaten man drifting heedlessly, hopelessly, furtive-eyed, away from his standards--and from her.

At such times the breath would flutter uncertainly between cold, bloodless lips, and the marble

whiteness of her face became a pallid death mask of despair.

Always in extremes she pictured him, for, knowing the man as she knew him--the bigness of him--the relentless dynamic man-power of his being, she knew that with him there would be no half-way measure--no median line of indifferent achievement which should stand for neither the good nor the bad among men.

Here was no Tomlinson whose little sins and passive virtues became the jest of the gods; but a man who in the final accounting would stand four-square upon the merit of his works, and in the might of their right or wrong, accept fearlessly his reward.

The days dragged into weeks and the weeks into months--empty months to the heart of the girl who waited, dreading, yet hoping for word from the man she loved. Yet knowing, deep down in her heart, she would hear no word.

He would come to her--would answer the call of her great love--would beat down the barriers and in the flush of victory would claim her as his own; or, in the everlasting silence of the weird realm of missing men, be lost to her forever.

Daily she scanned the newspapers. Not front pages whose glaring headlines flaunted world-rumblings, politics, and the illness of rich men's dogs, but tiny scabrous columns from whose far flung the beaten

cable-whispers from places far from the beaten track, places forgotten or unknown, whose very names breathed mystery; whispers that hinted briefly of life-tragedies, of action and the unsung deeds of men.

And as she read, she mused.

A tramp steamer dashed upon the saw-tooth rocks off Sarawak. Thirty perish--seven saved--no names. "Where is Sarawak? Is it possible that *he*--
-?"

Four sailors killed in the rescue of a girl from a dive in Singapore. Investigation ordered--no names. "*He* would have done that."

The rum-sodden body of a man, presumably a derelict American, picked up on the bund at Papiete; no marks of identification save the tightly clutched photograph of a well-dressed young woman. "Had *he* given up the fight? And was this the end?"

Eight revolutionist prisoners taken by General Orotho in yesterday's battle were shot at sunrise this morning before the prison wall of Managua.

One, an American, faced the firing squad with a laugh, and the next instant pitched forward, his body riddled with bullets. "*He* would have laughed! Would have played gladly the game with death and, losing--laughed!"

Each day she read the little lines of the doings of men; unnamed adventurers whose deeds were virile deeds; rough men, from whose contaminating touch society gathers up her silken skirts and passes by upon the other side; unlovely men, rolled-sleeved and open-throated, deep-seamed of face, and richly weather-tanned of arm, who tread roughshod the laws of little right and wrong; who drink red liquor and swear lurid oaths and loud; but who, shoulder to shoulder, redden the gutters of Singapore with their hearts' blood in the snatching of a young girl from danger.

And in the reading there grew up in her heart a mighty respect for these men, for, in the analysis of their deeds, the beam swayed strongly against the measure of the world in its balance of good and harm.

Many times her feet carried her into strange streets among strange people, where the reek of shipping became incense to her nostrils, and hairy-chested men of many ports stared boldly into her face and, reading her aright, made room with deference.

Upon an evening just before the annual surcease of frivolity, Gregory St. Ledger called at the Manton home and, finding Ethel alone in the library, asked her to be his wife.

Because it was an evening of her blackest mood

she neither refused nor accepted him, but put him off for a year on the ground that she did not know her mind.

In vain he protested, arguing the power and prestige of the St. Ledger millions, and in the end departed to seek out an acquaintance who had to do with a blatant Sunday newspaper.

During the interview that followed, in the course of which the reporter ordered and St. Ledger paid for many tall drinks of intricate concoction, the gilded youth made no statement of fact, but the impression he managed to convey furnished the theme for the news story whose headlines seared into Bill Carmody's soul to the crashing of his tenets and gods.

In the library the girl sat far into the night and thought of the man who had won her heart and of the toy man who would buy her hand.

CHAPTER XXVII

JEANNE

Bill Carmody opened his eyes. A weird darkness surrounded him through which dancing half-lights played upon a close-thrown screen. Dully he

watched the grotesque flickering of lights and shadows. He was not surprised--not even curious. Nothing mattered--nothing save the terrible pain in his head and the racking ache of the muscles of his body. His skin felt hot and drawn and he gasped for air. A great weight seemed pressing upon him, and when he tried to fill his bursting lungs instead of great drafts of cooling air, hot, stabbing pains shot through his chest and he groaned aloud at the hurt of it.

He turned his aching body, wincing at the movement, and stared dully through a low aperture in the encircling screen. Beyond, in another world, it seemed, a tiny fire flickered under a suspended iron kettle.

Near the fire a blanketed form sat motionless with knees tight-hugged against shrunken breast. Upon the blanket-covered knees rested the angular chin of a dark-skinned, leathern face, upon which the firelight played fitfully, and beneath a tangled mop of graying hair two eyes flashed and dulled like black opals.

He glanced upward and realized that the close-thrown screen, upon which danced the lights and shadows, was the smoke-blackened canvas of a tepee, loosely stretched upon its slanting lodge-poles.

Again he attempted to fill his congested lungs with

cool, sweet air, and again the attempt ended in a groan and he relaxed, gasping, while upon his forehead the cold sweat stood in clammy beads.

Yet his head was burning hot, and the blankets which covered him were blankets of fire. Suddenly it dawned upon him that this was a hideous nightmare.

The blackened lodge with its terrifying shadow-pictures that flickered and faded and flickered again; the old crone by the fire; the pain in his head, and the hot aches of his body, were horrid brain fancies.

With a mighty effort he would break the spell, and from the bunk below the rich brogue of Fallon would "bawl him out" for his restlessness--good old Fallon!

Vainly he attempted to marshal his scattered wits, and break the spell of the torturing brain picture. The shadows above him took on weird shapes; grinning faces with tangled gray locks; long snakelike bodies, and tails of red and yellow light twined and writhed sinuously about the beautiful face of a girl.

How real--how distinct in the half-light, was the face beneath the mass of gleaming black hair. And eyes! Dark, serious eyes, into which one might gaze far into mysterious depths--soft, restful eyes,

thought the man as he stared upward into the phantom face.

From the curve of the parted red lips the perfect teeth flashed whitely, and from the delicately turned chin the soft full-throated neck swept beneath the open throat of the loose-fitting buckskin hunting shirt whose deep fringed trimmings only half-concealed the rich lines of a rounded bosom.

The man remained motionless, fearing to move lest the vision fade and the harsh voice of Fallon blare out from below. "Damn Fallon!" he muttered, and then the pictured lips moved and in his ears was the soft, sweet sound of a voice.

The writhing snakes with the shining tails resolved into flickering wall-shadows which danced lightly among the slanting lodge-poles. But the dream-face did not fade, the dream-eyes gazed softly into his, the dream-lips moved, and the low sound of the dream-voice was music to his ears.

"You are sick," the voice said; "you are in pain." Bill's throat was dry with a burning thirst.

"Water!" he gasped, and the word rasped harsh.

The girl reached into the shadows and a tiny white-brown hand appeared holding a dripping tin cup. She bent closer and the next instant the man's burning cheek was pillowed against the soft coolness of her bare arm and his head was raised

coolness of her bared arm and his head was raised from the blanket while the tiny white-brown hand held the tin cup to his lips.

With the life-giving draft the man's brain cleared and he smiled into the eyes of his dream-girl. Her lips returned the smile and there was a movement of the rounded arm that pillowed his head.

"No! No!" he whispered, and pressed his cheek closer against the soft, bare flesh. The arm was not withdrawn, the liquid eyes gazed for a moment into his and were veiled by the swift downsweep of the long, dark lashes.

In the silence, a little white-brown hand strayed over his face and rested with delicious coolness upon the fevered brow. Bill's eyes closed and for blissful eons he lay, while in all the world was no such thing as pain--only the sweet, restful peace of Dreamland.

Unconsciously his lips pressed close against the softness of her arm, and at their touch the arm trembled, and from far away came the quick, sibilant gasp of an indrawn breath.

The arm pressed closer, the tapering fingers of the little hand strayed caressingly through the tangled curls of his hair, and Bill Carmody slipped silently into the quiet of oblivion.

The fire under the iron kettle died down. and the

shadows faded from the walls of the tepee. Inside, the girl sat far into the night, and the mystery of the dark eyes deepened as they gazed into the bearded face close pillowed against her arm.

By the dying fire the old crone drew her blanket more closely about her and glowered into the red embers as her beady, black eyes shot keen glances toward the motionless forms in the blackness beyond the open flap of the tepee.

On Blood River the logs floated steadily millward, the bateau followed the drive, and the men of the logs passed noisily out of the North.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A PROPHECY

In the gray of the morning Jacques Lacombe returned to his lodge to find Wa-ha-ta-na-ta seated in front of the tepee staring into the dead ashes of the fire.

In answer to his rough questioning she arose stiffly, stalked to the open flap of the lodge and, standing aside, pointed mutely to the silent figures within.

Both slept. The fever-flushed face of the man

pillowed upon the bare arm of the girl, whose body had settled wearily forward until her head, with its mass of black tresses, rested upon his breast, where it rose and fell to the heave of his labored breathing.

Long the half-breed looked, uttering no word, while the old squaw searched his face which remained as expressionless as a face of stone.

"Make a fire," he commanded gruffly, and slung his pack upon the ground. She obeyed, muttering the while, and Jacques watched her as he filled and lighted his pipe.

"The man is M's'u' Bill," he observed, apparently talking to himself, "The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die."

The old woman shot him a keen glance as she hovered over the tiny flame that licked at the twigs of dry larchwood. "All men die," she muttered dully. "Did not Lacombe die?"

"At midnight I passed through the deserted camp of Moncrossen," the man continued, paying no heed to her remark. "Creed did not go out with the drive, but stayed behind to guard the camp, and he told me of the death of this man; how he himself saw him sink beneath the waters of the river and saw the logs of the jam rush over him.

"As we talked, and because he had been drinking much whisky, he told me that it was he who looked

much whisky, he told me that it was he who locked this man in the shack last winter and then set fire to the shack. He told me also Moncrossen desired this man's death above any other thing, and had ordered the breaking of the jam at a moment when he knew the *chechako* could not escape, so that he was hurled into the water and killed."

The old woman interrupted him. "I drew him upon the bank, thinking he was Moncrossen, and that I might breathe upon him the curse. Because his heart is bad, being a man of logs, I would have returned him to the river whence he came; but Jeanne prevented." Jacques smiled at the bitter disappointment in her voice.

"It is well," he returned. "See to it that he lives. Moncrossen is great among the white men--and his heart is bad. But the heart of the *chechako* is good, and one day will come a reckoning, and in that day the curse of the Yaga Tah shall fall from thy lips upon the dead face of Moncrossen."

"All white men are bad," grumbled the squaw. "There is no good white man."

Jacques silenced her with a gesture of impatience. "What is that to you, oh, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, good or bad, if he kills Moncrossen?"

The old woman leaped to her feet and pointed a sharp skinny finger toward the tepee, her eyes flashed, and the cracked voice rang thin with anger.

"The girl!" she cried. "Jeanne, thy sister!"

Her son stepped close to her side and spoke low with the quiet voice of assurance:

"No harm will come to the girl. I have many times talked with this man as he worked in the timber. His heart is good--and his lips do not lie. I, who have looked into his eyes, have spoken. And, that you shall know my words are true, if harm befall the girl at the hand of the white *chechako*, with this knife shall you kill me as I sleep."

He withdrew a long, keen blade from its sheath and handed it to the squaw, who took it.

"And not only you will I kill, but him also," she answered, testing its edge upon her thumb. "For the moon has spoken, and blood will flow. Last night, in the wet red moon, I saw it--dripping tears of blood--twelve, besides one small one, and they were swallowed up in the mist of the river. I, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, the daughter of Kas-ka-tan, the chief, who know the signs, have spoken.

"Before the full of the thirteenth moon blood will flow upon the bank of the river. But whose blood I know not, for a great cloud came and covered the face of the moon, and when it was gone the tears of blood were no more and the mist had returned to the river--and the meaning of this I know not."

She ceased speaking abruptly at a sound from the tepee as the girl emerged and stepped quickly to the fire.

"I am glad you have come," said Jeanne hurriedly to her brother. "You, who are skilled in the mending of bones. The man's leg is broken; it is swollen and gives him much pain."

Jacques followed her into the tepee and, after a careful examination, removed the unconscious man.

The setting of the bones required no small amount of labor and ingenuity. Carmody was placed between two trees, to one of which his body was firmly bound at the shoulders.

A portion of the bark was removed from the other tree and the smooth surface rubbed with fat. Around this was passed a stout line, one end of which was made fast to the injured leg at the ankle.

A trimmed sapling served as a capstan bar, against which the two women threw their weight, while Jacques fitted the bone ends neatly together and applied the splints.

The Indians, schooled in the treatment of wounds and broken bones, were helpless as babes before the ravages of the dreaded pneumonia which racked the great body of the sick man.

Bill Carmody's recollection of the following days was confined to a hopeless confusion of distorted brain pictures in which the beautiful face of the girl, the repulsive features of the old crone, and the swart countenance of the half-breed were inextricably blended.

For two weeks he lay, interspersing long periods of unconsciousness with hours of wild, delirious raving. Then the disease wore itself out, and Jeanne Lacombe, entering the tepee one morning, encountered the steady gaze of the sunken eyes.

With a short exclamation of pleasure she crossed the intervening space and knelt at his side. The two regarded each other in silence. At length Bill's lips moved and he started slightly at the weak, toneless sound of his own voice.

"So you are real, after all," he smiled.

The girl returned the smile frankly.

"M's'u' has been very sick," she imparted, speaking slowly, as though selecting her words.

Bill nodded; he felt dizzy and helplessly weak.

"How long have I been here?" he asked.

"Since the turning of the moon."

"I'm afraid that is not very definite. You see I didn't

I'm afraid that is not very definite. You see I didn't even know the moon had been turned. Who turned it? And is it really turned to cheese or just turned around?"

The girl regarded him gravely, a puzzled expression puckering her face. Bill laughed.

"Forgive me," he begged. "I was talking nonsense. Can you tell me how many days I have been here?"

"It is fifteen days since we drew you from the river."

"Who's *we*?"

Again the girl seemed perplexed.

"I mean, who helped you pull me out of the drink?"

"Wa-ha-ta-na-ta. She is my mother. She is an Indian, and very old."

"Are *you* an Indian?" asked the man in such evident surprise that the girl laughed.

"My father was white. I am a breed," she answered; then with a quick lifting of the chin, hastened to add: "But not like the breeds of the rivers! My father was Lacombe, the factor at Crossette, and Wa-ha-ta-na-ta was the daughter of Kas-ka-tan, the chief, and they were married by a priest at the mission.

"That was very long ago, and now Lacombe is dead and the priest also. Wa-ha-ta-na-ta has a

paper; also it is written in the book at the mission that men may read it and know."

Carmody was amused at her eagerness and watched the changing expression of her face as she continued more slowly:

"My father was good. But he is dead and, until you came, there has been no good white man."

Bill smiled at the naïve frankness of her.

"Why do you think that I am good?" he inquired.

"In your eyes I have read it. That night, before the wild fever-spirit entered your body, I looked long into your eyes. And has not Jacques told me of how you killed the *loup-garou*; of how you are hated by Moncrossen, and feared by Creed?"

"Do I not know that fire cannot burn you nor water drown? Did you not beat down the greatest of Moncrossen's fighting men? And has not Wabishke told in the woods, to the wonder of all, how you drink no whisky, but pour it upon your feet?"

The girl spoke softly and rapidly, her face flushing.

"Do I not know all your thoughts?" she continued. "I who have sat at your side through the long days of your sickness and listened to the voice of the fever-spirit? At such times the heart cannot lie, and the

lips speak the truth."

She leaned closer, and unconsciously a slender, white-brown hand fell upon his, and the soft, tapering fingers closed upon his own. A delicious thrill passed through his body at the touch.

As he looked into the beautiful face so close to his, with the white flash of pearly teeth in the play of the red lips, the eyes luminous, like twin stars, a strange, numbing loneliness overcame him.

She was speaking in a voice that sounded soothing and far away, so that he could not make out the words. Slowly his eyelids closed, blotting out the face--and he slept.

CHAPTER XXIX

A BUCKSKIN HUNTING-SHIRT

The days of his convalescence in the camp of the Lacombies were days fraught with mingled emotions in the heart of Bill Carmody.

Old Wa-ha-ta-na-ta treated him with cold deference, anticipating his needs with a sagacity that was almost uncanny. She appeared hardly to be aware of his presence, yet many times the man felt, without seeing, the deep, burning gaze of the

undimmed, black eyes.

Jacques, whom he had known in the logging-camp as Blood River Jack, treated him with open friendliness, and as he became able to move about the camp, taught him much of the lore of the forest, of the building of nets and traps, the smoke-tanning of buckskin, and the taking and drying of salmon.

During the long evenings the two sat close to the smudge of the camp-fire and talked of many things, while the women listened.

But of the three it was the girl who most interested him. She was his almost constant companion, silent and subtle at times, and with the inborn subtlety of women she defied his most skilful attempts to share her thoughts.

At other times her naive frankness and innocent brutality of expression surprised and amused him. Baffling, revealing--she remained at all times an enigma.

By the middle of June Bill was able to make short excursions to the river with the aid of the crutches which Blood River Jack crudely fashioned from young saplings.

With his increased freedom of movement his restlessness increased. Somewhere along the river, he knew, the bird's-eye logs were banked, awaiting

the arrival of Moncrossen and Stromberg to raft them to the railway, and he surmised that their coming would not be long delayed.

Over and over in his mind he turned schemes for outwitting the boss. The strength was rapidly returning to his injured leg and he discarded one crutch, using the other only to help him over the rough places.

He was in no condition to undertake a journey to the railway, and in spite of Blood River Jack's expressed hatred of Moncrossen and friendship for himself, he hesitated about taking the half-breed into his confidence.

At length he could stand the suspense no longer. Each day's delay lessened his chance of success. He decided to act--to lay the matter before Blood River Jack and ask his co-operation, and if he refused, to play the game alone.

He came to this decision one afternoon while seated upon a great log overlooking the rushing rapid. Beside him sat Jeanne, apparently deeply engrossed in the embroidering of a buckskin hunting-shirt.

After a long silence Bill knocked the dead ashes from his pipe, and his jaw squared as he looked out over the foaming white-water. He turned toward the girl and encountered the intense gaze of her dark eyes.

The neglected needlework lay across her knees, the small hands were folded, and the shining needle glinted in the sun where it had been deftly caught into the yellow buckskin at the turning of an unfinished scroll.

"The logs which you seek," she said quietly, "are piled upon the bank of the river, half a mile below the rapids." The man regarded her with a startled glance.

"What do you know about these logs--and of what I was thinking?"

She answered him with a curious, baffling smile, and, ignoring his question, continued:

"You need help. I am but a girl and know naught of logs nor why these logs did not go down the river with the others. But in your face as you pondered from day to day I have read it. Is it not that you would prevent Moncrossen from taking these logs? But you know not how to do it, for the logs must go down the river and Moncrossen must come up the river?"

"You are a wonder!" he exclaimed in admiration. "That's exactly what's been bothering me." She blushed furiously under his gaze and, with lowering eyes, continued:

"I do not know how it can be managed. but

Jacques will know. You may trust Jacques as you trust me. For we are your friends, and his hatred of Moncrossen is a real hatred."

She raised her eyes to his.

"Do you know why Jacques hates Moncrossen, and why Wa-ha-ta-na-ta hates all white men?" she asked. Bill shook his head and listened as the girl, with blazing eyes, told him of the death of Pierre, and then, of the horror of that night on Broken Knee.

At her words Bill Carmody's face darkened, and his great fists clenched until the nails bit deep into his palms. The steel-gray eyes narrowed to slits and, as the girl finished, he arose and gently lifted one of the little hands between his own.

"I, too, could kill Moncrossen for *that*," he said, and the tone of his voice was low, and soft, with a tense, even softness that sounded in the ears of the girl more terrible than a thousand loud hurled threats.

She looked up quickly into the face of the glinting eyes, her tiny hand trembled in his, and a sudden flush deepened the warm color of her neck.

"For me?" she faltered. "*Me?*" And, with a half-smothered, frightened gasp, tore her hand free and fled swiftly into the forest.

Bill stared a long time at the place where she disappeared, and, smiling, stooped and picked up her needlework where it had fallen at his feet.

He examined it idly for a moment and then more closely as a puzzled look crept into his eyes. The garment he held in his hand was never designed for a covering for the girl's own lithe body, nor was it small enough even for Jacques.

"She's worked on it every day for a month," he murmured, as he glanced from the intricate embroidered design to his own shirt of ragged flannel, and again he smiled--bitterly.

"She's a queer kid," he said softly, as he recovered his crutch; "and a mighty good kid, too."

CHAPTER XXX

CREED

That night the four sat late about the campfire.

Old Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, silent and forbidding, as usual, but with a sharp ear for all that was said, listened as they laid their plans.

At their conclusion the others sought their blankets,

while Jacques took the trail for the camp of old Wabishke whose help was needed in the undertaking which was to involve no small amount of labor.

As the two women finished the preparation of breakfast the following morning, the half-breed appeared, followed closely by the old Indian trapper whose scarred lips broke into a hideous grin at the sight of Bill.

"This is Wabishke, of whom I spoke," said Jacques, indicating the Indian. Bill laughingly extended his hand, which the other took.

"Well! If it isn't my friend, the Yankee!" he exclaimed. "Wabishke and I are old friends. He is the first man I met in the woods." The Indian nodded, grunted, and pointed to his feet which were encased in a very serviceable pair of boots.

"Oh, I remember, perfectly," laughed Bill. "Have you still got my matches?" Wabishke grinned.

"You keel *loup-garou* with knife?" he asked, as if seeking corroboration for an unbelievable story.

"I sure did," Bill answered. "The old gal tried to bite me."

The Indian regarded him with grave approval and, stepping to his side, favored him with another heavy hand shake, after which, apparently he

greasy hand-shake, after which ceremony he squatted by the fire and removing a half-dozen pieces of bacon from the frying-pan proceeded to devour them with evident relish.

Breakfast over, the three men accompanied by Jeanne set out for the river, leaving to old Wa-ha-ta-na-ta the work of the camp. Sliding a canoe into the water, they took their places, Jacques and Wabishke at the paddles, with Jeanne and Bill seated on the bottom amidships.

Close to the opposite bank the canoe was headed down-stream and, under the swift, strong strokes of the paddles, glided noiselessly in the shadows. A few minutes later, at a sign from Jacques who was in the bow, Wabishke, with a deft twist of his paddle, slanted the canoe bankward.

With a soft, rustling sound the light craft parted the low hanging branches of killikinick and diamond willow, and buried its nose in the soft mud.

Peering through the tangle of underbrush the occupants of the canoe made out, some fifty yards below their position, a small clearing in the center of which, just above the high-water mark of the river, was a small pyramid of logs.

Seated beside the pile, with his back resting against the ends of the logs, sat a man holding a rifle across his knees.

Bill Carmody's fighting spirit thrilled at the sight. Here at last was action. Here were the stolen logs of bird's-eye, and guarding them was Creed!

While the others steadied the canoe he stepped noiselessly onto the bank, where he sank to his ankles in the mud, and, seizing hold of the bow shot the canoe out into the current.

Creed had been left in the woods by Moncrossen, ostensibly to guard the Blood River camp against pilfering Indians and chance forest fires, but his real mission was to keep watch on the bird's-eye until it could be safely rafted to the railway.

Moncrossen promised to return about the middle of June, and ten mornings Creed had skulked the three miles from the lumber camp to the logs, and ten evenings he had skulked fearfully back again, muttering futile curses at the boss's delay.

Creed was uneasy. Not since the evening the greener had walked into Hod Burrage's store at the very moment when he, Creed, was recounting to the interested listeners the circumstances attending his demise, had he been entirely free from a haunting, nameless fear.

True, as he told Blood River Jack, he had afterward seen with his own eyes, the greener go down under the rushing jam where no man could possibly go down and live.

But, nevertheless, deep in his heart was the *terror*--nameless, unreasoning, haunting--that clung to him night and day. So that a hundred times a day, alone in the timber, he would start and cast quick, jerky glances over his shoulder and jump, white-faced and trembling, at the snapping of a twig.

As the days went by the nameless terror grew, dogging his footsteps, phantomlike by day, and haunting him at night, as he lay shaking in his bunk in the double-locked little office.

With the single exception of Blood River Jack, he had seen no human being since the drive, and his frenzied desire for companionship would have been pitiful, had it been less craven.

He slept fitfully with his rifle loaded and often cocked in his bunk beside him, while during the day it was never out of reach of his hand.

In his daily excursions to the bird's-eye rollway he never took the same route twice, but skulked, peering fearfully about in the underbrush, avoiding even the game trails.

And always he détoured widely the place where he had seen the greener disappear beneath the muddy, log-ridden waters.

And so it was that upon this particular morning

Creed sat close against the pyramid of logs--waiting.

At a sound from the river he jerked his rifle into readiness for immediate action and sat nervously alert, his thumb twitching on the hammer. Approaching down-stream came a canoe.

Creed leaped to his feet with a maudlin grin of relief as he recognized the three occupants. Apparently they had not seen him, and he stepped to the bank fearful lest they pass.

"Hey! You, Jack!" he called, waving his cap.

The bow-man ceased paddling and gazed shoreward in evident surprise; the man on the bank was motioning them in with wide sweeps of the arm. The half-breed called a few hasty words over his shoulder and the canoe shot toward shore.

"Where y' goin'?" asked Creed, as the three stepped onto the bank. Blood River Jack replied with an indefinite sweep of his arm to the southward.

"Well, y' ain't in no hurry. Never seen a Injun yet cudn't stop long 'nough to take a drink o' lick. Har, har, har!"

He laughed foolishly, with an exaggerated wink toward the old Indian.

"How 'bout it, Wabishke; leetle fire-water make yer belt fit better? 'Tain't a goin' to cost y' nawthin'."

The Indian grinned and grunted acquiescence, and Creed inserted his arm between two logs and withdrew a squat, black bottle.

"Here's some reg'lar ol' 'rig'nal red-eye. An' here's lookin' at ye," he said, as he removed the cork and sucked greedily at the contents. "Jest tuk a taste fust, 'cause I don't like to give vis'tors whisky I wudn't drink m'self, har, har, har! Anyways, the way I figger, it's white men fust, then half white, then Injuns." He passed the bottle to Jacques.

"Fraid's little too strong fer ladies," he smirked, at Jeanne, and, reaching out quickly, jerked the upturned bottle from Wabishke's lips.

"Hey, y' ol' pirate! Y' don't need fer to empty it all to wurst. Set roun' a while, an' bimeby we'll have 'nother. 'S all on me to-day; this here's my party."

They seated themselves on the ground and engaged in conversation, in which Creed did most of the talking.

"Trade rifles?" asked Blood River Jack, idly picking up Creed's gun and examining it minutely.

"Beats all how a Injun allus wants to be a tradin'," grinned Creed. "Don't know but what I mought, though, at that. What's yours?"

though, at that. What's yours?

"Winchester, 30-40," replied Jacques, handing it over for inspection.

"Mine, too," said Creed; "only mine's newer. What'll y' give to boot?" Jacques did not hurry his answer, being engaged in removing the cartridges for the better inspection of magazine and chamber.

"Mine's better kep'," he opined after a careful squinting down the muzzle.

"Kep' nawthin! 'S all nicked up. An', besides, it pulls hard."

Jacques was deliberately refilling the magazine, but so intent was Creed in picking out fancied defects in the other's weapon that he failed to notice that the cartridges which were being placed in his own rifle had had their bullets carefully drawn, while his original cartridges reposed snugly in the pocket of the half-breed's mackinaw.

"Tell y' what I'll do," said Creed, speaking in a tone of the utmost generosity. "Give me ten dollars to boot, an' we'll call it a trade."

Jacques laughed loudly and, handing the other his rifle, picked up his own.

"We must be goin'," he observed, and rose to his feet.

"Better have 'nother drink 'fore y' go," said Creed, tendering the bottle. They drank around and Creed returned the bottle to its cache, while the others took their places in the canoe.

"Make it five, then," Creed extended the rifle as though giving it away.

Jacques shook his head, and pushed the canoe out into the stream.

The man on shore eyed the widening strip of water between the bank and the canoe.

"I'll make it three, seein' ye're so hell-bent on a trade," he called. But his only answer was a loud laugh as the canoe disappeared around a sharp bend of the river.

Creed resumed his position with his back against the ends of the logs.

At a point some fifty feet up-stream from the diminutive rollway, and about the same distance from the shore, a blackened snag thrust its ugly head above the surface of the water, and against this snag brushwood and drift had collected and was held by the push of the stream which gurgled merrily among its interstices.

Creed's gaze, resting momentarily upon this miniature island, failed entirely to note that it

concealed a man who stood immersed in the river from his neck down, and eyed him keenly through narrowed gray eyes; and that also this man was doing a most peculiar thing.

Reaching into the pocket of his water-soaked shirt he withdrew several long, steel-jacketed bullets and, holding them in the palm of his hand, grinned broadly.

Then, one by one, he placed them in his mouth, drew a long breath, and dived. The water at this point was about four feet in depth and the man swam rapidly, close to the bottom.

Creed's glance, roving idly over the river, was arrested by a quick commotion upon the surface of the water almost directly in front of him.

He seized his rifle and leaped to his feet, hoping for a shot at a stray otter. The next instant the rifle slipped from his nerveless fingers and struck upon the ground with a muffled thud.

Instead of an otter he was looking directly into the face of a man.

"God A'm'ty," he gurgled, "it's the greener!" He leaned heavily against the logs, plucking foolishly at the bark. His scalp tingled from fright.

His mouth sagged open and the lolling, flabby tongue drooped thickly. His face became a dull

tongue drooled thickly. His face became a dull, bloodless gray, glistening glaireously with clammy sweat, and his eyes dilated until they seemed bulging from their sockets.

It seemed ages he stood there, staring in horrible fascination at the man in the river--and then the man moved!

He was advancing slowly shoreward, with a curious limp, as he had entered Burrage's store. Creed's ashen lips moved stiffly, and his tongue seemed to fill his mouth.

"I've got 'em! I've got 'em," he maundered. "'S the booze, an' I'm seein' things!"

His groping brain grasped at the idea, and it gave him strength--better the "snakes" than *that*! But he must do something, the man was coming toward him--only hip-deep now--

"Go 'way! Go 'way!" he shrieked in a sudden frenzy of action. "Damn you! Y're dead! D'y'e hear me! Go 'way from here!"

Suddenly his weakening knees stiffened under him, and he reached swiftly for the rifle on the ground at his feet.

Slowly and deliberately he raised it, cocked it, rested it across a log, and took deliberate aim at the center of the man's face--twenty paces away.

"Bang!" The crack of the rifle sounded loud and sharp in the tense stillness.

The apparition, at the water's edge, raised its hand slowly to its lips, and from between its teeth took a small object which it tossed toward the other. The object struck lightly against Creed's breast and dropped to the ground.

He looked, downward--it was a 30-40 bullet--his own! He stared dumbly at the thing on the ground. Then, automatically, he fired again, taking careful aim.

Again the ghost's hand moved slowly toward its mouth, and again the light tap upon his chest--and two bullets lay upon the ground at his feet.

His head felt strange and large, and inside his skull things were moving--long, gray maggots that twisted, and writhed, and squirmed, like fishing worms in a can.

He laughed flatly, a senile, cackling laugh. He did not want to laugh, but laughed again and, stooping, reached for the bullets. He stared at his fingers, bewildered; they groped helplessly at a spot a foot from the place where lay the two bullets with their shining steel jackets.

He must move his fingers to the right--this way.

Again he stared, puzzled; they were moving farther

Again he stared--puzzled, they were moving farther and farther toward the left--away from the bullets. Again the dry, cackling laugh. He would fool his fingers. He would move them *away* from the bullets.

He tried, and the next instant the groping fingers closed unerringly upon the little cylinders. The laugh became an inarticulate babble of satisfaction, his knees collapsed, and he pitched forward and lay still with wide, staring eyes, while upon the corners of his mouth appeared little flecks of white foam.

A shadow fell across his face--he was staring straight into the eyes of the greener, who stood, dripping wet with the water of the river into which he had fallen more than two months before.

The man leaped from the ground in a sudden frenzy of terror, and fled screaming into the forest, crashing, wallowing, tearing through the underbrush, he plunged, shrieking like a demon.

The greener stood alone in the clearing and listened to the diminishing sounds.

At length they ceased and, in the silence, the greener turned toward the sparkling river, and as he looked there came to his ear faint and far, one last, thin scream.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ROBE OF DIABLESSE

It required three days of hard labor to remove the fifty-two bird's-eye maple logs to a position of safety. Jacques made a trip to the log camp, returning with a stout rope and an armload of baling wire which he collected from the vicinity of the stables.

The fact that bird's-eye maple logs, when green, will sink in water, rendered necessary the use of two large pine logs as floats. These were connected at the ends and in the middle with rope sufficiently long to permit four of the heavier logs to rest upon the ropes between the floats.

The raft thus formed was laboriously towed upstream to the eddy where the bird's-eye logs were wired together, weighted with stones, and allowed to sink.

During the whole time Jeanne worked tirelessly by the side of the men, and when the last log rested safely upon the bottom of the river, and the scars were carefully removed from the bank, Bill surveyed the result with satisfaction.

"I think that will keep Moncrossen guessing," he laughed. "He won't know whether Creed ate the

logs or an air-ship made away with them."

"But, he will know they are *somewhere*," said Jeanne gravely, "and he will search for them far and wide."

"He will not find them," Jacques interrupted. "No man would search up-stream for logs, even though he believed them to be upon the bottom of the river."

"But, in the searching, he may come upon the lodge, and in his rage, who can tell what he would do?" Bill's eyes narrowed, and he answered the girl with a smile.

"I will remain, and if Moncrossen comes----"

The girl laid a small hand upon his arm and looked into his eyes.

"I am but a girl and know nothing of logs, but, is it not better that he return down the river without searching?"

Carmody smiled into the serious dark eyes. "Go on, Jeanne," he said, "tell us what you would do."

"It is simple--only to build a big fire upon the spot where the logs were piled, and when Moncrossen finds the ashes he will seek no farther for his logs."

"Great!" cried Bill, in undisguised admiration and,

with the help of the others, proceeded to carry the plan into effect. All night they piled fuel upon the fire, and in the morning their efforts were rewarded by a pile of ashes that would easily be mistaken for the ruins of the bird's-eye rollway.

With the passing of the long, hot days of summer, Bill Carmody regained his strength, and yet he lingered in the camp of the Lacombs.

Creed was seen no more upon Blood River, and Bill assumed the responsibility of guarding the log camp, making for the purpose almost daily excursions with Jeanne or Jacques.

August mellowed into smoky September--September gave place to the red and gold of October, and the blood of the forest folk quickened to the tang of the North.

At the conclusion of one of these tours of inspection, Bill came suddenly upon the girl standing in awe before the skin of Diabliesse, which remained where he and Fallon had nailed it on the wall of the bunk-house. Bill carefully removed the nails and laid the dry pelt at the feet of the girl.

"See," he said, "the skin of the werwolf--it is yours."

"Mine!" she cried, with shining eyes. "You would give me *this*!"

Bill smiled. "Yes, that is all I have here in the

Bill smiled. "Yes, that is all I have, here in the woods. But when I return I will bring you many things from the land of the white men."

"The robe of Diablesse!" she breathed softly, as she gazed down upon the peculiar silvery sheen of the great white wolfskin. "I had rather you gave me this than anything else in the world."

She stopped in sudden confusion.

"And why?" questioned Bill, pleased at her evident delight.

"It is," she hesitated, and a slender hand clutched at her breast. "It is as you spoke of the hunting shirt--that you would always keep it because it is the work of my hands. Only the robe means much more, for, among men but one man could have slain the *loup-garou*, and in all the North there is none like it--the robe of Diablesse! and it shall bring us luck--and--and happiness?" she added, the rich voice melting to softness.

At the words the man glanced quickly into the face of the girl and encountered the shy, questioning gaze of the mysterious dark eyes. The gaze did not falter, and the deep, lustrous eyes held the man enthralled in their liquid depths. She advanced a step, and stood her lithe young body almost touching his own, holding him fascinated in the compelling gaze of the limpid eyes.

"And happiness?" The words were a whispered breath; the bronzed face of the man paled and, with an effort, he turned swiftly away.

"Luck! Happiness!" he repeated dully, with bowed head. "For me there can be no happiness."

With a low cry the girl was at his side and two tiny, white-brown hands clutched at the fringed arm of his buckskin shirt. The beautiful face was flushed, the bosom heaved, and from between the red lips poured a torrent of words:

"You *shall* find happiness! You, who are great and strong and brave above all men! You, who are good, and whom the Great Spirit sent to me from the waters of the river!

"You, The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die, shall turn from your own kind, and shall find your happiness beside the rivers, and in the forests of my people! Together we will journey to some far place, and in our lodge will dwell love and great happiness.

"And you shall become a mighty hunter, and in all the North you shall be feared and loved."

The girl paused and gazed wildly into the eyes of the man. His face was drawn and pale, and in his eyes she read deep pain. Gently his hand closed over the slender fingers that gripped his sleeve, and at the touch the girl trembled and leaned closer, until

her warm body rested lightly against his arm. Bill's lips moved and the words of his toneless voice fell upon her ears like the dry rustle of dead husks.

"Jeanne--little girl--you do not understand. These things cannot be. Only unhappiness would come to us. There is nothing in the world I would not do for you.

"To you I owe my life--to you and Wa-ha-ta-na-ta. But, love cannot be ordered. It is written--and, far away, in the great city of the white men, is a girl--a woman of my own people----"

The girl sprang from his side and faced him with blazing eyes.

"A woman of your people!" she almost hissed. "In your sleep you talked of her, while the fever-spirit was upon you. I *hate* her--this Ethel! She does not love you, for she will marry another! Ah, in the darkness I have listened, and listening, have learned to *hate*! She sent you away from her--for, in your eyes she could not read the goodness of your heart!"

Bill raised his hand.

"You do not understand," he repeated, patiently. "I was not good--I was a bad man!"

"Who, then, among white men is good? The men of the loas who drink whisky and fight among

the dogs, who drink whisky, and fight among themselves, and kill one another? Is it these men that are good in the sight of your woman? And are you, who scorn these things--are you bad?"

"I, too, drank whisky--and for that reason she sent me away."

"But, you cannot return to her! She is the wife of another! Over and over again you said it, in the voice of the fever-spirit."

"No," replied the man softly. "To her I cannot return. But, listen; I start to-morrow for the white man's country. To find the man for whom I work, and tell him of the bird's-eye.

"Soon I shall come again into the woods. I cannot marry you, for only evil would come of it. I will bring you many presents, and always we shall be friends--and more than friends, for you shall be to me a sister and I shall be your brother, and shall keep you from harm.

"To-morrow I go, and you shall promise me that whenever you are in trouble of whatsoever kind you will send for me--and I shall come to you--be it far or near, in the night-time or in the daytime, I will come--Jeanne, look into my eyes--will you promise?"

The girl looked up, and a ray of hope lightened the pain in her eyes.

"You will surely return into the North?"

"I will surely return."

"I will promise," she whispered, and, side by side, in the silence of the twilight, they left the clearing.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ONE GOOD WHITE MAN

The following morning Bill parted from his friends. As he was about to step into the canoe Jeanne appeared at the water's edge bearing the mackinaw which he had worn when they drew him from the river.

Without meeting his glance she extended it toward him, speaking in a low, tense voice.

"In the lining I have sewed them--the papers that fell dripping from your pocket--and the picture. Many times I have looked upon the face of this woman, who has caused you pain. And I have hated! Oh, how I have hated! So that I could have torn her in pieces.

"And many times I would have burned them, that you might forget. But, instead, I sewed them from

sight in the lining of the coat--and here is the coat."

Bill tossed the mackinaw into the bottom of the canoe.

"Thank you, Jeanne," he said. "And until we meet again, good-by!"

With a push of the paddle he shot the light canoe far out into the current of the stream.

Bill paddled leisurely, camping early and sitting late over his camp-fire smoking many pipefuls of tobacco. And, as he smoked, his thoughts drifted over the events of the past year, and the people who comprised his little world.

Appleton, who had offered him the chance to make good; whole-hearted Fallon; devoted old Daddy Dunnigan; Stromberg, in whom was much to admire; Creed, the craven tool of Moncrossen; the boss himself, crooked, brutal, vicious; Blood River Jack, his friend; Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, the sinister old squaw, who believed all white men to be bad; and Jeanne, the beautiful, half-wild girl, within whose breast a great soul fluttered against the restraint of her environment.

To this girl he owed his life, and he had repaid the debt by trampling roughshod upon her heart. Bitterly he reproached himself for not seeing how things were going. For not until the day she told him

in the clearing had he guessed that she loved him.

And yet now as he looked backward he could remember a hundred little things that ought to have warned him--a word here, a look, a touch of the hand--little things, insignificant in themselves, but in the light of his present understanding, looming large as the danger signals of a well-ordered block system--signals he had blindly disregarded, to the wrecking of a heart. Well, he would make all amends in his power; would look after her as best he could, and in time she would forget.

"They *all* forget," he muttered aloud with a short, bitter laugh, as the memory of certain staring headlines flashed through his brain. "I wish to God I could forget--*her!*"

But the old wound would not heal, and far into the night he sat staring into the fire.

"It's a man's game," he murmured as he spread his blankets, "and I will win out; but why?"

Beyond the fire came the sound of a snapping twig. The man started, staring into the gloom, when suddenly into the soft light of the dying embers stepped Jeanne Lacombe. He stared at her speechless.

There, in the uncertain glow, she stood, a Diana of flesh and blood, whose open hunting-shirt fell away

from her rounded throat in soft, fringed folds. Her short skirt of heavy drilling came only to her knees; she wore no stockings, and her tiny feet were incased in heavily beaded moccasins.

And so she stood there in the midnight, smiling down upon the man who gazed speechless from his blanket upon the opposite side of the dying fire; and then she spoke:

"I have come," she said simply.

"Jeanne!" cried the man, "why have you done this thing?"

"I love you, and I will go with you."

"But, girl, don't you realize what it means? This is the third night since I left the camp of Jacques----" The girl interrupted him with a laugh:

"And I, too, have been gone three nights; have struck straight through the forest, and because the river makes a great bend of many miles I came to this place before you, and have waited for you here a night and a day.

"And now I'm hungry. I will eat first, and then we will sleep, and to-morrow we will start together for the land of the white men."

The man's mind worked rapidly as he watched in silence while the girl removed some bacon and

bannock from his pack-sack and set the coffee-pot upon the coals. When she had finished her meal he spoke, slowly but firmly.

"Jeanne, you have waited here a night and a day; you are rested, you have eaten. I will now make up the pack, and we will take the trail."

"To-night?"

"Yes, to-night--now. The back trail for the lodge of Jacques." The girl regarded him in amazement, and then smiled sadly, as a mother smiles on an erring child.

"We cannot return," she said, speaking softly. "Wa-ha-ta-na-ta would kill me. She thinks we came away together. Wa-ha-ta-na-ta was married; we are not married; we cannot go back." The man rolled the blankets and buckled the straps of his pack-sack. He was about to swing it to his shoulders when the girl grasped his arm.

"I love you," she repeated, "and I will go with you."

"But, Jeanne," the man cried, "this cannot be. I cannot marry you. In my life I have loved but one woman----"

"And she is the wife of another!" cried the girl.

Bill winced as from a blow, and she continued, speaking rapidly:

"I do not ask that you marry me--not even that you love me. It is enough that I am at your side. You will treat me kindly, for you are good. Marriage is nothing--empty words--if the heart loves; nothing else matters, and some day you will love me."

The man slowly shook his head:

"No, Jeanne, it is impossible. Come, we will return to the lodge of Jacques. I myself will tell Wa-ha-ta-na-ta that no harm has befallen you, and----"

"Do you think she will believe *you*? Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, who hates all white men and, next to Moncrossen, you most of all, for she has seen that I love you. We have been gone three nights. She will not believe you. If you will not take me I will go alone to the land of the white men; I have no place else to go."

The man's jaw squared, his eyes narrowed, and the low, level tones of his voice cut upon the silence in words of cold authority:

"We are going back to-night. Wa-ha-ta-na-ta will believe me. She is very old and very wise; and she will know that I speak the truth."

The words ceased abruptly, and the two drew closer together, their eyes fixed upon the blanketed form which, silent as a shadow, glided from the

bushes and stood motionless before them.

Within an arm's reach, in the dull, red glow, the somber figure stood contemplating the pair through beady, black eyes, that glowed ominously in the half-light.

Slowly, deliberately, a clawlike hand was withdrawn from a fold of the blanket, and the feeble rays of the fire glinted weakly upon the cold, gray steel of a polished blade.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PROMISE

The silent, shadowy figure swayed toward Bill Carmody, who met the stabbing glare of the black eyes with the steady gaze of his gray ones. For long, tense moments their eyes held, while the girl watched breathlessly.

Raising the blade high above her head, the old squaw brought it crashing upon a rock at Carmody's feet. There was the sharp ring of tempered steel, and upon the pine-needles lay the broken blade, and beyond the rock the hilt, with a scant inch of blade protruding at the guard.

Stooping, the old woman picked up the two pieces

of the broken sheath-knife, and, handing the hilt gravely to the astonished man carefully returned the blade to her blanket. She pointed a long, skinny finger at Bill, and the withered lips moved.

"You are the one good white man," she said. "I, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, the daughter of Kas-ka-tan, the chief, have spoken. I--who, since the death of Lacombe, have said 'there is no good white man'--was wrong, and the words were a lie in my mouth. In your eyes I have read it. You have the good eye--the eye of Lacombe, who is dead.

"I have followed upon the trail of my daughter, thinking it was in your heart to meet her here and carry her to her ruin in the land of the white man. With this blade I would have killed you--for all men die--would have followed and killed you in the land of your people. But now I know that your heart is good. I have broken the knife.

"You will keep the hilt, and when you are in trouble, in need, in want of a friend, you will send me this hilt, and I, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, the daughter of Kas-ka-tan, the chief, will come to you."

Her eyes rolled upward as though seeking among the tiny, far-winking stars the words of some half-forgotten ritual, and her voice rose in a weird, hesitating chant:

"Through the snows of Winter,

Through the heat of Summer,
Across high Mountains,
Over broad Waters,
Braving lean Want,
Scorning fat Plenty,
Nor turning aside
From the fang of Wolf,
From the forked arrows of Lightning,
From the mighty voice of Thunder,
From the hot breath of Fire,
From the rush of Waters,
From the sting of Frost.
Nor lingering to the call of Love,
Nor heeding the words of Hate.
In the face of Sickness,
In defiance of Death
Will I come

That you may know I am your Friend.

Hear all ye Spirits and Devils that rule the World,

And sit upon the High Places of the Great World,

This is my Vow!

Should my feet lag upon the Trail,

Should my heart turn to Water,

Should I forget--

So that in the time of my friend's need

I answer not his call;

Then, upon my head--upon the heads of my
children--and their children

Shall descend the Curse--the Great Curse of the
Yaga Tah!

The Man-Who-Lies-Hid-in-the-Sky!"

The quavering chant ceased, and the undimmed old
eyes looked again into the face of the man.

"And because you are good," she went on, "and
because you have heard the vow, when this broken
blade comes to your hand you will know that Wa-
ha-ta-na-ta, the daughter of Kas-ka-tan, the chief,

in the last extremity of her need, is calling you.

"And because you are strong and brave and have the good eye--you will come. And no people of the earth, and nothing that is upon the earth, nor of the earth, shall prevent you. I have spoken."

Bill Carmody listened in awed silence until the old woman finished.

"I, whom you choose to regard as the one good white man," he replied with a dignity matching her own, "will one day prove my friendship. Upon sight of the fragment of blade I will come.

"No people of the earth, and nothing that is upon the earth, nor of the earth, shall prevent me--and one day you will know that my words are true."

He raised his hand and, gazing upward, repeated the words of the strange chant. At their conclusion he gazed steadily into the face of the old squaw.

"This is *the promise*," he said gravely. "I have spoken."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE NEW BOSS

The twilight of late autumn darkened the landscape as Bill Carmody found himself once again at the edge of the tiny clearing surrounding the cabin of Daddy Dunnigan.

Through the window, in the yellow lamplight of the interior, he could see the form of the old man as he hobbled back and forth between the stove and the table.

Remembering Creed, Bill feared the effect upon the old man should he present himself suddenly at the door. Advancing into the clearing, he whistled. Daddy Dunnigan paused, frying-pan in hand, and peered futilely out of the window. Again Bill whistled and watched as the other returned the pan to the stove and opened the door.

"Come on in out av that, ye shpalpeen!" called Dunnigan. "Ut's toime ye be comin' back to let th' owld man know how ye're farin'!"

Bill grasped the extended hand and peered into the twinkling eyes of the old Irishman.

"Well, Daddy, you don't seem much surprised."

"Oi know'd ye'd be along wan av these days, but ye tuk yer own toime about ut."

"How did you know I wasn't drowned in the river?"

"Sur-re, Oi know'd ye *wuz*--didn't Oi see ye go

undher th' logs wid me own eyes? An' didn't th' jam go rippin' an' tearin' into th' rapids? An' c'd on-ny man live t'rough th' loike av that? Oi *know'd* ye wuz dead--till Oi seed Creed. Thin Oi know'd ye wuzn't. But Moncrossen don't know ut--nor on-ny wan ilse, ondly me. Oi'd 'a' gone to hunt ye, ondly Oi know'd phwin th' toime suited ye ye'd come here; so Oi waited.

"Set by now er th' grub'll be cowl'd. They'll be toime fer palaverin' afther."

When the dishes had been washed and returned to their shelves the two seated themselves and lighted their pipes.

"You say Creed returned to Hilarity and told of having seen me?" asked Bill.

"Well, he did--an' he didn't," replied the old man slowly. "Ut's loike this: Along in July, ut wuz, Moncrossen an' his gang av bur-rd's-eye pirates come roarin' out av th' woods huntin' fer Creed. They'd wint in be th' river, but come out be th' tote-road, an' mad clean t'rough to th' gizzard. No wan hadn't seed um, an' they clum aboard th' thrain, cursin' an' swearin' vingince on Creed phwin they caught um.

"Thin, maybe it's two wakes afther, we wuz settin' in Burrage's phwin th' dure bust open, an' in come Rad Cranston loike th' divil wuz afther um.

"They's a woild man,' he yells, 'come out av th' woods, an' he's tearin' things up in Creed's cabin!"

"Hod picks up a cleaver an' makes fer th' dure, wid us follyin' um, affther providin' oursilves wid what utinsils wuz layin' handy--a scythe here an' an axe there, an' some wan ilse wid a pitchfork. Rad brung up lasht wid a sixteen-pound posht-maul, bein' in no hurry at all fer another luk.

"Trut' is, none av us wuz in no great hurry--Creed's woman havin' cashed his pay-check an' skipped out--but at lasht we come to phwere we c'd see th' place, an' sure enough th' dure shtood open an' insoide come a racket av shmashin' furniture an' yellin' 'tw'd done proud to camp-meetin' salvation.

"Thin come a foine loud rattle av glass, an' out t'rough a windie come th' half av a chair, follyed be a len'th av shtovepoipe an' a grane glass wather-pitcher.

"Fer me own part, Oi'd seed such loike brick-a-brack befor, an' besides Oi reminbered a dhrink Oi hadn't tuk earlier in th' evenin', so Oi shtarted workin' me way to th' back av th' crowd, th' bether some wan ilse c'd see.

"Oi'd no more thin tur-rned around phwin wid a whoop, 'tw'd wake th' dead, out t'rough th' windie come th' domnedest-lukin' cryther this side av

Borneo, a wavin' over his head wan av th' owld lady Creed's rid cotton table-cloths--an' niver another stitch to his name but a leather belt wid about six inches av pants a hangin' onto ut, an' a pair av corked boots.

"Phwin Oi shtar-rted from Burrage's Oi laid holt av a man's-size crowbar, but at that minit th' thing Oi helt in me hand loked about th' heft av a tinpinny nail. Be that toime all th' others wuz av loike moind to me. They wuz considerable crowdin', an', bein' crippled, Oi dhropped me crowbar an' laid a good holt on th' tail av Hod's coat.

"Th' shtore wuz clost by, an' we had a good shtart; but th' thing that wuz affher us wuz thravelin' loight an' in foorty-fut leps.

"Twuz a good race, an' wan Oi wanted to win; but, owin' to th' unyversal willin'ness av th' crowd to get into th' shtore, we plugged up th' dureway, an' befoor we c'd get unstuck th' thing wuz onto us, gibberin' an' jabberin' an' screamin' an' laughin' all to wunst.

"Ut tuk eight av us to howld um whilst Burrage toied um hand an' fut, an' phwin we'd dhrug um into th' shtore we seed 'twuz Creed hissif. Twuz two days befoor th' sheriff come fer um, an' in th' mane toime he'd gabble an' yell about th' greener comin' affher um, an' how he come out av th' wather, an' so on.

"Th' rist think ut's th' shtayin' alone made um loony, but Oi put two an' two togither--here's Moncrossen losht his bur-rd's-eye an' Creed scairt witless be th' soight av th' greener--phwat's th' answer?"

"Phy, th' b'y ain't dead at all. Some ways he got out av th' river, scairt th' dayloights out av Creed, an' made off wid th' bur-rd's-eye. Am Oi roight?"

"Exactly!" exclaimed Bill.

"Oi know'd ut! Ye've th' luck av Captain Fronte's own silf! That come out av ivery shcrape wid his loife, save th' lasht wan, an' he w'd thin av a domned nayger shell hadn't bust ag'in' his ribs--but that's toimes gone."

"I wonder where Moncrossen is now?"

"Right here in Hilarity; him an' his crew unloaded yisterday fer to shtar-rt fer th' camp in th' marnin'."

"I think I'll just let the boss believe I'm still in the river until after I have had a talk with Appleton. By the way, Daddy, how are you fixed for money?"

"Sure, Oi got more money thin a man ought to have--money in th' bank an' money in me pocket--take ut an' welcome"--he tossed a thick wallet onto the table--"ondly ye won't have to go to Minneapolis.

"Owld man Appleton's over to Creighton, eighty moiles wesht av here, sooperintindin' a new camp on Blood River, wan hundred an' tin moiles above Moncrossen's. Fallon's wid um, an' Shtromberg, an' a lot more av th' good min that's toired av worrk' undher Moncrossen."

"He is not bossing the camp himself!" exclaimed Bill.

"No, but he's got to kape an eye on't. Fallon'll be a kind av shtraw boss an' luk afther th' wor-rk, but th' owld man'll have to figger th' toime an' th' scale--Fallon ain't got no agginatin'.

"'Tis roight glad O'm thinkin' th' owld man'll be to lay eyes on ye. They say he wuz all bruk up phwin he heerd ye wuz dhr-rounded."

Bill's visit to Hilarity was known to no one except Daddy Dunnigan, and the following evening after Moncrossen's departure for the woods, the two proceeded to the railway by a circuitous route.

Unobserved, he swung aboard the caboos of the local freight-train which stood at the tiny platform, discharging goods.

"He'll be afther makin' ye boss av th' new camp," opined the old man from his position beside a pile of ties. "An' av ye nade a cook just dhrop me a loine an' O'll come."

"I haven't got the job yet," laughed Bill.

"But ye will. Owld Appleton'll be glad enough not havin' to come thrapsin' into th' woods ivery month or so durin' th' winther." The old man leaned forward upon his crutch, and with pathetic eagerness scanned the face of the younger man.

"Me b'y," he said, "av yer plans is changed--wor-rd from th' gir-rl, or what not, that'll be takin' ye back to Noo Yor-rk--ye'll take me wid ye?"

"Oi may be a bit owld, but Oi'm as good as iver Oi wuz. Oi c'd lear-m to run yer otymobile er take care av th' harses, er moind th' babies, ut makes no difference; for whilst a McKim lives owld Dunnigan belongs to luk affher um."

"Never fear, Daddy!" cried Bill, as the train jerked into motion. "Now that we've found each other, we'll stick together until the end." And he stood silent upon the steps of the caboose until the figure of the old Irishman blended into the background.

In the front room of the one-story building with its undeceptive two-story front, where Appleton had established his headquarters in the little town of Creighton, the lumber magnate sat talking with Irish Fallon.

The tote-road leading to the new camp had been pushed to completion, and Appleton was giving

Fallon some final instructions.

"I must leave for Minneapolis in the morning," he said. "Do the best you can, and I will run up as often as possible."

"Oi'll do ut, sorr," replied Irish. "Oi c'n lay down th' logs all roight; th' throuble'll be wid th' figgers. If ondly me frind, Bill, wuz here--sure, there wuz th' foine lad!"

Appleton pulled at his gray mustache and regarded the other thoughtfully.

"You knew him well--this Bill?" he asked.

"Oi wuz th' fur-rst whoite man he seen in th' woods th' day he stud knee-dape in th' shnow av th' tote-road, lukin' down at th' carcass av D'ablish. An' from that toime on till he wint down undher th' logs we wuz loike two brothers--ondly more so."

"Pretty good man, was he?"

"A-a-h, there wuz a man!" Fallon's big fist banged noisily upon the table, and his blue eyes lighted as he faced his employer. "Misther Appleton, ye losht a *man* phwin th' greener wint undher. Fearin' nayther God, man, nor th' divil, he come into th' woods, an' in wan sayson lear-rnt more about logs thin th' most av us'll iver know."

"Monrossen liked him--spoke very highly of him

Moncrossen liked him--spoke very highly of him, and that is unusual with Moncrossen." Fallon's breath whistled through his teeth at the words.

"Loiked um, did he? Sure he loiked um--loike a rabbit loikes a wolf!"

He leaned forward in his chair, punctuating his remarks with stabs of a huge forefinger upon the other's knee.

"Misther Appleton, Moncrossen *hated um!* An' ivery man along th' river that day knows that av ut wuzn't fer Moncrossen, th' greener'd be livin' this minit--ondly we can't pr-roove ut. Th' boss hated um because he wuz a bether man--because he know'd he wuz a clane man, wid a foightin' hear-rt an' two fists an' th' guts to carry um t'rough. He chilled th' har-rt av th' boss th' fur-rst noight he seen um, an' from thin on th' fear wuz upon um fer th' bird's-eye."

"The bird's-eye?" inquired Appleton. "What do you mean?"

Fallon hesitated; his enthusiasm had carried him further than he had intended. He gazed out of the window, wondering how to proceed, when his eyes fastened upon a large, heavily bearded man who approached rapidly down the wooden sidewalk, a folded mackinaw swung carelessly across the fringed arm of his buckskin shirt.

The iron latch rattled; the man entered, closed the door behind him, and, turning, faced the two with a smile. For a long moment the men gazed at the newcomer in silence; then Fallon's chair crashed backward upon the floor as the Irishman leaped to his feet.

"Thim eyes!" he cried, throwing a huge arm across the man's shoulders and shaking him violently in his excitement. "Bill! Bill! Fer th' love av God, tell me 'tis yersilf! Ye damn' shcoundril, ain't ye dhrouned at all, at all? An' phwere ye ben kapin' yersilf?"

Bill laughed aloud and wrung Appleton's hand.

The lumberman had risen to his feet, staring incredulously into the other's face while he repeated over and over again: "My boy! My boy!"

Fallon danced about, waving his arms and shouting: "Th' new camp'll go t'rough hell a whoopin'! Bill'll be boss, an' th' min'll tear out th' bone to bate Moncrossen!"

Order was finally restored, and the three seated themselves while Bill recounted his adventures. Appleton's brow clouded as he learned the details of the bird's-eye plot.

"So that's the way he worked it?" he exclaimed. "I knew that there was some bird's-eye in the timber, and that I was not getting it. But I laid it to outside

thieves--never supposed one of my own foremen was double-crossing me.

"That is Moncrossen's finish!" he added grimly. "I need him this winter. Too many contracts to afford to do without him. In the spring, though, there will be an accounting; and mark my words, he will get what is coming to him!"

"What next--for me?" asked Bill.

Appleton smiled.

"I think Fallon has disposed of your case," he replied. "My boy, I want you to take this new camp and *get out logs*. I won't set any specific amount, I will tell you this: I *must* have twenty-five million feet out of the Blood River country this winter. You are the first inexperienced man I have ever placed in charge of a camp. I don't know what you can do. I'll take the chance. It's up to you.

"My camps are run without interference from the office. Results count with me--not methods. Feed your crew all they can eat--of the best you can get. Knock a man down first and argue with him afterward. Let them know who is boss, and you will have no trouble. Don't be afraid to spend money, but *get out the logs!*"

The following morning the new foreman stood upon the platform of the station as the heavy, vestibuled Imperial Limited ground to a stop, under special

Imperial Limited ground to a stop, under special orders to take on the great lumberman.

"So-long, Bill!" Appleton called. "See you next month. Bringing a party into the woods for a deer-hunt. May put up at your camp for a couple of weeks."

The train pulled out for the East, leaving Bill Carmody gazing, just a shade wistfully, perhaps, at the contented-looking men and women who flashed past upon the rich plush cushions.

But as the last coach passed he squared his shoulders with a jerk and turned quickly away.

CHAPTER XXXV

A HUNTING PARTY

H. D. Appleton, millionaire lumberman, sighed contentedly as he added cream to his after-dinner coffee. He glanced toward his wife, who was smiling at him across the table.

"Oh, you can drink yours black if you want to, little girl," he grinned; "but, remember 'way back when we were first married and I was bossing camps for old Jimmie Ferguson, and we lived in log shacks 'way up in the big woods, I used to say if we ever

got where we could have cream for our coffee, I'd have nothing else to ask for?

"Well, to this day, drinking cream in my coffee is my idea of the height of luxury. This is all right, and I enjoy it, too, I suppose." He indicated with a wave of his black cigar the rich furnishings, the heavy plate and cut-glass that adorned the dining-room. "But, somehow, nothing makes me feel *successful* like pouring real cream into my coffee."

The gray-haired "little girl" laughed happily.

"You never have quite grown up, Hubert," she replied. "Did you have a hard trip, dear? The three weeks you have been away have seemed like three months to me."

"No, no! I had a good trip. It looked rather hopeless at first, trying to establish a new camp, with no one really capable of running it; but just at the last minute--You remember the man I told you about last fall--the young fellow who throttled that scoundrel after the wreck in the Chicago railroad yards, and who refused to tell me his name until after he had made good?"

"Yes--he was drowned last spring, wasn't he? Poor boy, I have often wondered who he was--a gentleman, you said?"

"By gad, he's more than a gentlemen--he's a *man*!

And he wasn't drowned at all. Got rescued somehow by an old squaw and her daughter. His leg was broken, and when he got well he stayed in the woods and looked after the camp all summer; and not only that, he recovered fifty-two bird's-eye maple logs that had been stolen by some of my own men.

"He found me in Creighton, and I made him boss of the new camp. He's a winner, and the men will work for him till they drop."

"Oh, by the way, Hubert," said Mrs. Appleton. "Mr. Sheridan called up a day or two ago and wanted to know when you would return. He said you and he had planned a deer-hunt this fall."

"Yes; we'll go about the first of the month. It's been a good while since Ross Sheridan and I have had a hunt together; not since the old days on the Crow Wing. Remember the time Ross and I got lost, and nearly scared you womenfolks to death?"

"Indeed I do. I never will forget that blizzard, and those three awful days--we had been married only six months, and Mary Sheridan and I were the only women in the camp.

"I remember how good all the men were to us--telling us you were in no danger, and not to worry--and all during the storm they were searching the woods in squads. Oh, it was awful! And yet----"

Her voice trailed into silence, and she stared a long time into the open fire that blazed in the huge fireplace.

"And yet, what, little girl," asked Appleton, smiling fondly upon her--"what are you thinking about? Come, tell me."

She turned her eyes toward him, and the man detected a wistful look in them.

"I was thinking, dear, of how happy we were those three years we spent 'way up in the timber while you were getting your start. Not that we haven't always been happy," she hastened to add, "because we have. We couldn't have been happier unless--unless--some children had come. But, dear, those days when we were so poor and had to work so hard, and every dollar counted--and we had to do without things we both wanted, and sometimes things we really needed.

"And, oh, Hubert dear, do you remember the organ? And how long it took us to save up the sixty dollars? And how I cried half the night for pure joy when you brought it home on the ox-sled? And how I used to play in the evenings, and the Sheridans were there, and the men would come and listen, and their big voices would join in the singing, and how sometimes a man would draw a rough sleeve across his eyes when he thought no one was looking--do you remember?"

"Yes, yes, yes--of course I remember!" The lumberman's voice was suspiciously gruff. "Seems almost like another world." His wife suddenly stretched her arms towards the open fire:

"Oh, Hubert, I want to go back!"

"What?"

"Yes, dear, just once more." Appleton saw the tears in her eyes. "I want to smell the fragrance of the pine woods--and sit on the thick pine-needles--and cook over an open fire! Bacon and trout and coffee--yes, and no *real cream*, either!" She smiled at him through her tears. "Canned milk, and maybe some venison steaks.

"I want to borrow your pocket-knife and dig out spruce gum and chew it, with the little bits of bark in it," she went on, "and I won't promise not to 'pry,' with it, either. I hope I do break the blade! Do you remember that day, and how mad you were?"

"I want to see the men crowd into the grub-shack, and hear the sound of the axes and saws and the rattle of chains and the crashing of big trees. I want to see the logs on the rollways; and, Hubert, you won't think I'm awful, will you, dear, but I want to--just once more in my life--I want to hear a big man *swear*!"

H. D. Appleton stared at his wife in blank

amazement, and then, throwing back his head, roared with laughter.

"Well, you sure will, little girl, if you try to slip any canned milk into *my* coffee!"

His wife regarded him gravely.

"I am not joking, Hubert. Oh, can't you see? Just once more I *must* have a taste of the old, hard, happy days--can't I?"

"Why, Margaret, you don't really mean that you want to go into the woods--seriously?"

"Yes, I do mean just exactly that--seriously!"

Appleton tugged at his mustache and puckered his forehead.

"We might make up a party," he mused. "I'll speak to Ross in the morning."

The little gray-haired woman stepped lightly around the table, and, seating herself on his lap, captured his big fingers in her own.

"How many times must I tell you not to pull your mustache, dear? Now, listen; I have a plan. There will be Mary Sheridan and Ross and Ethel Manton--you know she promised us a visit this fall, and I expect her any day now. A trip into the woods will do her a world of good, poor girl. She has had lots

of responsibility thrust upon her since brother Fred died, with young Charlie to look out for, and the care of that big house.

"Mrs. Potter, you know she lives next door to Ethel, writes me that she does not believe the girl is happy--that this St. Ledger, or whatever his name is, that she is reported engaged to, is not the kind of a man for Ethel at all--and, that she hasn't seemed herself for a year--some unhappy love affair--the man was a scamp, or something--so this trip will be just what she needs. Charlie will be with her, of course, and we can invite that young Mr. Holbrooke; you have met him, that nice young man--the VanNesses' nephew.

"We will go away up into the big woods where you men can hunt to your heart's delight; and we women will stay around the camp and do the cooking and smell the woods and chew spruce gum. Oh, Hubert, won't it be just *grand*?"

Appleton caught something of his wife's enthusiasm.

"It sure will, little girl! But what's *he* for?"

"What is who for?"

"This Holbrooke person. Where does he come in on this?"

"Why, for Ethel, of course! Goose! Don't you see

that if Ethel is not happy--if she is not really in love with this St. Ledger--and she spends two or three weeks in the same camp with a nice young man like Mr. Holbrooke--well, there's no place like the woods for romance, dear; you see, I know. And he has money, too," she added.

Appleton suddenly lifted his wife to her feet and began pacing up and down the room.

"Money!" he exclaimed. "He never earned a cent in his life."

"But he is the VanNess heir!"

"Old VanNess made his money selling corsets and ribbons."

"Why, dear, what difference does that make? I am sure the VanNesses are among----"

"I don't care who they're among, or what they're among!" interrupted her husband. "We don't want any niece of ours marrying ribbons. Hold on a minute, let me think. By gad, I've got a scheme!"

He continued to pace up and down the length of the room, puffing shortly upon his cigar and emitting emphatic grunts of satisfaction.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "If you're bound to marry Ethel off we will give her the chance to marry a *man*. Go ahead and make up the party, but leave

ribbons out of it. We will let Ethel rest up for a few days and then we will start--straight for the new camp. There is a *man* there."

"But," objected his wife, "you know nothing about him. You don't know even his name."

"What difference does that make? I know a good man when I see one. I know enough about him to know that he is good enough for Ethel or any other woman. And, if he hasn't got a name now, by gad, he is making one--up there in the big country!"

"But he has no money."

"No money! How much did we have when we were married? Why, little girl, you just got through saying that the happiest days we ever spent were up there in the woods when money was so scarce that we knew the date on every dollar we owned--and every scratch and nick on them--and the dimes and pennies too."

The little woman smiled. "That is true, Hubert, but somehow----"

"Somehow nothing! If we did it, these two can do it. They've got a better chance than we had. I'm not going to live forever. I need a partner. I'm getting old enough to begin to take things easier--to step aside and let a younger man shoulder the burden."

He threw his arm lovingly about his wife's shoulders, and drew her close. "We never had a son, sweetheart," he said gravely, "but if we had I'd want him to be just like that boy. He is making good."

Margaret Appleton looked up into her husband's eyes.

"You haven't made many mistakes, dear," she whispered. "I hope he will make good--for your sake and--maybe for Ethel's."

CHAPTER XXXVI

TOLD ON THE TRAIL

It was a merry party that clambered into the big tote-wagon in the little town of Creighton one morning in early November. Upon request of Appleton and Sheridan, two of the road's heaviest lumber shippers, a private car had been coupled to the rear of the Imperial Limited at Winnipeg.

Later the big train hesitated at Hilarity long enough to permit a half-breed guide in full hunting regalia to step proudly aboard, to the envy of the dead little town's assembled inhabitants. And later still the Limited stopped at Creighton and shunted the private car onto a spur

Appleton promptly impressed one of his own tote-wagons which had been sent to town for supplies; and before noon the four-horse team was swung into the tote-road carrying the hunting party into the woods.

Tents, blankets, and robes had been ranged into more or less comfortable seats for the accommodation of the party, while young Charlie Manton insisted upon climbing onto the high driver's seat, where he wedged himself uncomfortably between the teamster and Blood River Jack, the guide.

From the time the latter had joined the party at Hilarity the boy had stuck close to his side, asking innumerable questions and listening with bated breath to the half-breed's highly colored narratives in which wolves, bears, and Indians played the important parts.

In the evening, when they camped beside the tote-road, and he was permitted to help with the tents and the fire-wood, the youngster fairly bristled with importance, and after supper when the whole party drew about the great camp-fire the boy seated himself close by the side of the guide.

"You never told me your name," he ventured.

"Blood River Jack," the man replied.

"That's a funny kind of a name," puzzled the boy.
"Why did they name you that?"

"Jacques--that is my name. Blood River--that is where I live. It is that my lodge is near the bank of the river and in the Blood River country I hunt and lay my trap lines, and in the waters of the river I fish. What is your name?"

"New York Charlie," unhesitatingly replied the boy and flushed deeply at the roar of laughter with which the others of the party greeted his answer. But the long-haired, dark-skinned guide, noting the angry flash of the wide, blue eyes, refrained from laughter.

"That is a good name," he said gravely. "In the land of the white man men are called by the name of their fathers. In the woods it is not often so, except when it be written upon papers. The best man in the North is one of whom men know only his first name. He is M's'u' Bill--The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die."

"Why can't he die?" asked the youngster eagerly.

Jacques shook his head.

"Wa-ha-ta-na-ta says 'all men die,'" he replied; "but--did not the *chechako* come into the North in the time of a great snow, and without rackets mush sixty miles in two days? Did he not kill with a knife

forty times in two days? Did he not kill with a knife Diablesse, the werewolf, whom all men feared, and with an axe chop in pieces the wolves of her pack?

"Did he not strike fear to the heart of the great Moncrossen with a look of his eye? And, with three blows of his fist, lay the mighty Stromberg upon the floor like a wet rag? Did he not come without hurt through the fire when Creed locked him in the burning shack? And did he not go down through the terrible Blood River rapids, riding upon a log, and live, when Moncrossen ordered the breaking out of the jam that he might be killed among the pounding logs? These are the things that kill men--yet the *chechako* lives."

"Gee, Eth, think of that!" exclaimed the boy, turning toward his sister, who from her place by the side of her Aunt Margaret had been an interested listener. "He must be *some man*! Where does he live? Will we see him?"

Before the half-breed could reply Appleton broke in.

"He sure is *some man*!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "And you will see him about day after to-morrow night, if we have good luck. I don't know about all the adventures Blood River Jack mentioned, but I have heard of some of them, and I can add the story of the outwitting of a couple of card-sharps and a fight in the dark, in the cramped

quarters of an overturned railway coach, in which he all but choked the life out of a human fiend who was robbing the dead and injured.

"And I might tell of another fight--the gamest fight of all--but, wait till you know him. He is foreman of the camp which will be our headquarters for the next two or three weeks."

"To hear them talk," said Mrs. Appleton to her niece, "one would imagine this man a huge, bloodthirsty ruffian; but he isn't. Hubert says that he is in every respect a gentleman."

"Yes," agreed her husband, "but one who is not afraid to get out and work with his two hands--and work hard--and who has never learned the meaning of fear. I took a chance on him, and he has made good."

The phrase fell upon the ears of the girl with a shock. They were the words *he* had used, she remembered. Was *he* making good--somewhere? She felt her heart go out with a rush to this big man she had never seen, and she found herself eagerly looking forward to their meeting.

"Oh, he must be splendid!" she exclaimed impulsively, and her face glowed in the play of the firelight--a glow that faded almost to pallor at the words of the half-breed.

"He has come again into the woods?" he asked

He has come again into the woods. He asked quickly. "It is well. For now Jeanne need have no fear. He promised her that he would return again into the North--and to her."

"What?" cried Appleton in surprise. "Who is this Jeanne? And why should he return to her?"

"She is my sister," Jacques replied simply. "Her skin is white like the skin of my father. She is beautiful, and she loves him. She helped Wa-ha-ta-na-ta to draw him from the river, and through all the long days and nights of his sickness she took care of him. When he went out of the woods she accompanied him for three days and three nights upon the trail to the land of the white man, and he promised her that he would come again into the woods and protect her from harm."

At a hurried glance from his wife Appleton changed the subject abruptly. "I wish to thunder it would snow!" he exclaimed. "Hunting deer without snow is like fishing without bait. You might accidentally hook one, but it's a long chance."

Blood River Jack sniffed the air and shrugged, glancing upward.

"Plenty of snow in a few days," he said. "Maybe too much."

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN THE OFFICE

The setting sun shone weak and coppery above the pines as the big four-horse tote-team dashed with a flourish into the wide clearing of the new camp on upper Blood River. The men had not yet "knocked off," and from the impenetrable depths of the forest came the ring of axes and the roar of crashing trees.

In the little blacksmith-shop a grimy-faced, leather-aproned man bent over a piece of glowing iron which he held in long tongs, and the red sparks radiated in showers as the hammer thumped dully on the soft metal--thumps sharply punctuated by the clean ring of steel as the polished face of the tool bounced merrily upon the chilled surface of the anvil.

The feel of snow was in the air and over by the cook-shack men were hauling fire-wood on a pole-drag. The team brought up sharply before the door of the office which was located at one end of a long, low building of logs, the two other rooms of which contained stoves, chairs, and a few rough deal-tables.

Appleton leaped from the wagon and swung the ladies lightly to the ground, while the teamster and Blood River Jack, assisted by Charlie, proceeded

to unload the outfit. The lumberman pushed open the door of the office and glanced within. It was empty. He called one of the men from the cook-shack and bade him build a fire in the little air-tight.

"Well, H. D., your man ain't an office foreman, anyhow," grinned Sheridan, with a nod of approval toward the cold stove.

Sheridan was a bluff man with a bristling red mustache--the kind that invariably chew upon their cigars as they talk.

Appleton turned to the ladies.

"Make yourselves at home," he said as the fire roared up the stove-pipe. "Ross and I will look over the works a bit. Where is the boss?" he asked of the man who was returning to the wood-pile.

"Out in the cuttin' somewheres; er me'be over to the rollways," replied the man, laughing. "Big Bill he's out among 'em *all* the time."

"By Glory! H. D., we've all got to hand it to you when it comes to picking out men. I'd like to catch one of *my* foremen out on the works some time--I wouldn't know whether to fire him or double his wages!"

Sheridan mouthed his cigar, and the two turned into a skidway.

Appleton smiled. He raised a finger and touched his eyelid.

"It's the eye," he said. "Look in a man's eye, Ross. I don't give a damn what a man's record is--what he's done or what he hasn't done. Let me get a good look into his eye when he talks and in half a minute I'll know whether to hire him or pass him on to you fellows. Here he comes now."

Bill took keen delight in showing the two lumbermen about the camp.

"What's the idea of the ell on the bunk-house?" asked Appleton.

"Teamster's bunk-house," replied the foreman. "You see, I know how it feels to be waked up at four in the morning by the teamsters piling out of their bunks; so I built a separate bunk-house for them. The men work too hard to have their sleep broken into that way. And another thing--I built a couple of big rooms onto the office where the men can play cards and smoke in the evening. I ordered a phonograph, too. I expect it in on the tote-wagon."

Sheridan grinned skeptically and spat out part of his cigar. Appleton made no comment.

"Come over to the office, Bill," he said. "I want you to meet the ladies--my wife and niece and Mrs.

Sheridan."

"I am afraid I am not very presentable," replied Bill dubiously as they crossed the clearing in the lengthening shadows; but he went with them without hesitation.

They were met at the door by a plump-faced lady of ample proportions who was evidently fighting a losing battle with a tendency toward *embonpoint*; and a slight, gray-haired one who stood poised upon the split puncheon that served as a door-step.

"Ladies, this is Bill, the foreman of this camp. Mrs. Sheridan, Bill, and my wife."

The ladies bowed formally, and secretly approved of the grace with which the foreman removed his cap and returned their salute. Nevertheless, there was an icy note in Mrs. Appleton's voice as she said:

"My niece begs to be excused. She is very tired after her rather hard trip." If Bill noticed the frigidity in the tone he gave no sign.

"I imagine it has been a very trying trip for you all. However, I will offer you the best accommodations the camp affords. If you will kindly choose which of those two rooms you prefer I will have your belongings moved in at once."

"I suppose you brought cots," he added, turning to

I suppose you brought coats," he added, turning to Appleton.

"Yes, everything necessary for a tenderfoot outfit."

"When the ladies have selected their room I will have your gear moved into the other," said Bill; and, with a bow to the ladies, moved off in the direction of the cook-shack.

Alone in the office, Ethel Manton gazed about upon the meager furnishings; a desk, the little air-tight stove with its huge wood-box; three wooden chairs, a trunk secured by a padlock, and a bunk neatly laid with heavy blankets.

Several pairs of boots, moccasins, and heavy mittens were ranged along the floor next to the wall, while from pegs above them hung a faded mackinaw, a slicker, and several pairs of corduroy trousers.

Tacked to the wall above the desk was a large, highly colored calendar, while upon the opposite wall hung a rifle and a belt of yellow cartridges. Her woman's eye took in the scrupulous neatness of the room and the orderly disposition of the various articles.

For the first time in her life she was in a man's room, and she felt a keen thrill of interest in her surroundings. Upon the top of the desk beside the little bracket-lamp was a short row of books.

"It is too bad," she muttered, "that he couldn't have been *nice*. How I would have enjoyed talking with him and telling him how splendid it is that he is *making good*!"

"Maybe somewhere a girl is wondering where he is--and waiting day after day for word from him--and worrying her very heart out. Oh, I hope she will never know about this Jeanne--ugh! An Indian--and Uncle Appleton said he is a *gentleman*!"

She paused before the desk and idly read the titles of the books; there were a logger's manual, a few text-books on surveying and timber estimating, several of the latest novels, apparently unread and a well-thumbed copy of Browning.

"Browning! Of all things--in a log camp! Now I know there is a girl--poor thing!" Open, face downward upon the surface of the desk where it had been pushed aside to make room for a rough sketch of the camp with its outreaching skidways and cross-hauls, lay a small volume.

"And Southey!" she exclaimed under her breath, and picked up the book. It was "Madoc," and three lines, heavily underscored, stood boldly out upon the page:

"Three things a wise man will not trust,

The wind, the sunshine of an April day,

And woman's plighted faith."

Over and over she read the lines, and, returning the book to its place, pondered, as she allowed her glance to rove again over the little room whose every detail bespoke intense masculinity.

"I might at least be nice to him," she murmured. "Maybe the girl *was* horrid. And he is 'way up here, trying to forget!" Unconsciously she repeated the words of her Uncle Appleton: "He *has* made good."

And then there flashed through her mind the words of the guide: "She is beautiful, and she loves him. She accompanied him for three days and three nights on the trail to the land of the white man, and he promised that he would come again into the woods and protect her from harm."

"This Indian girl," she whispered--"she loves him, and he persuaded her to accompany him, and when they drew near to civilization he sent her back--with a promise!"

Her lips thinned and the hot blood mounted to her cheeks. No matter what conditions sent this man into the woods, there could be no justification for *that*. She shuddered as she drew her skirts away where they brushed lightly against the blankets of his bunk and turned toward the door

And just at that moment the door opened, and in the gathering darkness a man stood framed in the doorway. She drew back, startled, and with the swiftness of light her glance swept him from the top of his cap to the soles of his heavy boots.

He was a large man whose features were concealed by a thick beard. His fringed and beautifully embroidered shirt of buckskin was open at the throat, as if to allow free play to the mighty muscles of his well-formed neck.

Only a few seconds he stood thus, and with a swift movement removed the cap from his head.

"You will pardon me," he said, and his eyes sought hers; "I did not know any one was here."

At the first sound of his voice the girl started. One quick step, and she stood before him, staring into his eyes. She felt her flesh grow cold, and her heart seemed gripped between the jaws of a mighty vise.

"*You!*" she gasped, and swayed unsteadily as her hand sought her throat. Her voice came dry and hard and choking as she repeated the word: "*You!*" And in that moment the man saw her face in the deepening gloom of the room.

"*Ethel!*" he cried, springing toward her with outstretched arms. Then, when she was almost

within their grasp, the arms dropped, for the girl shrank from his touch and her eyes blazed.

Thus for a moment they stood facing each other, the girl--white, tense--with blazing eyes, and the big man, who fought for control of himself. Finally he spoke, and his voice was steady and very low.

"Forgive me, Ethel," he said. "For the moment I forgot that I have not the right--that there is another----"

With a low, moaning cry the girl covered her face with her hands. Even since she faced him there the thought had flashed through her brain that there might be some mistake--that the man might even yet be as he appeared to be--big and brave and *clean*.

But now--from his own lips she had heard it--"there is another"--and that other--an *Indian*!

A convulsive shudder shook her whole body, the room seemed to reel; she pressed her hands more tightly to her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of him, and the next instant all was dark, and she pitched heavily forward into the arms of the man.

For one brief moment he held her, straining her limp body to his. The hands relaxed and fell away from her pallid face, and the bearded lips bent close above the soft lips of the unconscious girl--but *only* for a moment.

Without touching the lips, the man straightened up and, crossing to the bunk, laid the still form upon the blankets. With never a backward glance, he passed out through the door.

It was dark in the clearing, and a couple of steps brought him face to face with Appleton, who was coming to tell his niece that the ladies' quarters were ready.

The foreman paused and looked squarely into the face of his employer. He slowly raised an arm and pointed to the open door of the office.

"Miss Manton," he said, "has fainted." And without waiting for a reply, passed on into the night.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CHARLIE FINDS A FRIEND

The following morning the camp looked out upon a white world. The threatened snow which began during the night was still falling, and from the windows the dark walls of the clearing could be seen but dimly through the riot of dancing flakes.

It was a constrained and rather glum party that sat down to breakfast shortly after daylight in the room

adjoining the office, where two deal tables had been drawn together and spread with a new, white oilcloth.

Ethel Manton had entirely recovered from her syncope of the previous evening, and had offered no elucidation other than that of fatigue. Nevertheless, not a person in the room but felt that there had been another and more immediate cause for the girl's collapse.

Charlie had begged to be allowed to "eat with the men," and the foreman had courteously declined Appleton's invitation to join the party during their stay in camp.

The dismal and sporadic attempts at conversation had slumped into an awkward silence, in the midst of which the door burst open and young Charlie catapulted into the room.

"Oh, Eth! Guess who he is!" he cried. "Guess who's the boss--the man the Indians call The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die"! It's *Bill Carmody*! And I knew him the minute I saw him, if he *has* got whiskers all over his face and a buckskin shirt.

"And he knew *me*! And he shook hands with me right before all the men--and you ought to seen 'em look! And he's going to teach me how to walk on snowshoes! Oh, ain't you *glad*! 'Cause now you and Bill can----"

"*Charlie!*" The girl's face flamed, and the word seemed wrung from her very heart. The boy paused for a moment in the midst of his breathless harangue and eyed his sister with disgust.

"You know you *do* love him," he continued, his eyes flashing defiantly, "even if you did have a scrap--and he loves you, too! And that dang St. Ledger's just nothing but a--a--a *squirt*--that's what he is--and if I was Bill Carmody I'd punch his head for him if he even *spoke* to you again--if you was *my* girl!

"And I'm going to tell him we *know* he never swiped those bonds, and you stuck up for him when old man Carmody told you he did."

The last words of the boy's remarks were addressed to an empty chair, for the girl, white and trembling, had fled into the other room and banged the door after her.

Mrs. Appleton, with an unintelligibly muttered excuse, hurriedly followed, leaving her husband gazing from her retreating back to the excited face of the youngster, and muttering: "Bless my soul! Bless my soul!" between the gulps of his coffee, which for once in his life he swallowed with never a growl at the canned milk. A moment later he abruptly left the table and, motioning the boy to follow, led the way to the office.

A half-hour passed, and Charlie left the building under the strictest kind of orders not to mention to Bill Carmody either Ethel or the bonds.

Puzzling his small head over the inexplicable doings of grown-up people, he wandered toward the cook-shack to hunt up Daddy Dunnigan, with whom he had already struck up a great friendship.

"She loves him and he loves her," he muttered to himself as he scuffed his brand-new moccasins through the soft snow, "and each one tries to let on they don't. And Uncle Appleton won't let me tell Bill *she* does so he'd go and tell her *he* does; and then old man Carmody and his bonds could go to the *devil*!

"You bet, I hope I never get in love and act like a couple of fools. Now, I bet she'll marry that *sniffit*, and he'll marry Blood River Jack's sister." The boy paused and glanced speculatively at the falling snow. "I wonder if he wants to? Anyhow, I can ask him that much."

Later, in the office, Mrs. Appleton broke in upon her husband's third black cigar. There was no doorway connecting the office with the other two rooms, and the lumberman watched the snowflakes melt on his wife's hair as she seated herself directly in front of him.

"Well Hubert Appleton this is a nice mess you

have got us into, I must say!"

"Me!" grinned the man. "Why, little girl, this is your party."

"I wish you would tell me who it was that suggested leaving out young Mr. Holbrooke, and coming here so that Ethel could meet this *man*?"

"She--er--met him--didn't she?"

"You needn't try to be facetious! What are you going to do about it?"

"Who--me? Oh, just stick around and watch the fun."

"Fun! Fun! Hubert Appleton, aren't you *ashamed* of yourself? And that poor girl in there crying her eyes out! Fun, indeed--it's *tragedy*!"

"There, there, little woman; don't let's get excited. It's up to us to kind of figure things out a bit; but the young folks themselves will be the real actors."

"Now, just how much--or, how little did she tell you?"

"She told me *everything*. Poor dear, it did her good. She has had nobody to tell--nobody to cry with her and sympathize with her."

When his wife concluded. H. D. Appleton had

received a very accurate chronicle of the doings of Bill Carmody from the time of his boyhood until chance threw them together in the smoking-compartment of the west-bound sleeper.

The lumberman listened attentively, without interrupting, until his wife finished.

"Does she think Bill took those bonds?" he asked.

"No. She does not. Even with everything else against him, she cannot bring herself to believe that he is a thief."

"Do *you* think he took them?"

"Why--I--I don't know," she hesitated.

"Do you *think* he took them?"

The little woman looked into her husband's eyes as she purposely delayed her reply.

"No," she said at length. "I do not. But his own father accused him."

Appleton leaned forward in his chair and brought his fist down upon the desk-top.

"I don't give a damn *who* accused him!" he cried. "That boy never stole a bond, or any other thing, and I'll stake my last cent on it!"

"Oh, it isn't the bonds. Ethel does not believe he stole them. But--the other--you heard what the guide said--and Ethel heard it. She never *can* get over *that*! He may be honest--but he is a perfect *villain*!"

"Hold on, now. Let's go easy. Maybe it isn't so bad as it sounds."

"Not so bad! Hubert Appleton, do you mean to tell me that you would, for a minute, think of allowing your niece to *marry* such a man?"

Appleton smiled into the outraged eyes of his wife.

"Yup. I think I would," he replied, and then hastened to add:

"Wait here and I will fetch Blood River Jack. He may have told more than he knows, or he may not have told all he knows. When you come to think of it, from what he *did* tell, we only jumped at conclusions."

He hurried from the office, returning a few minutes later with the half-breed, who seated himself and lighted the proffered cigar with evident enjoyment.

"Now, Jack," Appleton began, speaking with his accustomed brevity, "tell us about Monsieur Bill and this sister of yours. Did you say he was going to marry her?"

The guide looked from one to the other as if silently taking their measure. Finally he seemed satisfied.

"No," he said gravely, "he will not marry Jeanne."

The lumberman cleared his throat and waited while the man looked out upon the whirling snow, for well he knew that the half-breed must be allowed to take his own time--he could not be "pumped." And Mrs. Appleton, taking her cue from her husband, curbed her impatience, and waited with apparent unconcern.

"It is," the guide began, as if carefully weighing his words, "that you are the good friends of M's'u' Bill. Also I have seen that you know the men of the logs.

"Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, my mother, who is old and very wise, knows the men of the logs, and, knowing them, hated M's'u' Bill, and would have returned him to the river, but Jeanne prevented. For Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, knowing of the fatherless breeds of the rivers, hated all white men, and a great fear was in her heart for the girl, who is her daughter, and the daughter of Lacombe whom, she says, was the one good white man; but Lacombe is dead.

"So always in the days of the summer, when these two would leave the lodge to visit the deserted camp of Moncrossen, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta followed them. Stealthily and unknown she crept upon their trail, and always her sharp eyes were upon them,

and in the fold of her blanket was concealed a long, keen blade, and behind the unfailing gaze of the black eyes was the mind to kill.

"Thus passed the days of the summer, and the hand of Wa-ha-ta-na-ta was stayed, but her vigilance remained unrelenting. For deep in her heart is seared the memory of two winters ago, when Moncrossen gazed upon the beauty of Jeanne, and came to the tepee in the night, knowing I was away, and Wa-ha-ta-na-ta fought him in the darkness until he fled, cursing and swearing vengeance.

"Never since that night has the girl been safe, for Moncrossen, with the cunning of the wolf, is waiting his time--and some day he will strike!

"But I shared not the fear of my mother that harm would come to Jeanne at the hand of the great *chechako*, for I have looked into his eyes, and I know that his heart is good.

"Upon the day before his departure for the land of the white man he gave to the girl the skin of Diablesse, and then she told him she loved him, and begged him to remain with her in the country of the Indians.

"But he would not, for he does not love Jeanne, but another--a woman of his own people, who lives in the great city of the white man. And even though this woman sent him from her, he loves her, and will

marry no other.

"Listening, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta heard him tell this to Jeanne; but of this woman the girl knew, for he talked incessantly of her, and cried out that she would marry another--in the voice of the fever-spirit, in the time of his great sickness.

"The following day he departed in a canoe, and as he pushed from the shore, Jeanne handed him his mackinaw, and words passed between them that Wa-ha-ta-na-ta could not hear from her position behind a log.

"But, as the canoe passed from sight around a bend in the river, the girl plunged into the woods, and Wa-ha-ta-na-ta returned to the tepee and made up a light pack and slipped silently upon her trail. The girl cut through the forest and came again to the river, and for a night and a day awaited the coming of the canoe.

"The third evening it came and the man camped, and Jeanne crept close and watched him across the blaze of his little fire as he smoked and stared into the embers. While Wa-ha-ta-na-ta also crept stealthily to the fire, making no sound, and she came to within an arm's reach of the man's back, and in her hand was clutched tightly the sheath-knife with its long, keen blade.

"At the midnight the man unrolled his blankets and

laid down to sleep, and then it was that Jeanne stepped into the firelight. And in the deep shadow, Wa-ha-ta-na-ta gripped more tightly the knife and made ready to strike."

The half-breed paused while the others waited breathlessly for him to resume.

"Think not that Jeanne is bad. She is good, and her heart is the pure heart of a maiden. But, such is the love of woman--to face gladly the sneers of the world, and the wrath of her people--for she did not ask him to marry her--only to take her.

"But the man would not, and commanded her to return to the lodge. She told him that she could not return--that three days and three nights had passed since they had departed together, and that, if he would not take her, she would go alone to the land of the white man.

"Then M's'u' Bill arose and folded his blankets and made up his pack, and when he spoke to her again it was in the voice of the terrible softness--the softness that causes men first to wonder, and then to obey, though they know not why. He said that he himself would take her back, and that Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, who is old and very wise, would know that his words were true.

"Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, lurking there in the deep shadow, in that moment knew that the man's heart was good.

And she stepped into the firelight, and looked long into his eyes--and she broke the knife--and between them there passed the *promise*."

Jacques puffed slowly upon his cigar, arose to his feet, and stood looking down upon the two who had listened to his words.

"It is well," he said, and his dark eyes flashed, "for the heart of Moncrossen is bad, and the beauty of Jeanne has inflamed the evil passions of him, and he will stop at nothing in the fulfillment of his desire.

"But, into the North has come a greater than Moncrossen. And terrible will be the vengeance of this man if harm falls upon Jeanne. For he is her friend, his word has passed, his heart is strong and good, and he knows not fear.

"Upon Moncrossen will fall the day of the Great Reckoning. And, in that day, justice will be done, for he will stand face to face with M's'u' Bill--The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die--the man whom Wa-ha-ta-na-ta has named 'The One Good White Man!'"

CHAPTER XXXIX

BILL'S WAY

"And to think " whispered Mrs. Appleton as she

wiped a tear from her eye, after the half-breed's departure, "that in New York this same man had earned the name of 'Broadway Bill, the sport'!"

"Yes," answered her husband; "but Broadway Bill has passed, and in his place, out here in the big country, is Broadgauge Bill, the *man*! I knew I was right, Margaret, by gad, I knew it! Look in his eye!"

Followed, then, in the little office, an hour of intimate conversation, at the conclusion of which the two arose.

"Not a word to Ethel, remember," admonished the woman, and laughed knowingly as her husband stooped and kissed her.

During the days that followed, Appleton and Sheridan, accompanied by Blood River Jack, hunted from early morning until late evening, when they would return, trail-weary and happy, to spend hours over the cleaning and oiling of guns and the overhauling of gear.

Young Charlie was allowed to go on some of the shorter expeditions, but for the most part he was to be found dogging the heels of Bill Carmody; or perched upon a flour-barrel in the cook-shack, listening to the tales of Daddy Dunnigan.

The ladies busied themselves with the care of the two rooms, with useless needlework, and with

dummy auction, varying the monotony with daily excursions into the near-by forest in quest of spruce-gum and pine-cones.

Since the morning Charlie had broken in so incontinently upon their breakfast no reference had been made to Bill Carmody by any member of the party; while the foreman pursued the even tenor of his way, apparently as unconcerned by their existence as they were by his.

One afternoon as the ladies were starting upon one of their tramps they came face to face with the foreman, who tipped his cap, bowed coldly, and passed into the office, closing the door behind him.

Mrs. Appleton halted suddenly, glanced toward the building, and retraced her steps. It was but a short distance, and Ethel walked back, waiting at the door while her aunt entered their own apartment.

The girl watched abstractedly, thinking the older woman had returned for something she had forgotten.

Suddenly she became all attention, and a hot flush of anger mounted to her face as she saw her aunt walk to the table, pick up her purse and several rings which she had left, and with a glance at the thick, log wall which separated the room from the office, deliberately walk to her trunk and place the articles under lock and key.

Apparently Mrs. Appleton had not noticed the girl's presence, but more than once during the afternoon the corners of her mouth twitched when, in response to some question or remark of hers, the shortness of the girl's replies bordered upon absolute rudeness.

And late that night she smiled broadly in the darkness when the low sound of stifled sobs came from the direction of the girl's cot.

Immediately after breakfast the following morning, Ethel put on her wraps and started out alone. Arriving, after a long, aimless ramble, at the outermost end of a skidway, she sat upon a log to rest and watch a huge swamper who, unaware of her presence, was engaged in slashing the underbrush from in front of a group of large logs.

Finally, tiring of the sight, she arose and started for the clearing, and then suddenly drew back and stepped behind the bole of a great pine, for, striding rapidly toward her on the skidway was Bill Carmody, and she pressed still closer to the tree-trunk that he might pass without observing her.

He was very close now, and the girl noticed the peculiar expression of his face--an expression she had seen there once before--his lips were smiling, and his gray eyes were narrowed almost to slits.

The man halted scarcely fifty feet from her, at the place where the swamper, with wide blows of his axe, was laying the small saplings and brushwood low. She started at the cold softness of the tones of his voice.

"Leduc," he said, "just a minute--it will hardly take longer."

The man turned quickly at the sound of the voice at his side, and for the space of seconds the two big men faced each other on the packed snow of the skidway.

Then, with a motion of incredible swiftness, and without apparent effort, the foreman's right arm shot out and his fist landed squarely upon the nose of the huge swamper.

The girl heard the wicked spat, and the peculiar, frightened grunt as the man reeled backward, and saw the quick gush of red blood that splashed down his front and squirted out over the snow.

Before the man had time to recover, the foreman advanced a step and struck again. This time it was his left hand that clove the air in a long, clean swing, and the man went down into the snow without a sound as the fist thudded against his neck just below the ear.

Without so much as a glance at the man in the snow Bill Carmody turned on his heel and started

snow, Bill Carmody waded on his feet and started back down the skidway.

Few seconds had elapsed, and a strange, barbaric thrill ran through the girl's body as she looked out upon the scene, quickly followed by a wave of sickening pity for the poor wretch who lay sprawled in the snow.

And, then, a great anger surged into her heart against the man who had felled him. She dashed from her hiding-place, and in a moment stood facing him, her blue eyes flashing.

"You *brute!*" she cried, "what right had you? Why did you strike him?" The man regarded her gravely, lifting his cap politely as if answering a most commonplace question.

"Because," he replied, "I wanted to," and, with a curt bow, stepped into the timber and disappeared, leaving her alone in the skidway with the bloody, unconscious form in the snow.

Never in her life had Ethel Manton been so furiously angry--not because a man had been felled by a blow--she had forgotten that--but because, in demanding an explanation, in attempting to call Bill Carmody to account, she had laid herself open to his stinging rebuff.

Without pretense of defense or justification, the man had quietly told her that he knocked the swamper

down "because he wanted to"; and without waiting for comment--as if the fact that "he wanted to" was sufficient in itself--had gone about his business without giving the matter a second thought.

The flash of anger, which in the first place had prompted her to speak to the man, was but an impulsive protest against what she considered an act of brutality; but that quickly passed.

The anger that surged through her heart as she gazed, white-faced, at the spot where the big man disappeared, was the bitter anger of outraged dignity and injured pride.

He had not taken the trouble to find out what she thought, for the very obvious reason that he had not cared what she thought--and so he left her. And when he had gone the girl plodded wrathfully back to camp and spoke to no one of what she had seen. But, deep down in her heart, she knew there had been a reason for Bill's act--and she knew that the reason was good.

That same evening Appleton pushed his chair back from the table and glanced toward Ethel, who had got out a bit of crochet-work. Then, with a sidewise glance at his wife, he remarked thoughtfully:

"I'm afraid I'll have to get rid of Bill. A Canuck swamper named Leduc complained to me that the boss slipped up on him and knocked him insensible

with a club. I can't stand for that--not even from Bill."

At the mention of the foreman's name the girl looked up quickly.

"He *didn't* hit him with a club! He hit him with his fist! And there *was* a reason----" The girl stopped abruptly, and a wave of crimson suffused her face. She could have bitten her tongue off for speaking--for defending this man.

"How do *you* know?" asked her uncle in surprise.

"I saw him do it," she replied; realizing that, having gone so far, she must answer.

"Why did he strike him?" persisted Appleton.

"You might ask *him* that," she said and, with a defiant toss of her head, quitted the room and closed the door behind her.

The Sheridans had been taken into confidence, and when the four found themselves alone they smiled knowingly.

As the days slipped into the second week of their stay, the carcasses of many deer hung from poles in the clearing, and the outside walls of the log building were adorned with the skins of numerous wolves and bobcats.

Hardly a day passed but some one, by word or look, or covert sneer, expressed disapproval of the boss; and Ethel, entirely ignorant of the fact that these expressions of disapproval were made only in her presence, and for her special benefit, was conscious of a feeling of great pity for the lonely man.

The indescribable restlessness of a great longing took possession of her; she found herself, time and again, watching from the window, and from places of concealment behind the trunks of trees, while the big foreman went stolidly about his work.

The fact that she should hate Bill Carmody was logical and proper; but she bitterly resented the distrust and criticism of the others. She wished now with all her heart that she had not confided in her aunt, and a dozen times she caught herself on the point of rushing to his defense.

Not since that morning on the skidway had the two met. Bill deviated not one whit from the regular routine of his duties, and the girl purposely avoided him.

She hated him. Over and over again she told herself that she hated and despised him, and yet, on two or three occasions when she knew he had gone to the farthest reaches of the cutting, she had slipped unobserved into the office and read from his books--not the uncut novels--but the well-thumbed copies

of Browning and Southey; and as she read she pondered.

She came upon many marked passages; and in her heart the unrest continued, and she allowed her hands to stray over the coarse cloth of his mackinaw, and once she threw herself upon his bunk and buried her face in his blankets, and sobbed the dry, racking sobs of her deep soul-hurt.

Then she had leaped to her feet and smoothed out the wrinkles in the blankets, and stooped and straightened the row of boots and moccasins along the base-log--and quickly disarranged them again for fear he might remember how he left them--and rushed from the office.

Of these secret visits the members of the party knew nothing, but Daddy Dunnigan, from the window of the cook-shack, took note of the girl's comings and goings, and nodded sagely and chuckled to himself. For Daddy Dunnigan, wise in the ways of women, had gathered much from the talk of the impetuous youngster.

CHAPTER XL

CHARLIE GOES HUNTING

Blood River Jack halted suddenly in his journey from the bunk-house to the grub-shack and sniffed the air.

He dropped the butt of his rifle to the hard-packed snow of the clearing and glanced upward, where a thin sprinkling of stars winked feebly in the first blush of morning.

The dark sky was cloudless, and the trees stood motionless in the gloom, which slowly dissipated where the first faint light of approaching day grayed the east. The air was dry and cold, but with no sting of crispness. The chill of it was the uncomfortable, penetrating chill that renders clothing inadequate, yet brings no tingle to the exposed portions of the body.

Again the man sniffed the dead air and, swinging the rifle into the crook of his elbow, continued toward the grub-shack.

Appleton and Sheridan accepted without remonstrance the guide's prediction of a storm and retired to the "house," as the rooms in which the party was quartered had come to be known--not entirely unthankful for a day of rest.

The crew went into the timber, as usual; the guide retired to his bunk for a good snooze; and young Charlie Manton, tiring of listening to Daddy Dunnigan's yarns, prowled about the camp in

search of amusement.

Entering the bunk-house, his attention was attracted by the loud snoring of Blood River Jack, and his eye fell upon the half-breed's rifle and cartridge-belt, which reposed upon the floor just beneath the edge of his bunk.

The boy crept close, his soft moccasins making no sound, until he was within reach of the gun, when he dropped to the floor and lifted it in his hands. For many minutes he sat upon the floor examining the rifle, turning it over and over.

At length he reached for the cartridge-belt, and buckling it about his waist, left the room as noiselessly as he had entered and, keeping the bunk-house in line with the window of the cook-shack, slipped unobserved into the timber.

Upon his hunting expeditions with the others, Charlie had not been allowed to carry a high-power rifle. It was a sore blow to his pride that his armament had consisted of a light, twenty-gauge shotgun, whose possibilities for slaughter were limited to rabbits, spruce-hens, and ptarmigan.

Farther and farther into the timber he went, avoiding the outreaching skidways and the sound of axes. Broad-webbed snow-shoe rabbits leaped from under foot and scurried away in the timber, and the whir of an occasional ptarmigan or spruce-hen

passed unheeded.

He was after big game. He would show Uncle Appleton that he *could* handle a rifle; and maybe, if he killed a buck or a wolf or a bobcat, the next time he went with them he would be allowed to carry a man's-size weapon.

An hour's tramp carried him to the bank of the river at a point several miles below the camp, where he seated himself upon a rotten log.

"Blood River Jack just wanted to sleep to-day, so he told 'em it was going to storm," he soliloquized as he surveyed the narrow stretch of sky which appeared above the snow-covered ice of the river.

But somehow the sky did not look as blue as it had; it was a sickly yellow color now, like the after-glow of a sunset, and in the center of it hung the sun--a dull, copper sun, with uneven, red edges which lost themselves in a hazy aureola of yellowish light.

The boy glanced uneasily about him. The woods seemed uncannily silent, and the air thick and heavy, so that the white aisle of the river blurred into dusk at its farther reaches.

It grew darker, a peculiar fuliginous darkness, which was not of the gloom of the forest. Yet no smell of smoke was in the air, and in the sky were no clouds.

"Looks kind of funny," thought the boy, and glanced toward the river. Suddenly all thought of the unfamiliar-looking world fled from his brain, for there on the snow, not twenty yards distant, half crouched a long, gray body with the claws of an uplifted forefoot extended, and cruel, catlike lips drawn into a hideous snarl.

The other forefoot rested upon the limp, furry body of a rabbit, and the great, yellow-green eyes glowed and waned in the dimming light, while the sharply tufted ears worked forward and back in quick, nervous twitches.

"A *loup-cervier*," whispered the boy, and slowly raised Blood River Jack's rifle until the sights lined exactly between the glowing eyes. He pulled the trigger and, at the sharp metallic click with which the hammer descended upon the firing-pin, the brute seized the rabbit between its wide, blunt jaws and bounded away in long leaps.

Hot tears of disappointment blurred the youngster's eyes and trickled down his cheeks--he had forgotten to load the rifle, and his hands trembled as he hurriedly jammed the long, flask-shaped cartridges into the magazine and followed down to the river on the trail of the big cat.

He remembered as he mushed along on his small rackets that Bill had told him of a rocky ledge some five or six miles below camp, and had promised to

take him to this place where the *loup-cerviers* had their dens among the rocks.

The trail held to the river, whose banks rose more abruptly as he proceeded, and at length, as he rounded a sharp bend, he could make out dimly through the thickening air the outline of a high rocky bluff; but even as he looked, the ledge was blotted out by a quick flurry of snow, and from high among the tree-tops came a long, wailing moan of wind.

The trees pitched wildly in the icy blast; the moan increased to a mighty roar, and the air was thick with flying snow. Not the soft, flaky snow of the previous storm, but particles fine as frozen fog, that bit and stung as they whirled against his face in the eddying gusts that came from no direction at all and every direction at once.

The boy bowed his head to the storm and pushed steadily forward--he *must* kill the *loup-cervier*, whose trail was growing momentarily more indistinct.

His eyes could penetrate but a few yards into the white smother, and suddenly the dark wall of the rock ledge loomed in front of him, and the trail, almost obliterated now, turned sharply and disappeared between two huge, upstanding boulders.

CHAPTER XLI

THE BLIZZARD

At eleven o'clock in the morning Bill Carmody ordered his teams to the stables.

At twelve o'clock, when the men crowded into the grub-shack, the air was filled with fine particles of flinty snow, and the roar of the wind through the pine-tops was the mighty roar of the surf of a pounding sea.

At one o'clock the boss called "gillon," and with loud shouts and rough horse-play, the men made a rush for the bunk-house.

At two o'clock Daddy Dunnigan thrust his head through the doorway of the shop where Bill, under the blacksmith's approving eye, was completing a lesson in the proper welding of the broken link of a log chain.

With a mysterious quirk of the head he motioned the foreman to follow, and led the way to the cook-shack, where Blood River Jack waited with lowering brow.

"D'yez happin to know is th' b'y up yonder?" asked the old Irishman, with a jerk of his thumb in the direction of the stable where Bill Carmody's teams

direction of the house. Bill beat the dry snow from his clothing as he stared from one to the other.

"The boy!" he cried. "What do you mean? Come--out with it--*quick!*"

"It is that my rifle and belt have gone from under the bunk," Blood River Jack answered. "They were taken while I slept. The boy did not come to dinner in the grub-shack. Is it that he eats to-day with his people?"

"Good Lord! I don't know! Haven't you seen him, Daddy?"

"Not since mebbe it's noine o'clock in th' mornin', an' he wint to th' bunk-house. I thought he wuz wid Jack." Bill thought rapidly and turned to the old man.

"Here, you, Daddy--get a move on now!" he ordered. "That ginger cake of yours that the kid likes, hustle some of it into a pail or a basket or something, and carry it up to the house. Tell them it's for Charlie, and you'll find out if he's there. If not, get out by saying that he's probably in the bunk-house, and get back here as quick as you can make it. There is no use in alarming the people up there--yet."

"Here you, Jack, go help the old man along. It's a tough job bucking that storm even for a short distance. Come now beat it!"

After ten minutes the two returned, breathless from their short battle with the storm.

"He ain't there," gasped the old man and sank down upon the wood-box with his head in his hands. "God help um, he's out in ut!"

"I'm going to the office," said the foreman and stepped out into the whirling snow.

"Man! Man!" called Daddy, springing to his feet; "ye ain't a goin' to thry----" The door banged upon his words and he sagged slowly onto his rough seat.

A few minutes later Appleton stamped into the cook-shack. "Did you find him, Daddy?" he asked.

The old man shook his head. "He ain't in th' camp," he muttered. "He tuk Jack's gun whilst he slep' an' ut's huntin' he's gone--Lard hilf um!"

"Where is Bill?" the lumberman inquired.

"Av ye're quick, ye may catch um in th' office--av ye ain't O'm thinkin' ye niver will foind um. Be th' luk in his eye, he's gone affther th' b'y."

The lumberman plunged again into the storm and made his way to the office. It was empty. As he turned heavily away the door opened and Ethel Manton flung herself into the room, gasping with exertion. Giving no heed to her uncle's presence,

excitement. Giving no heed to her uncle's presence, the girl's glance hurriedly swept the interior.

Her hand clutched at the bosom of her snow-powdered coat as she noted that the faded mackinaw was gone from its accustomed peg and the snowshoes from their corner behind the door.

Instantly the truth flashed through her brain--Charlie was lost in the seething blizzard and somewhere out in the timber Bill Carmody was searching for him.

With a smothered moan she flung herself onto the bunk and buried her face in the blankets.

The situation the foreman faced when he plunged into the whirling blizzard in search of the boy, while calling for the utmost in man's woodsmanship and endurance, was not so entirely hopeless as would appear. He remembered the intense interest evinced by the boy a few days before, when he had listened to the description of the rocky ledge which was the home of the *loup-cerviers*, and the eagerness with which he begged to visit the place.

What was more natural, he argued, than that the youngster, finding himself in unexpected possession of a rifle and ammunition, had decided to explore the spot and do a little hunting on his own account?

The full fury of the storm had not broken until noon, and he figured that the boy would have had ample time to reach the bluff where he could find

temporary shelter among the numerous caves of its rocky formation.

Upon leaving the office, the boss headed straight for the rollway, and the mere holding his direction taxed his brain to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

The air was literally filled with flying snow fine as dust, which formed an opaque screen through which his gaze penetrated scarcely an arm's reach.

Time and again he strayed from the skidway and brought up sharply against a tree, but each time he altered his course and floundered ahead until he found himself suddenly upon the steep slope where the bank inclined to the river.

When Bill Carmody turned down-stream the gravity of his undertaking forced itself upon him. The fury of the storm was like nothing he had ever experienced.

The wind-whipped particles cut and seared his face like a shower of red-hot needles, and the air about him was filled with a dull roar, mighty in volume but strangely muffled by the very denseness of the snow.

It took all his strength to push himself forward against the terrific force of the wind which seemed to sweep from every quarter at once into a whirling vortex of which he himself was the center.

One moment the air was sucked from his lungs by a mighty vacuum, and the next the terrible compression upon his chest caused him to gasp for breath.

The fine snow that he inhaled with each breath stung his lungs and he tied his heavy woolen muffler across his mouth. He stumbled frequently and floundered about to regain his balance. He lost all sense of direction and fought blindly on, each bend of the river bringing him blunderingly against one or the other of its brush-grown banks.

The only thought of his benumbed brain was to make the rock ledge somewhere ahead. It grew dark, and the blackness, laden with the blinding, stinging particles, added horror to his bewilderment.

Suddenly his snowshoe struck against a hard object, and he pitched heavily forward upon his face and lay still. He realized then that he was tired.

Never in his life had he been so utterly body-weary, and the snow was soft--soft and warm--and the pelting ceased.

He thrust his arm forward into a more comfortable position and encountered a rock, and sluggishly through his benumbed faculties passed a train of associated ideas--rock, rock ledge, *loup-cerviers*, the boy! With a mighty effort he roused himself from the growing lethargy and staggered blindly to

from the growing lethargy and staggered blindly to his feet.

He filled his lungs, tore the ice-incrusted muffler from his lips and, summoning all his strength, gave voice to the long call of the woods:

"Who-o-o-p-e-e-e!"

But the cry was cut off at his lips. The terrific force of the shifting gusts hurled the sound back into his throat so that it came to his own ears faint and far. Again and again he called, and each time the feeble effort was drowned in the dull roar of the storm.

An unreasoning rage at the futility of it overcame him and he plunged blindly ahead, unheeding, stumbling, falling, rising to his feet and staggering among the tumbled rocks at the foot of the bluff--and then almost in his ear came the sharp, quick sound of a rifle-shot and another and another, at a second apart--the distress signal of the Northland.

CHAPTER XLII

BUCKING THE STORM

Bill Carmody wheeled against the solid rock wall and frantically felt his way along its broken surface. His groping hands encountered a cleft barely wide

enough to admit the passage of a man's body.

With a final effort he called again; instantly the high, clear tones of the boy's voice rang in his ears from the depths of the rock cavern, and the next moment small hands were tugging at his armpits.

"Oh! Bill, I knew you would come!" a small voice cried close to his ear. "It was my last three shots. I've been shooting every little while for hours and hours. Hold on! We've got to take off your snowshoes; they won't come through the door."

A few minutes later the man sat upon the hard floor of the cave which reeked of the rank animal odor of a long-used den. The place was bare of snow and he leaned back against a soft, furry body while the boy rattled on:

"I killed the *loup-cervier*! I chased him in here and shot him right square through the head. And he never kicked--just slunked down in a heap and dropped his rabbit. And now, if we had some matches, we could build a fire--if we had some wood--and cook him. I'm hungry--aren't you?"

The boy's utter disregard of the real seriousness of their plight, and the naive way in which he accepted the coming of his friend as a matter of course, irritated the man, who listened in scowling silence.

"Blood River Jack *was* right," Charlie went on. "I thought he just wanted a chance to sleep for a day. Pretty good storm, isn't it? Say, Bill, how did he know it was going to snow?"

"Look here, young man," Bill replied wrathfully, "do you realize that we are in a mighty bad fix, right this minute? And that it is your fault? And that there was only about one chance in a thousand that I would find you? And that if we ever get out of this, and your Uncle Appleton don't give you a darn good whaling, I *will*?" The man felt a small body press close against him in the darkness.

"Honest, Bill, I'm sorry," a subdued voice answered. "I thought Jack was fooling, and I *did* want to show 'em I could kill something bigger than a rabbit. You aren't mad, are you, Bill? I hope Eth won't worry; we'll prob'ly have to stay here all night, won't we?"

"All night! Won't worry! Don't you know that this is a *regular* blizzard--the kind that kills men at their own doors--and that it may last for a week? And here we are with no fire-wood, and nothing to eat! The chances are mighty good that we'll never see camp again--and you pipe up and hope your sister won't worry!"

Charlie leaned over closer against Carmody's body.

"Why, we've *got* to get back, Bill!" he said, and his

voice was very earnest now. "We're all Eth's got--you and me--and she *needs* us."

The boy felt a sudden tightening of the muscles beneath the heavy mackinaw, and the quick gasp of an indrawn breath. A big arm stole about his shoulders. The harshness was gone from Bill's voice, and when he spoke the sound fell softly upon the culprit's ears.

"Sure, kid, we'll get back. Buck up! We've got a fighting chance, and that's all we need--men like you and me. Life up here is a hard game, kid, but we're no quitters! This is just one of the rough places in the long, long trail.

"And, say, kid--just man to man--I want you always to remember *that*--she needs you--and some day she may need you *bad*. This St. Ledger may be all right, but----"

"St. Ledger!" The voice of the boy cut sharply upon the darkness. "Say, Bill, you aren't going to marry Blood River Jack's sister, are you?"

"What!"

"Why, Blood River Jack's sister, you know, that helped fish you out of the river."

"Lord! *No!* What ever put that into your head?"

"Blood River Jack told us when we were coming

out about you--only we didn't know it was *you*, then. And he said that his sister was pretty, and she loved you, and she went down the river with you for three or four days, or something. And Eth thinks you love this half-breed girl. And, maybe, if you did marry her, Eth would marry St. Ledger; but she don't love him."

Bill sat suddenly erect, and the arm about the boy's shoulder tightened and shook him roughly.

"Look here! How do you know? I read an account of their engagement 'way along last winter."

"That was a *dang lie*! 'Cause I was in the den when she called St. Ledger up about it. She gave him the darndest talking to he ever got, and she told him she never would marry him as long as she lived. And Eth *does* love you! And you ought to heard her stick up for you when old----"

The boy stopped abruptly, suddenly remembering his uncle's injunction of silence. "There's an old dead tree right close to the door of the cave," he added hastily. "We might get some wood off that."

"What were you saying?" inquired Bill. "Never mind the wood."

"Nothing--I forget, I mean. Come on, let's get some wood--I'm hungry."

And in spite of his most persistent efforts not

And in spite of his most persistent efforts, not another word could Bill Carmody get out of the youngster, except the mournful soliloquy that:

"I bet Uncle Appleton *will* whale me--anyway, he couldn't whale as hard as you."

In the thick blackness of the storm the man groped blindly near the snow-choked entrance to the den, guided in his search for the dead tree by the voice of the boy from the interior.

It was no easy task to twist off the dead limbs and carry them one by one to the cavern where the boy piled them against the wall. At length, however, it was accomplished, and Bill crept in and whittled a pile of fine shavings.

A few minutes later the flicker of a tiny flame flashed up, the shavings ignited, and the narrow cavity lighted to the crackle of the fire. Together they skinned the rabbit which the dead lynx had dropped, and soon they were busily engaged in roasting it over the flames.

The two were far from comfortable. Despite the fact that the fire had been built as near as possible to the entrance, the smoke whipped back into their faces. The air became blue and heavy, they coughed, and tears streamed from their eyes at the sting of it.

"I'm thirsty," said the boy, as he finished his portion

of the rabbit. "I guess we'll have to eat snow; there's nothing to melt it in."

"Never eat snow," the man cautioned as his eyes swept the barren interior.

"Why not?"

"It will burn you out. I don't know why, but when a man starts eating snow, it's all off."

Directly in front of him, in the rock floor, was a slight depression, and with a stick Bill scraped the fire close to this natural basin and filled it with dry snow. At the end of ten minutes the snow had melted, leaving a pool of filthy, black water.

"It's the best we can do," laughed the man as the boy made a wry face as he gulped down a swallow of the bitter floor-washing.

They set about skinning the *loup-cervier*, and spread the pelt upon the floor for a robe.

"We'll have to tackle the cat for breakfast," grinned Bill.

"Oh, this is fun!" cried the boy. "It's like getting cast away and living in a cave, like you read about." But the humor of the situation failed to enthuse Bill, who lighted his pipe and stared moodily into the tiny fire.

The two spent a most uncomfortable night. their

brief snatches of sleep being interrupted by long hours of wakefulness when they huddled close to the small blaze.

The scarcity of wood and the danger of suffocation precluded the building of an adequate fire, and the miserable night wore interminably upon the nerves of the imprisoned pair.

At last the dull gray light of morning dispersed the gloom, and the two crept to the snow-choked door.

The storm raged unabated, and their eyes could not penetrate the opaque whiteness of the powdery snow. Bill gathered more firewood, cut up the lynx, and roasted the hams, shoulders, and back.

The meat was dry and stringy, with a disagreeable, strong flavor that savored intimately of the rancid odor of the den. Nevertheless, they devoured a great quantity of the tough, unpalatable food, washing it down with bitter drafts from the pool of dirty snow-water, thick with ashes and the pungent animal reek.

Again the man filled his pipe and sat gazing out upon the whirling void.

"Bill, let's try it," said a voice at his elbow. "She's waiting for us--and worrying."

Carmody glanced quickly into the determined little face. The boy had voiced his own thoughts to the letter, and he remained long without speaking, carefully weighing the chances.

"It's better than staying here," pursued the youngster; "Cause, if we don't snufficate, we'll starve to death, or freeze. We can tie us to each other so we won't get lost, and all we got to do is stick to the river. I can make it if you can," he added naively.

Bill grinned, and then his eyes became serious and he began methodically to stow the remains of the roast cat into his pockets.

"It's going to be an awful pull, kid. You are a man, now, and I'll give it to you straight--maybe we'll make it, and maybe we won't. But I'd hate to 'snufficate'--and she *is* worrying. We'll try it--and God help us, if we don't keep the river."

The skin of the lynx was cut into strips and fashioned into a rawhide line which Bill made fast to their belts, leaving plenty of slack to allow free use of the rackets. The rifle was left in the cave, and, muffled to the ears, the two stepped out into the storm.

Bill judged it to be well after noon when a sudden tightening of the line brought him to an abrupt halt.

Many times during the long hours in which they

many times during the long hours in which they forged slowly ahead had the line gone taut as the boy fell in the snow, but each time it was followed by a wriggling and tugging, and the youngster scrambled gamely to his feet and floundered on in the wake of his big friend.

But this time Carmody waited in vain for the movement of the line that would tell him that the boy was regaining his feet--the line remained taut, and Bill turned and groped in the snow. He lifted the boy to his feet, but the small body sagged limply against his own, and the head rolled weakly.

He shook him roughly and, with his lips close to the boy's ear, shouted words of encouragement. But his only answer was a dull look from the half-closed eyes, and a sleepily muttered jumble of words, in which he made out: "Can't make it--all in--go on--she does love you."

Again and again he tried to rouse him, but all to no purpose; the boy had battled bravely to the end of his endurance, and now only wanted to be let alone. Bill sat beside him in the snow and, sheltering him as best he could from the sting of the wind-driven particles, produced a piece of the meat from his pocket.

The boy gnawed it feebly, and the food revived him somewhat, so that for a few rods he staggered on, but the line again tightened, and this time the man knew that it was useless to attempt to arouse him

knew that it was useless to attempt to arouse his little companion.

Hurriedly removing his mackinaw, he wrapped it around the body of the boy and, by means of a "squaw hitch" sling, swung him to his back. The boy's dangling rackets hindered his movement, and he slashed the thongs and left them in the snow.

Then, straining the last atom of his vitality, he plunged ahead.

The early darkness of the North country settled about the staggering man. His progress was painfully slow and, without sense of direction, he wallowed forward, stumbling, falling, struggling to his feet only to fall again a few rods farther on.

The weight of the boy seemed to crush him into the snow, and each time it became harder and harder to regain his feet against the merciless rush of the blizzard.

He lost all hope of making camp. He did not know whether it was near or far, he only knew that he was upon the river, and that he must push on and on.

He realized dully that he might easily have passed the rollways hours ago. He even considered doubling back; but what was the use? If he passed them once, he would pass them again.

Every drop of his fighting blood was up. He would push on to the end. He would die, of course; but he wouldn't die *yet*! And when he did die, he would *fall* to die--he would never *lie down* to die!

It was not far off, he knew--that fall, when he would never get up. He wondered who would find them; Blood River Jack, probably. As he leaned into the whirling, cutting wind, he thought of Jeanne and of his promise to Wa-ha-ta-na-ta.

His fists clenched, and a few more rods were gained. He thought of Ethel, and of what Charlie had told him in the cave:

"She needs us; we're all she's got--you and me."

Again the fists in the heavy mittens clenched, and more rods were covered. It was growing black; the white smother of snow ceased to dance before his eyes. His advance now was hesitating, dogged; each step became a measure of time.

He reeled suddenly against an unyielding object. A tree, he thought, and grasped it for support as he struggled to get his bearings. He was off the river; yet, when had he ascended the bank?

The tree felt smooth to the touch, and he moved his mittens up and down the trunk. Suddenly he realized that it was no tree, but a skinned pole. His numbed brain groped dully as his hands traveled up

and down its smooth length.

At the height of his waist he encountered a rope, and at the feel of the heavy line the blood surged to his head, clearing his brain.

"The *water-hole*!" he cried thickly. "They've roped off the *water-hole*!" Frantically he pulled himself along, hand over hand. The rope seemed endless, stretching from stake to stake.

He was ascending the bank now at the foot of the rollways--and, at the top was the camp!

He exerted his strength to the uttermost ounce, heaving and lifting with the huge muscles of his legs, and pulling with his arms until it seemed they must be torn from his shoulders, inching himself along, gasping, sweating, straining.

The incline grew steeper, his frozen mittens slipped, the guide-rope tore from his grasp, and he pitched heavily backward into the soft smother.

He struggled helplessly. Something seemed pressing him down, down--at last he was *home*. He had won out against the terrible odds, and the boy was safe.

He had brought him back to her, and now he must sleep. How warm and comfortable it was in the bunk. He did not know a man could be so sleepy.

What was it the girl was singing as he passed her window only a few nights ago--when he paused in the darkness of the clearing to listen?

Dreamily the words floated through his brain:

"And the women are weeping and wringing their hands

For those who will never come back to the town."

But he had come back. He smiled vaguely; they needn't wring their hands and weep--and the rest of it:

"For men must work, and women must weep,

And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep,

And good-by to the bar and its moaning."

Sleep! That's what he needed--sleep. He could sleep forever and ever, here in his warm, warm bunk. And the moaning of the bar--he liked that; he could hear it moaning now--roaring and moaning.

Bill Carmody closed his eyes. The fine, sifting snow came and covered his body and the smaller body of the boy who was lashed firmly to his broad back--and all about him the blizzard howled and roared and moaned.

And it was night!

CHAPTER XLIII

IN CAMP AGAIN

The violence of the storm precluded the use of horses about the camp, and the trail that slanted from the clearing to the water-hole was soon drifted high with snow, rendering useless the heavy tank-sled. Fallon, who had been placed in temporary charge of the camp, told the men into water-shifts; barrels were lashed to strong sleds and man-hauled to the top of the bank, where the guide-rope had been run to the water-hole.

The men of the shift formed a long line reaching from the sled to the river, and the water dipped from the hole cut in the ice was passed from man to man in buckets to be dumped into the barrels and distributed between the stables, cook-shack, bunk-house, and "house."

Darkness had fallen when the men of the afternoon shift wallowed toward the river upon the last trip of the second day of the great blizzard. The roar of the wind as it hurled the frozen particles against their cold-benumbed faces drowned their muttered curses as, thirty strong, they pushed and hauled the cumbersome sled to the top of the bank. Seizing the

buckets, they strung out, making their way down the steep slope with one hand on the guide-rope.

Suddenly the foremost man stumbled and fell. He scrambled profanely to his knees and began feeling about in the thick darkness for his bucket. His mittened hand came into contact with the object which, protruding from the snow, had tripped him, and with a vicious wrench he endeavored to remove it from the trail. It yielded a little, but remained firmly imbedded.

With a wild yell he forgot his bucket and began digging and clawing in the snow, for the object he grasped was the bent ash edge of a snowshoe, and firmly lashed in the center of the webbing was the moccasined foot of a man.

Other men came, floundering and sprawling over each other in the darkness, and the word was bellowed from lips to listening ear that a man lay buried beneath the drift.

"Dig! Ye tarriers!" roared Fallon as his heavy mittens gouged into the snow. "Dig! Ut's th' boss!" he yelled into the ear of the nearest man. "Oi know thim rackets!"

And from lip to bearded lip the word passed, and the big men of the logs redoubled their efforts; but the fine snow had packed hard around the prostrate form, and it was many minutes before they had

uncovered him sufficiently to note the smaller body lashed tightly upon his back. The frozen lash was soon severed and the two exanimate bodies lifted in eager hands.

Buckets were left to snow under as the men crowded up the bank, howling into each other's ears. Big Stromberg, who bore the boss in his arms, was propelled up the steep slope by the men who crowded about him, pushing, pulling, hauling--the ground-gaining, revolving wedge of the old days of mass formation in football.

"To th' office wid um!" roared Fallon in Stromberg's ear as they milled across the clearing. "Th' b'ys'll crowd th' bunk-house till they hindher more thin hilp!"

The boy responded quickly to vigorous treatment and stimulants and was removed to his own bunk and placed under the able care of his Aunt Margaret and Mrs. Sheridan.

In the office Ethel Manton, white-faced and silent, watched breathlessly the efforts of Appleton and Blood River Jack to revive the exhausted and half-frozen foreman. The lumber magnate unscrewed the silver cap from a morocco-covered flask and poured out a generous dose of liquor; but before it reached the unconscious man's lips the half-breed stayed his hand.

"M's'u Bill drinks no whisky," he said. "Even in the time of his great sickness would he drink no whisky; and if you give him whisky he will be very angry."

Appleton paused and glanced curiously from the face of the half-breed to the still form upon the bunk, and the other continued:

"It is strange--I do not know--but he told it to Jeanne one day--that, in the great city of the white man is a girl he loves. He used to drink much whisky, and for that reason she sent him from her--and now he drinks no whisky--even though this girl has married another."

Ethel stared at the speaker, wide-eyed, and the pallor of her face increased.

"Married another!" she gasped.

Jacques regarded her gravely. "I know nothing except it was told me by Jeanne," he returned--"how he talked in the voice of the fever-spirit, that this girl would marry another. In the paper he read it--but even so, will he drink no whisky. One week ago did he not hear how one night in the bunk-house Leduc tried to make the little boy drink whisky? And did he not hunt up Leduc the next morning, and, upon the skidway, smash the nose of him and knock four teeth from his jaw?"

The guide paused, and Appleton slowly screwed the silver top to his flask and returned it to his

the silver top to his back and returned it to his pocket.

"Upon the stove is a pot of very strong coffee which Daddy Dunnigan told me to bring," Jacques went on; "and he is even now making broth in the cook-shack. M's'u' Bill cannot die. The strong coffee and the good broth will bring him back to life; for he is called in the woods The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die.

"If he could die he would die in the blizzard. For, since blizzards were known, has no man done a thing like this--to search for two days and a night for one boy lost in the snow, and carry him home in safety."

The half-breed finished, and the girl, with a low cry, sank into a chair and, leaning forward upon the desk, buried her face in her arms while her shoulders shook with the violence of her sobbing.

Appleton crossed to her side and laid a hand gently upon her shoulder.

"Come, Ethel," he said; "this has been too much for you. Let me take you to the house."

But the girl shook her head. She raised her eyes, wet with tears, and with an effort controlled her voice.

"My place is here--with *him*," she said softly as she arose, and, walking to the side of the cot, looked

down at the set face of the unconscious man. "Leave me alone now. There is nothing you can do. I will stay with him while you sleep. Draw your cot close to the wall, and if I need you I will knock. Jacques will go to the cook-shack," she added, turning to the half-breed, "and when the broth is ready bring it to me."

The men obeyed without question, and as the office door closed behind them the girl dropped to her knees beside the bunk and, throwing her arms about the man's neck, pressed her soft cheek close against his bearded face.

The little tin lamp in its bracket beside the row of books on the top of the desk was turned low and its yellow light illuminated dimly the interior of the rough room. She slipped into an easier position and, seated upon the floor at the edge of the low bunk, drew his head close against her breast. At the touch--the feel of this strong man lying helpless in her arms--the long-pent yearning of her soul burst the studied bonds of its restraint and through her whole body swept the torrent of a mighty love.

Resistlessly it engulfed every nerve and fiber of her--wave upon wave of wild, primitive passion surged through her veins until her heart seemed bursting with the sweet, intense pain of it. Fiercely, in the hot, quick flame of passion, she strained him to her breast and her lips sought his in an abandon of feverish kisses.

And in that moment she knew that, in all the world of men, this man was *her* man. Always he had dominated her life--always she had known this great love, had fought against it, and feared it--and always she had held it in check.

But now, alone in the night, with the man lying helpless in her arms, this mighty passion welled to the bursting of restraint.

Her heart, subservient no longer to the will of her brain nor to creeds nor the tenets of convention, had this night come into its own, and she loved with the hot, savage mate-love of her pristine forebears.

The man's lips moved feebly upon hers and the closed eyelids fluttered. The girl sprang to the stove and returned a second later bearing a thick porcelain cup steaming with strong, black coffee.

She raised his head upon her arm and, holding the cup, let part of its contents trickle between his lips. He strangled weakly and swallowed.

Again she tilted the cup and again he swallowed. "My darling! My darling!" she sobbed as the fluttering eyelids half opened and the lips moved, and then leaned close to catch their faintest murmur.

"Jeanne," he whispered, "Jeanne, little girl----" and then the lips ceased to move, he shuddered slightly

through the length of him, his eyes closed, and he slept.

The thick cup thudded heavily upon the floor and its contents splashed unheeded over her gown, as the girl sat motionless, staring past the bunk at the blank wall of logs.

The little nickel-plated alarm-clock ticked loudly in sharp, insistent threes, as she sat, white of face, with set lips and unwinking eyes staring stonily at the parallel logs of the wall.

Centuries of supercultivation and the refinement of breeding were concentrated in that white-lipped, cold-eyed stare, which is the heart-mask of the *recherché* woman of empire. And then--the mask dropped.

The inevitable artificiality of years of unconscious eugenic selection melted in a breath before the fierce onrush of savage emotion. The girl sprang to her feet as the hot blood surged to her face and paced frantically back and forth in a fume of primordial hate. Her small fists clenched till pink nails bit deep into soft, pink palms. Her nostrils dilated, quivering; her eyes flashed, and the breath hissed through her lips in deep sobs of impotent rage against the woman who had robbed her of this man's love and whose name was upon his lips in the first moment of his awakening.

She moved and moved into the face of the man who

She paused and gazed into the face of the man who was the hero of her fondest dreams--the man who had overcome obstacles, who defied danger and death, and had won, with his two hands and the great force of his personality, the respect and devotion of the big men of the rough country.

And he was hers--never had he been aught else but hers--and she had lost him! Wildly she resumed her restless pacing, while the words of the half-breed rang in her ears: "She is beautiful, and she loves him."

She halted abruptly, and in her eye flashed a momentary ray of hope; the man had said, not "He loves her," but, "She loves him." Could it be--but, no, there were his own words, spoken at the time of their first meeting in the gloom of this very room: "I forgot that I have not the right--that there is another."

And was it not *her* name that sprang to his lips in the half-consciousness of a few moments ago? In her mind she pictured the wild, dark beauty of the other girl, and in the jealous fury of her heart could have torn her in pieces with her two hands.

"M's'u' Bill drinks no whisky"--the dream of her life had been realized, but in the realization she had been beaten--all her hopes and prayers, the long, bitter hours of her soul-anguish, which burned and gnawed beneath the stoicism and apathy her

environment demanded, had gone for naught, and she, who had borne the brunt of the long battle, was brushed aside and forgotten.

The spoils belonged to another--and that other, an *Indian!*

CHAPTER XLIV

THE MISSING BONDS

The walls of the room seemed the restraining bars of a prison, shutting her apart from life and the right to love. She lifted the latch and flung open the door, standing upon the threshold amid the seething inrush of the storm.

The fine snow felt good against her throbbing temples, and she stared into the blackness whose whirling chaos voiced the violence of the heart-storm that raged within her breast. *He* had conquered the storm!

She shivered as an icy blast sent the snow-powder flying half across the room, closed the door, and resumed her tireless journey to and fro, to and fro, and at each turn she glanced at the sleeping man.

She dropped to her knees beside the bunk and looked long into his rugged face. He, too, had

suffered. She remembered the deep hurt in his eyes at their parting. Yet he was not beaten.

She had sent him from her, heartsick and alone into the great world, and he had fought and conquered and earned a place among men.

And as the girl looked, her eyes grew tender and the pain in her heart seemed more than she could bear. When she rose to her feet the savage hatred was gone from her heart, and in its place was determination--the determination to win back the love of this man.

She, too, would fight, even as he had fought--and win. He had not been discouraged and beaten. She remembered the look upon his face as he strode toward her that morning on the skidway in search of Leduc.

Unconsciously her tiny fists doubled, her delicate white jaw squared, and her eyes narrowed to slits, even as his had narrowed--but her lips did not smile.

He was *her* man! She could give him more than this half-breed girl could give him, and she would fight to win back her own--that which had been her own from the first.

Almost at her feet upon the floor, just under the edge of the bunk where it had been carelessly

tossed, lay his mackinaw of coarse, striped cloth. The girl stooped, drew it forth, and smoothed it out.

"His coat," she breathed almost reverently as she patted its rough folds. "He took it off and wrapped it around Charlie. Oh, it must have been terrible-*-terrible!*"

She was about to hang it upon its peg when something fell to the floor with a sharp slap--a long, heavy envelope that had dropped from a ragged tear in the lining where the men had ripped it from the body of the boy.

She hung the garment upon its peg and stooped to recover the packet. The envelope was old, and had evidently been exposed to the action of water, for the flap gaped open and the edges were worn through at the ends. Upon one side was tightly bound a photograph, dim and indistinct from the rub of the coarse cloth.

Her lips tightened at the corners as she stepped to the desk and turned up the lamp. She would see what manner of girl it was who had scored so heavily against her in this battle of hearts. She held the picture close to the yellow flame and stared unbelievably at the nearly effaced features.

With a swift movement she tore the encircling cord from the packet and examined it more closely. Her heart beat wildly, and the blood surged through her

veins in great, joyous waves. For the photograph showed, not the dark features of the Indian girl, but--*her own!*

Worn almost beyond recognition it was, with corners peeled and rolled back from the warped and water-thickened mounting--but unmistakably *her picture.*

"He cares! He does care!" she repeated over and over. "Oh, my boy! My boy!" And then her eyes fell upon the thick envelope with its worn edges and open flap which lay unheeded upon the desk-top.

Mechanically she reached for it, and her hand came in contact with its thick, heavily engraved contents. She raised the papers to the light and stared; there were five in all, neatly folded, lying one upon another.

The green background of the topmost one was faded and streaked, and a thin, green wash had trickled over the edges of the others, staining them.

A yellow slip of paper fluttered to the desk. She picked it up and read the almost illegible, typewritten lines. It was a memorandum addressed to Strang, Liebhardt & Co., and bearing the faded signature of Hiram Carmody.

A sudden numbness overcame the girl. She sank slowly into the chair in front of the desk and stared dully from the yellowed slip of paper to the faded

dully from the yellowed slip of paper to the faded green bonds.

The room seemed suddenly cold, and she stared, unseeing, at her bloodless finger-tips. She tried to think--to concentrate her mind upon the present--but her brain refused to act, and she muttered helplessly:

"The bonds--the bonds--he took the bonds!"

Like one in a dream, she arose and replenished the fire in the little air-tight. It had burned almost to ashes.

She watched the yellow flames lick hungrily at the bubbling pitch of the knot she had thrown upon the coals, and glanced from the flaring flames to the little pile of green papers--and back again at the little flames that climbed higher about the resinous chunk.

"Why not?" she muttered. "They can never prove he took them, and he would think that they were lost." For a long time she sat, thinking, and then she closed the stove and returned to the desk.

"I stood by him when his father accused him," she murmured, "when I thought he was innocent. And now--oh, I can't! I can't give him up!" Her voice quavered pitifully, and she clutched at the hurt in her throat.

"I can't!" she gasped again. "He needs me now. He is mine! *Mine!*" she cried fiercely. "We will work it out together. He was weak then--but now he is strong. I will tell him that I know, and persuade him to return them. And then he will be clean--brave and strong and *clean!*"

She started nervously at the sound of a fumbling at the latch. Hastily catching up the bonds, she thrust them into the bosom of her gown and turned to face Blood River Jack, who entered, bearing a steaming pail of broth and a larger pail covered with a clean white cloth.

Behind him Daddy Dunnigan noisily stamped the snow from his feet. The old man hobbled to the side of the bunk and looked intently into the face of the sleeper, and, stooping, held his ear close to the man's heart.

With a satisfied nod he turned to the girl, who stood close by his side.

"He's shlaypin' foine," he said, and the little red-rimmed eyes looked straight into the eyes of blue. "But, miss, hear-rt-hunger has kilt more good min thin belly-hunger--ye'll foind th' *broth* in yon buckut."

He joined the half-breed, who waited in silence. At the door he turned and again addressed the girl.

"In th' big bucket's ye're oun snack. Ate ut betoor ut gits cowl'd. Phwin ye're done, wake um up an' make um dhrink some coffee an' all he c'n howld av th' broth. He's th' bist man in th' woods, an' ut's up to you to pull um t'rough."

Before the girl could reply the door closed and the two men were swallowed up in the storm.

Ethel was surprised to find that she was hungry, and the appetizing luncheon which old Daddy Dunnigan had carefully prepared and packed for her was soon disposed of.

The hands of the little alarm-clock pointed to two as she crossed and knelt at the side of the sleeping man. She leaned over and kissed his forehead--his lips--and whispered softly into his ear.

"Bill--Bill, *dear*."

She blushed at the sound of the word, and glanced hurriedly about the room, but there was no one to hear, and the man slept on undisturbed by the tiny whisper. She laid a hand upon his shoulder and shook him gently.

"Bill--wake up!" He stirred slightly, and a sigh escaped him.

"Come, wake up, dear, you must eat."

This time she did not blush at the word, and the

shaking became more vigorous. Carmody moved uneasily, grunted, and opened his eyes. Ethel started at the steady gaze of the grey eyes so close to her own. The grey eyes closed and he passed a hand slowly across them.

"A dream," he muttered, and the girl leaned closer.

"No, Bill," she whispered, "it is not a dream. I am here--Ethel--don't you know me?"

"Ethel," he repeated, and the name seemed to linger on his lips. "We must get back to her, kid, she is worrying--come--mush, kid--mush!" The girl laid a soft hand on his forehead and smoothed back the tangled hair.

"Bill, dear," she whispered, with her lips close to his, "Charlie is safe. And you are safe, here in the office--with me."

Bill seemed suddenly to grasp the situation.

"Ethel!" he exclaimed. And then, in a dull, tired voice, "I--I brought him back to you." His eyes closed, and he turned his face toward the wall.

Ethel poured a cup of coffee from the pot on the stove, and returning, seated herself upon the edge of the bunk. Deftly her arm slipped under his head, and she held the cup to his lips. Bill drank greedily to the last drop, and the girl filled another cup with
broth

This time he helped a little, and she raised him higher and pillowed his head against her breast. He sipped the broth hungrily, but very slowly, pausing a long time between sips.

Ethel's body thrilled at the touch of him, the little hand that held the cup trembled, and the man, close-pressed against her soft breast, heard the wild pounding of her heart.

Suddenly he looked up into her eyes. Her face flushed crimson, and the swift down-sweep of the long lashes hid the soft, blue eyes from the intense, burning gaze of the hard grey ones. In confusion she averted her face.

There was a swift movement beside her, and the next instant strong arms were about her, and she heard, as from afar, the heavy thud as the porcelain cup struck the floor.

Vainly she struggled in a sudden frenzy of panic to free herself from the embrace of the encircling arms, and her heart was filled with a great, passionate gladness at the futility of her tiny efforts as she felt herself drawn closer and ever closer against the mighty chest of the big man whom, in spite of herself, and of his own shortcomings and weaknesses, she loved with the savage abandon that is the wonder-love of woman. She knew, too, that the deep music in her ears was the sound of his

and the deep thrum in her ears was the sound of his voice which came in short, stabbing, half-sentences.

"Ethel! Ethel! Little girl--you are mine, mine, *mine*! You *do* love me! Darling, better than life itself, I love you. I have always loved you! Tell me, dear, it was all a lie--about St. Ledger. Tell me you love me, dearest!"

The bearded lips found hers, and for answer, her struggles ceased, her body relaxed against his body, her soft arms stole timidly about his neck, and there was a wild singing in her heart.

"And there has never been another?" she whispered a few minutes later as she sat close beside him and watched him sip hot broth from the thick cup. The grey eyes twinkled.

"Don't you *know*, sweetheart, that there has never been another? Why, you have known me all my life!" But the blue eyes were serious.

"I mean, since--since you went away?" For answer the man raised his arm and pointed toward the opposite wall.

"Hand me that mackinaw," he said. Ethel gasped and stared at him wide eyed. "The *mackinaw*--that old striped coat next to the slicker," he smiled.

"But----" she stifled the protest, and the man wondered at the sudden pallor of her face.

"Hand it here," he repeated, "there is something I want to show you."

Without a word the girl crossed the room and, removing the mackinaw from its peg, laid it upon the blanket within reach of his hand. He drew it to him, and the girl watched in silence while he ran his fingers over the lining.

He plunged his arm to the elbow into the ragged hole and explored to the very corners the space between the lining and the cloth. With a blank expression of disappointment he looked up at her.

"They are gone," he said in a low voice. "My letters and my picture. *Your* letters, dear--and *your* picture----

"Letters!" the girl gasped, leaning forward and staring into his eyes.

"Why, yes, darling. There were only a few. You wrote them when I was in Europe. They were all I had--those few little letters, and the photograph. You remember--the one you gave me----

"But--I don't understand----

"I always kept it on my desk at home," he continued, ignoring the interruption. "And your letters, too--all sealed in a big envelope. And the morning I went away I bound the picture to the

envelope and put it in my pocket, and I have always kept it with me.

"A thousand times, dear, I have looked at the picture. It has been my fetish--the little amulet that keeps a man from harm. And whether or not it has succeeded, dear heart, you must judge for yourself."

"But, the letters--you never took them out--never read them?" The man was surprised at the intense eagerness of her tone.

"No," he answered, "I never read them. You see, it got to be a sort of game with me. It was a big game that I played against myself, and when I was sure I had won I was going to open the letters."

He paused and looked into the girl's eyes. "And then, one day I happened to read in an old newspaper the account of your engagement to St. Ledger. I almost lost the game, then--but I didn't. And--after that--the letters never were the same, and I--I just played the game to *win*."

There were tears in the girl's eyes, and she clutched at his hand.

"But the bonds?" she cried. The man regarded her with a puzzled look.

"Bonds--bonds--what bonds?"

"Why, the bonds you were to have delivered to Strang, Liebhardt & Co. Securities, or something."

Bill stared uncomprehendingly, then suddenly he laughed.

"Oh! Those! Why, I handed them over to father. You see, Dad handed it to me pretty straight that morning. In fact, he--er--fired me. So I gave him the bonds and----"

The sentence was never finished. With a glad cry the girl flung herself upon him, and to his unutterable wonder sobbed and sobbed.

CHAPTER XLV

SNOW-BOUND

Late in the following afternoon Ethel awoke and lay for a long time revelling in her new-found happiness, and thinking of the big man who had come once more into her life, this time bringing her only gladness and the joy of an infinite love.

Her heart glowed with pride as she thought of the strength and the fine courage of him, and she flushed as she wondered how, even with the bonds in her hands, she could have doubted his innocence.

Ah, well, she would never doubt him again.

She smiled fondly, but the smile slowly faded, for in her mind at that moment was a doubt--a vague, elusive doubt, that rested upon the slender fabric of a half-breed's fireside tale.

Somewhere in the wild country was another girl--a girl who was beautiful and who loved this man--*her* man.

In the small hours of the morning as they talked he had not mentioned this girl, and Ethel forbore to question him, hoping that he would tell her of his own accord. But whether or not he purposely avoided the subject she did not know.

She believed in him--believed in his great love for her, in his absolute honesty and the new-found strength in him. Yet, hovering like a specter, intangible, elusive, menacing--the one disturbing element in her otherwise perfect happiness--was the other girl.

Who was she? What was she? What had she been to him? What had been their relations? And why had she accompanied him on his journey out of the woods? The phantom girl took on a sinister form as the question tantalized her brain.

This wild woman had helped to draw him from the river, had nursed him through a long sickness. He

was under obligations to her, and--was that the *only obligation?*

The girl flushed hotly, and with an impatient movement flung the blankets from her, and proceeded to dress.

"I will never, never ask him," she decided, as she sat upon the thick bearskin in front of the stove and drew on her stockings. "He loves me and I love him.

"If he tells me it will be of his own free will; he shall not know that I ever heard of this girl. What is past, is past. There are sealed chapters in the lives of most men--why should I care?

"He is mine--mine!" she cried aloud, "and I love him!"

But deep down in her heart she knew that she did care--and that she would always care. And the knowledge hurt.

Her toilet completed, the girl passed into the other room, where Appleton and Sheridan were engaged in a lively discussion with the ladies.

"How is he?" She addressed her uncle, who answered with twinkling eyes.

"Bill? Oh, he's all right. Feeling fit as a fiddle. Wanted to get out on the job, but I wouldn't let him.

He was going anyhow, and the only way I could make him stay in was to threaten to wake you up to give him his orders straight from headquarters."

Ethel blushed furiously as the smiles of the others were directed toward her. "Yup, he wouldn't stand for that," went on Appleton. "Said he'd rather lie in bed for a week than have you puttering around."

With a disdainful toss of her head the girl seated herself at the table.

"Now, Hubert Appleton, you stop teasing that poor girl!" Aunt Margaret rallied in her defence. "Don't pay any attention to him, honey. Bill is doing nicely, and we're all crazy to congratulate you. We think he is just *grand*!"

Dinner had been kept piping hot, and Ethel hid her confusion behind an appetizing array of steaming dishes.

"And what do you think?" continued her aunt, who hovered about the table with fussy little pats and arrangement of dishes, "we have to stay here all winter!"

"What?" cried the girl in dismay.

"That is just what we both said--Mary and I. But there is no help for it. The tote-road is drifted twenty feet deep. Hubert and Mr. Sheridan are going to make the trip on snowshoes; they must get

going to make us up on snowshoes, they must get back to business. The supplies will have to be brought in on dog-sleds, and we have got to stay."

"I'll bet Ethel could think of a worse predicament," grinned Appleton. "She'll be a regular sourdough before spring; won't want to come out."

"But I have nothing to wear!"

"Nothing to wear!" scoffed her uncle. "Tell me, please, what in time you women have got packed in those half a dozen trunks, then? It's not grub. I'll bet there's clothes enough in those trunks to last three women fourteen years! Still, if you really get cold, you might ask Bill to lend you a pair of his----"

"Hubert Appleton!" The lumberman glanced at his wife in surprise. "A pair of his moccasins--they'll keep your toes warm."

The girl finished her belated dinner, and throwing a coat over her shoulders stepped out into the clear, crisp air. Immediately in front of the building the wind had swept the ground almost bare of snow, but Ethel gasped with surprise as her eyes sought the other buildings of the camp.

The blacksmith's shop was entirely buried under a huge drift; only one half of the cook-shack roof was visible, and the bunk-house was buried to the eaves. A twenty-foot drift cut off the view of the stables, and the whole crew was busy digging paths

and breaking out skidways.

The storm had ceased as suddenly as it had come, and the sun shone with dazzling whiteness upon the mystic, snow-buried world.

In the office she found Bill fully dressed, propped against his pillows, a villainous black pipe between his lips, reading. He laid aside his book and pipe and stretched his arms toward her.

She crossed, blushing, to his side, and for a long time sat with her head resting upon his shoulder, while his great arms held her close against his beating heart.

And under the spell of his presence and his gently murmured words of love, the disquieting fear vanished, and she knew that he was all hers. And she laughed at her fear, and drove it from her in the foolish belief that it could never return.

"Dear," she said later when their conversation assumed an intelligible form, "you must send those bonds back by Uncle Appleton. Just think--your father thinks you *stole* them!"

The man smiled:

"Yes, poor old dad. It must be kind of rough on him to think his son is a thief. He was sore that morning, and so was I, and we didn't part the best of friends.

But I would rather return the bonds myself. Darling, we will take them to him, you and I, next summer, when we go back to the old town."

"Go back!" exclaimed the girl.

"Sure. When we go back on our honeymoon. Now that I have you I am never, never going to let you go, and when next you see the big burg, you will be Mrs. Bill Carmody."

He kissed the serious blue eyes that looked up into his.

"But, dear, we are coming back here?"

"Back here!" he exclaimed in surprise. "You! Back here! In the woods!"

The girl nodded.

"I love the woods; I will always love them. It was in the woods that you found *yourself* and your place among men. And it was in the woods that I found you--the *real* you--the *you* I have always loved!"

"But, dear heart, it is a rough life up here. It is new to you now, and you are enchanted; but there is so much you would miss. I have to come back, of course--will have to for several years to come. We could have a house in Minneapolis, and Charlie could go to school."

"What! And only have you for five or six months in the year? No, *sir*! Charlie could live with Uncle and Aunt Margaret and go to school, but you and I are coming into the woods.

"Aunt Margaret lived in camps for years when she was first married, and they were as poor as church mice. She told me all about it. Of course, there is hard work; but it is all so big, and grand, and free, and there is lots of fun, too, and you will have to teach me to shoot and walk on snowshoes and fish through holes cut in the ice.

"I can cook and sew, and we will have a victrola, and lots of books and things--anyway, that is the way it is going to be, so there is no use arguing about it." And the boss smiled as he realized what Appleton meant when he said: "Orders straight from headquarters."

The two lumbermen took their departure the following morning amid the hearty farewells of the snow-bound camp. They were accompanied by Blood River Jack, who reluctantly agreed to see the dog-team tote service established before returning to his lodge at the foot of the rapid.

"We'll come up for you in the spring," called Appleton, "and we'll follow the drive in a bateau. You got a bigger taste of the old life than you bargained for, little girl," he smiled at his wife; "but the tote-road is ruined for this winter and you'll have

to make the best of it."

"H. D. and I will sure think of you girls while we're sitting in the baldheaded pews at the Gaiety this winter gloating over the grand opera we're missing!" called Sheridan, rolling his cigar juicily between his grinning lips.

"Men of your age----" began Mrs. Sheridan.

"Hubert Appleton! If I hear----" But the protests of the "girls" fell upon deaf ears as the men disappeared in the wake of the guide, slapping each other upon the back in high glee.

The question of grand opera was a joke of long standing between them, and up to the present had been on the husbands, who, despite their protests, had manfully endured their annual week of martyrdom.

"Cheer up, ladies," smiled Bill, "the graphophone is a very good one, and in the office is a whole box of records of my own selection. If we are snow-bound we will not have to entirely forego even grand opera."

CHAPTER XLVI

Despite the handicap of the deep snow, results in the new camp were highly satisfactory to Bill Carmody.

Not a man in the crew but swore by the boss, and each day threw himself into the work with a will that made for success. And each night, as he rolled into his bunk, not a man but knew that the boss himself had that day worked harder than he.

"Niver wuz such a crew in th' woods, miss," boasted Daddy Dunnigan one afternoon as Ethel stood in the door of the cook-shack and watched the old man's preparation of the gigantic supper.

"Oi've logged a bit, here an' there, an' always Oi've be'n where min wuz--but niver Oi've seed 'em buckle down an' tear out th' bone, wan day wid another, save in th' so'gerin' days av Captain Fronte McKim.

"Th' same wuz th' boss's uncle, an' he's a McKim fir th' sole av his feet to th' peak av his head, barrin' th' licker, an' th' min'll go t'rough hell an' hoigh wather fer um, beggin' ye're pardon--an' he ain't no dommed angel, nayther, beggin' ut ag'in, miss.

"Ye sh'd see th' hand av poker he plays, an' th' beautiful swearin' av um, phwin things goes wrong! An' ye sh'd see um foight wanst! An' now he's gone an' poshted a foive per cint bonus av they bate

Moncrossen's cut, an' uts loike handin' ut to 'em, 'cause he knows th' b'ys is already doin' their dommedest, beggin' ye're pardon, miss.

"O'i'll bet me winther's wages, come shpr-ring, we'll have Moncrossen shnowed undher dayper thin' yon smithy, an' they had to tunnel to foind ut."

The girl laughed happily and passed on with a great love in her heart for Daddy Dunnigan and the big, rough men out in the timber who were "tearing out the bone" that *her* man might make good.

Day by day the black pyramids of the rollways lengthened, and the skidways were pushed farther and farther into the timber. And, of all the men in the crew, none worked harder nor to better purpose than Stromberg, the big hulking Swede, whom Fallon had warned Bill was the brains of Moncrossen's bird's-eye gang.

Neither Bill nor the big swamper had ever alluded to that affair in the bunk-house upon the night of their first meeting, and it was with a feeling of surprise that the foreman looked up one evening as he sat alone in the little office to see Stromberg enter and cross to his side.

The man lost no time in coming to the point.

"Bill," he began, "I went up with Buck Moncrossen this summer to bring down the bird's-eye. We

found a pile of ashes where the logs should have been. Moncrossen thinks Creed burned them--or let someone do it.

"It was a crooked game, and I was in it as deep as any one. I ain't trying to beg off--but, I'd rather be square than crooked--and that's the truth. I ain't spent most of my life in the woods not to be able to tell hardwood ashes from soft-wood, and I know you slipped one over on us.

"You're going to make good in the woods. You'll be the big boss, some day. I expect to do time for my part in the bird's-eye game, and I'll take all that's coming to me. And I won't snitch on the rest to get a lighter sentence, either.

"I know Appleton, and I know we'll get ours in the spring, but what I want to know is: when I get out, can I come to you for a job?"

Bill rose from his chair and thrust a big hand toward the other.

"Stromberg," he said, "you are no more a crook than I am. You threw in with a bad bunch--that's all. Suppose we just forget the bird's-eye business. You and Fallon are the two best men I've got.

"We are going to beat Moncrossen this year, and every man in the crew has got to help do it--and next winter--well, Mr. Appleton will have an eye needled for a man to take Moncrossen's job--see?"

picked for a man to take Moncrossen's job--see:

The two big men shook hands, and as he made his way to the bunk-house, Stromberg wondered at the peculiar smile on the boss's lips as he said:

"There are a hell of a lot of good men wasted because of a bad start. So-long."

The weeks slipped rapidly by. The weather settled, keen and cold, with the crew keyed to the highest pitch of efficiency.

"Beat Buck Moncrossen!" became the slogan of the camp, and with the lengthening days it became apparent that a record cut was being banked on the rollways.

It was a wonderful winter for Ethel Manton. The spirit of the big country entered her blood. More and more she loved the woods, and learned to respect and admire the rough loyalty of the big men of the logs.

She had come to call most of them by name, as with a smile and a nod, or a wave of the hand, she passed them in the timber on her daily excursions in search of rabbits and ptarmigan. And not a man in the crew but would gladly have fought to the last breath for "the boss's girl."

And now the feel of spring was in the air. Each day the sun climbed higher and higher, and the wind lost

its sting. The surface of the snow softened by day, and high-piled white drifts settled slowly into soggy masses of saturated, gray slush.

Bill figured that he had nearly fifteen million feet down when he called off his sawyers and ordered the clean-up. The nights remained cold, freezing the surface of the sodden snow into a crust of excellent footing, so that the day's work began at midnight and continued until the crust softened under the rays of the morning sun.

The men laughed and sang and talked of the drive, and of the waterfront dives of cities, whose calk-pocked floors spoke the shame of the men of the logs.

But most of all they talked of the wedding. For as they sat at the supper-table on the day the last tree fell, the boss entered, accompanied by the girl.

In a few brief words he told them that he was proud of every man jack of them; that they were the best crew that ever came into the woods, and that they had more than earned the bonus.

He told them that he realized he was a greener, and thanked them for their loyalty and coöperation, without which his first season as camp foreman must have been doomed to failure.

Cheer after cheer interrupted his words, and when

he took Ethel by the hand and announced that they were soon to be married in that very room and invited all hands to the wedding, their cheers drowned his voice completely.

But when the girl tried to speak to them, choked in confusion, and with her eyes brimming with tears, extended both hands and gasped: "Oh, I--I love you all!" the wild storm of applause threatened to tear the roof from the log walls.

It was Ethel's idea that they should be married in the woods. Her love for the wild country grew deeper with the passing days. She loved it all--the silent snow-bound forest, the virile life of the big camp with its moments of tense excitement, the mighty crash with which tall trees tore through the branches of lesser trees to measure their length on the scarred snow, the thrill of hunting wild things, and the long evenings when the rich tones of the graphophone fell upon her ears amid rough surroundings, like a voice from the past.

But most of all she loved the long walks in the forest, in the deep gloom of moonlit nights with the weird, mysterious shadows all about them as the big man at her side told her of his great love while they planned and dreamed of the future; and then returned to the little office where she listened while he read aloud, pausing now and then to light his black pipe and blow clouds of blue smoke toward the low ceiling.

He had grown very close to her, and very dear, this big, impetuous boy, who had suddenly become a masterful man, and in whom she found each day some new depth of feeling--some entirely unsuspected and unexplored nook of his character.

Her doubts and fears had long since been thrust aside, and even the existence of the Indian girl had been forgotten. And so it was that when Ethel told Bill one evening she wished their wedding to take place in the camp, amid the scenes of their future hardships and happiness, he acquiesced gladly, and to the laughing outrage of her dignity picked her up in his two hands and tossed her high in the air as he would have tossed a baby.

And now the time of the wedding was very near. The clean-up was finished, and day by day they awaited the coming of Appleton and Sheridan, and of Father Lapre, of the Rice Lake Mission.

The men of the crew set about to make the event one long to be remembered in the Northland. Flowers were unobtainable, but a frame in the form of a giant horseshoe was constructed and covered over with pine-cones.

A raid was made upon the oat-bin, and the oats sifted between the scales of the cones and moistened. The structure was placed near the stove in the bunk-house, and when the tiny, green shoots

began to appear, woe to him who procrastinated in the closing of the door or neglected to tend fire when it was his turn!

The walls of the grub-shack were completely hidden behind pine-branches, and festoons of brilliant red *bakneesh* encircled the room and depended from the chains of the big, swinging lamps.

In the bunk-house the men busied themselves in the polishing of buck-horns for the fashioning of a wonderful chair in whose make-up would be found neither nails nor glue, its parts being bound together by means of sinews and untanned buckskin thongs.

The bateaux were set up and waiting at the head of the rollways. The snow of the forest slumped lower and lower, and innumerable icy rills found their way to the river over the surface of whose darkened, honeycombed ice flowed a shallow, slushy stream.

Father Lapre arrived one morning, pink, smiling, and wet to the middle, having blundered onto thin ice in the darkness. The following morning Sheridan and Appleton appeared with mysteriously bulging packs, and weary from their three nights' battle with the slippery, ice-crust ed tote-road.

CHAPTER XLVII

MONCROSSEN PAYS A VISIT

In the filthy office of the camp on the Lower Blood River, Buck Moncrossen sat at his desk and glowered over his report sheets. The ill-trimmed lamp smoked luridly, and the light that filtered through its blackened chimney illumined dimly the interior of the little room.

The man pawed over his papers with bearlike clumsiness, pausing now and then to wet a begrimed thumb and to curse his luck, his crew, his employer, and any and everything that had to do with logs and logging.

It had been a bad season for Buck Moncrossen. The spring break-up was at hand, and the best he could figure was a scant nine million feet, where Appleton had expected the heavy end of a twenty-five-million-foot cut.

Many of his best men had gone to the new camp to work, as they supposed, under Fallon. The previous winter's bird's-eye cut was lost; Creed was gone; Stromberg was gone, and he trusted none of his men sufficiently to continue the game. The boss rose with a growl, and spat copiously in the direction of the stove.

"Damn Appleton! And damn the crew! Nine million feet! At that, though, I bet I've laid down half again

as much as the new camp. Fallon never run a crew, an' he had his camp to build to boot."

He resumed his seat, and reaching to the top of the desk drew down a quart bottle, from which he drank in long, deep gurgles. He stared a long time at the bottle, drank again, and stooping, began to unlace his boots.

"I'll start the clean-up in the mornin', an' then I'll find time to pay a little visit I be'n aimin' to pay all winter. Creed said she was somewheres below the foot of the rapids. It's anyways ten days to the break-up; an' I ain't worryin' a damn if I do happen to foul Fallon's drive."

Jacques Lacombe had so arranged his trap-lines that on his longest circle he should be absent only one night from the lodge where old Wa-ha-ta-na-ta kept an ever-vigilant eye upon the comings and goings of Jeanne.

Since his return after the great blizzard the half-breed had made numerous trips to the camp of Moncrossen, carrying fresh venison, and he did not like the shifting glances the boss bent toward him, nor the leering smile with which he inquired after Jeanne.

As the freezing nights hardened the crust upon the surface of the sodden snow, Jacques discarded his rackets and spending his days in the lodge

attended his traps at night by the light of a lantern.

Daylight found him one morning headed homeward on a course paralleling the river and nearly opposite Moncrossen's camp. Steadily he plodded onward, and a smile came to his lips as he formulated his plans for the summer, which included the removal of Jeanne from her dangerous proximity to Moncrossen.

He would change his hunting-ground, move his lodge up the river, and next season he would supply the camp of M's'u' Bill, whose heart was good, and who would see that no harm came to the girl.

He swung onto the marshy arm of a small lake, whose surface was profusely dotted with conical muskrat houses which reared their brown domes above the broken rice-straw and cattail stalks.

He had nearly reached the center when suddenly he halted, whirled half around, and clutched frantically at the breast of his shirt. It was as though some unseen hand had dealt him a sharp blow, and a dull, scorching pain shot through his chest.

He drew away his hand, red and dripping, glanced wildly about, staggered a few steps, and crashed headlong, with a rustling sound, into the thick growth of dry cattail stalks.

On the bank of the marsh a thin puff of vapory

smoke drifted across the face of a blackened stump and dissolved in the crisp air, and the sharp crack of a high-power rifle of small caliber raised scarcely an echo against the wall of the opposite shore.

A man stepped from behind the stump, glanced sharply about him, and grinned as he leisurely pumped another cartridge into the chamber.

He bit the corner from a thick plug of tobacco, and gazed out over the marsh, which showed only the light yellow of the dry stalks and the brown domes of the rat-houses.

"That ain't so bad fer two hundred yards--plugged him square in the middle, too. God! I'd hate to die!" he muttered, and, turning, followed the shore of the lake and struck into the timber in the direction in which the other had been going.

An hour later he slipped silently behind the trunk of a tree at the edge of a tiny clearing in the center of which stood a single, smoke-blackened tepee.

The blue smoke from a small fire in front of the opening floated lazily upward in the still air, and beside the blaze a leathern-faced crone squatted and stirred the contents of a black pot which simmered from a cross-piece supported at the ends by crotched sticks driven into the ground.

The old squaw fitted the lid to the pot, hung the

long-handled spoon upon a projection of a forked upright, and, picking up a tin pail, disappeared down the well-worn path to the river. With an evil leer the man stepped boldly into the clearing and crossed to the opening of the tepee.

Stooping, he suddenly looked within, where Jeanne Lacombe knelt upon one knee as she fastened the thongs of her moccasin. The man grinned as he recognized the silvery hairs of the great white wolf skin which the girl had thrown across her shoulders.

"So you swiped the greener's wolf-hide, did you? I seen it was gone offen the end of the bunk-house."

At the sound the girl looked up, and the blood froze in her veins at the sight of the glittering eyes and sneering lips of Moncrossen. He spoke again:

"You thought I was done with you, did you? Thought I'd forgot you, an' the fight the old she-tiger put up that night on Broken Knee? But that was in the dark, or there'd been a different story to tell."

The words came in a horrible nasal snarl, and the little eyes glowed lustfully as they drank in the rich curves of the girl who had sprung to her feet, her muscles tense with terror.

"Come along, now--an' come peaceable. You're *my* woman now. I'm willin' to let bygones be bygones, an' I'll treat you right long as you don't try none of your tricks. You'll learn who's boss, an' as

none of your tricks. You'll learn who's boss, an' as long as you stay by me you'll get plenty to eat an' white folks clothes to wear--that's a heap better'n livin' like a damned Injun--you'll soon fergit all this."

His promises terrified the girl even more than the angry snarl, and with a loud cry she tried to spring past him, but his arms closed about her and he laughed a hard, brutal laugh of contempt for her puny struggles.

A shadow fell upon them, and the man whirled, dodging quickly as the sharp bit of an axe grazed his shoulder and tore through the wall of the tepee. He released the girl and lunged toward the old squaw, who was reaching for the pot with its scalding contents.

Seizing her by the arm, he threw her heavily to the ground, where she lay while the girl fled to the edge of the clearing and paused, for she knew that in the forest she could easily elude the heavy-footed lumber boss. Moncrossen, too, realized that pursuit would be useless, and in his rage leveled his rifle at the figure upon the ground.

"Come back here!" he cried. "Come back, or by God I'll plug her like I plugged----" He stopped abruptly and glanced along the sights.

The girl hesitated, and the voice of Wa-ha-ta-na-ta fell sharply upon her ear:

"No! No! Do not come! He will not shoot! Even now his finger flutters upon the trigger! He is afraid to shoot!" And she glared defiantly into the glittering eyes that squinted above the gun-barrel. Slowly the muzzle lowered and the man laughed--a hard, dry laugh.

"You're right!" he sneered. "I won't shoot. But if she don't come back you'll wish to God I had shot!"

He turned to the girl: "I ain't goin' to chase you. I'm goin' to stand pat. When you git ready you c'n come to me--up to the camp. Meanwhile I'll put the old hag where the dogs won't bite her, an' while you stay away she don't eat--see? She ain't nothin' but a rack o' bones nohow, an' a few days'll fix her clock."

"Go find Jacques!" cried the old woman, fumbling at her blanket.

The man laughed. "Sure, go find him!" he taunted.

A skinny hand was withdrawn from the blanket and the clawlike fingers clutched a fragment of broken knife-blade. She held it before the man and the shrunken lips mumbled unintelligible words; then, with a swift movement, she flung it from her and it rang upon the ice at the feet of the girl, who stooped swiftly and seized it.

"Go!" cried the old woman. "Far up the river to the

camp of the One-Good-White-Man!"

Again Moncrossen laughed harshly.

"You can't work none of your damned charms on me!" he sneered. "G'wan up the river. There ain't no one up there but Fallon's camp, an' you might better stick with me. Only don't stay too long. This here old leather image can't live without eatin', an' when you come we'll have heap big potlatch."

The wigwam of old Wabishke, the Indian trapper, was pitched in a dense thicket on the shore of the little muskrat lake. In the early gray of the morning the old Indian was startled by the sound of a shot.

He peered cautiously through the branches and saw a man pitch forward among the rice-stalks. Five minutes later another man carrying a rifle passed within a hundred feet of him and disappeared in the timber in the direction of Blood River Rapids. When he was gone Wabishke ran swiftly to the fallen man and conveyed him to the wigwam, where he plugged the bullet-hole with fat and bound up the wound.

Two hours later the bushes parted and Jeanne Lacombe burst panting into the wigwam. The girl uttered a wild cry at the sight of her brother lying motionless upon the robe and dropped to her knees at his side.

"Moncrossen" greeted the Indian, and watched in

ivonkossen, grunted the Indian, and watched in silent wonder as the girl leaped to her feet and, seizing an empty pack-sack, began stuffing it with food. Snatching a light blanket from the floor, she swung the pack to her shoulders and without a word dashed again into the forest.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE WEDDING

The events incident to the wedding of Bill Carmody and Ethel Manton are indelibly stamped upon the memory of every person present. The day was warmer than any preceding one, with a lowering, overcast sky. The dark, soggy snow melted rapidly, and the swollen surface stream gnawed and tore at the honeycombed ice of the river.

In the cook-shack Daddy Dunnigan superintended the labors of half a dozen flunkies in the preparation of the Gargantuan wedding feast which was to follow the ceremony, and each man of the crew worked feverishly in the staging of the great event.

The table, which extended the full length of the grub-shack, was scrubbed until it shone and was moved to one side to make room for the heavy benches arranged transversely, one behind the other

CHURCH.

The wide aisle between the table and the ends of the benches, leading from the door to the improvised altar at the farther end of the room, was carpeted with blankets from the bunk-house, and suspended from the ceiling immediately in front of the altar swung the massive horseshoe, fresh and green with sprouting grain.

During the afternoon a warm drizzle set in and the men completed the preparations amid a muttered cursing of the weather.

An ominous booming and cracking now and then reached their ears from the direction of the river where the sullen, pent-up waters threatened momentarily to break their ice bonds, and the men knew that the logs must go out on the flood though the heavens fell.

The drizzle continued, the gray daylight wore into darkness, and with the darkness came the return of good cheer. For rollways must be broken out in the light of day, and the air rang with loud laughter and the rhythmic swing of roaring chanteys, as the men realized that they were not to be robbed of their gala day with its long night of feasting.

The phonograph, with its high-piled box of records, occupied a conspicuous place upon the dais, and upon the long table was displayed an enormous collection of gifts—chief among which was the

collection of gals, one among whom was the ingeniously constructed chair with its broad back of flaring moose antlers.

At seven-thirty the men filed in from the bunk-house and found places upon the benches where they sat awkwardly, conversing in loud whispers.

Father Lapre, book in hand, took his place at the altar, and a few minutes later Bill Carmody entered with Sheridan and strode rapidly up the aisle. At the sight of the boss the crew rose as one man and the room rang with a loud, spontaneous cheer.

The little priest held up his hand for silence. At a signal someone started the graphophone, and to the sweet strains of a march the bride appeared, leaning upon the arm of her uncle.

Slowly, with bowed head, in the midst of a strained silence, she traversed the length of the long room, the cynosure of all eyes. When almost at the altar she raised her eyes to the man who awaited her there.

Her quick, indrawn breath was almost a gasp, and Appleton felt her arm tremble upon his.

He stood waiting for her--this man into whose keeping she was giving her life--exactly as she had seen him at the time of their first meeting in the North country when he stood, big and bearded, in the gathering dusk, framed in the doorway of the

little office.

In one swift glance she saw that every detail was the same, from the high-laced boots to the embroidered hunting-shirt open at the throat--only his eyes were different--there was no pain, now, in the gray eyes that blazed eagerly into her own--only happiness, and the burning passion of love.

And then her uncle retired, and she stood alone with the man, facing the priest. She could hear the voice of the little pink priest and of the big man at her side, and as in a dream she found herself repeating the words of the ritual.

She knew that a ring was being placed upon her finger, and she was a wife. And that the priest, in solemn voice, with outstretched hands, was extending them his blessing.

The voice hesitated--stopped.

In the rear of the room the door was thrown violently open and banged loudly against the log wall. There was a confused scuffling of feet and a scraping of heavy benches as the men craned their necks toward the entrance.

Involuntarily Ethel turned, and there, gliding swiftly toward her up the blanket-carpeted aisle, was the most picturesquely beautiful woman she had ever seen.

Wide-eyed she stared at the newcomer. Her face went deathly white, and the heart within her breast turned to ice, for instinctively she knew, by the wild, intense beauty of the woman, that she stood face to face with the Indian girl--the Jeanne of Bill Carmody's whispered words!

Her brain took in the details with incredible rapidity; and the girl was still coming toward her as she noted the dazzling brightness of the great silvery wolf-skin that was flung about her shoulders and caught together at her soft throat; the mass of black hair, upon which the mist-beads sparkled like a million diamonds; the dark, liquid eyes, and the even, white teeth that glistened between the curving red lips.

The girl was at her side now, and with a low cry threw herself upon her knees before the man, and stretched her arms toward him gropingly.

"M's'u' Bill!" she cried, and the voice was sweet and soft; the words uttered with imploring intensity. And then in Ethel's ears was the voice of her husband.

"Jeanne, Jeanne," he said; "why have you come? Speak, girl; why have you come to me?"

At the sound of the name, the thought that at the very altar this woman's name was upon the lips of her husband, the hot blood surged to her face and

her husband, the hot blood surged to her face and the tiny fists clenched. She was about to speak, but was forestalled by the half-breed girl who had leaped to her feet and thrown her arms about Bill's neck and was speaking in short, stabbing words:

"Come! Come now--with me! Oh, do not wait! Come--even now it may be too late!"

The low voice quivered with excitement, and the man's hand patted her shoulder soothingly as he endeavored to quiet her. Ethel took a quick step forward, and the hard tone of her voice cut upon the air like the ring of tempered steel.

"Who are you?" she cried. "Speak! What is this man to you?"

The Indian girl turned and faced her, seeming for the first time aware of her presence. The dark, liquid eyes flashed as she drew herself to her full height.

"To me, he is *everything*! I would die for him! *I love him!*"

The tense tones rang through the long room where a hundred and fifty big men sat silent--hypnotized by the intense drama of the scene.

With a lithe, swift movement the half-breed girl raised her hands to her bosom and tore at the fastenings of her hunting-shirt. There was the sound

of popping buttons, the heavily embroidered shirt flew open, and there, gleaming cold and gray in the lamplight, upon the warm ivory of her bared breast lay a naked blade--the broken blade of a sheath knife!

She broke the cord that held it suspended about her neck and extended the blade toward the man, uttering but a single word:

"Come!"

And as Bill's eyes fell upon the bit of metal his form stiffened and his fists clenched.

"I will come--lead on!" he answered For in his mind rang the words of his solemn promise: "No people of the earth, and nothing that is upon the earth, nor of the earth, shall prevent me--and one day you will know that my words are true."

The half-breed girl had already turned away when the man's eyes sought the eyes of his wife. She was regarding him with a strange, frightened stare. Her face had turned marble white at his words, and she gasped uncertainly for breath.

Her pallor alarmed Bill, who stepped toward her with outstretched arms; but she shrank from his touch and her blue eyes fixed him with their cold, frightened stare.

"Ethel!" he cried. "Darling--my wife! *I must go!* It is

LATER HE CRIED. "Darling--my wife: *I must go*: it is *The Promise!*" Unconsciously he repeated the words of the old squaw. "Wa-ha-ta-na-ta, in the last extremity of her need, is calling--and I must go to her.

"Oh, can't you see?" he cried suddenly, as the look of horror deepened upon the face of his wife. "Darling--only long enough to give her aid--then I will return! Surely, surely, dear, you trust me! You will believe in me--just this once! When I return to you I will explain all--I can't wait, now--good-by!"

He turned to follow the Indian girl, but before he could take a step his wife's arms were about his neck and her words came in great choking sobs:

"No! No! No! You are *mine*! You cannot go! You will not leave me at the altar! Oh, if you loved me--if you loved me, you could not go!"

Bill's arms were about her, and the words rushed from his lips: "Love you! I love you more than life itself--I live for *you*! But I promised--my word has passed--*I must go*! In a day--two days--a week--you shall know and understand."

With a low, moaning cry Ethel tore herself from his embrace and reeled, fainting into the arms of the priest, while her husband, white lipped, followed swiftly after the Indian girl who had already gained the end of the aisle.

But a few moments had elapsed since Jeanne Lacombe had burst into the room. Moments so tense--so laden with terrible portent--that, although every person in the room heard each spoken word, brains failed to grasp their significance; and Appleton, from his bench near the door, as he saw Bill Carmody turn from his fainting wife, for the first time doubted his sincerity.

Men were on their feet now, gazing incredulously at the boss, who, looking neither to the left nor to the right, strode rapidly down the aisle.

Scarcely knowing what he did, with the one thought uppermost in his mind, to stop the foreman and bring him to his senses, Appleton leaped the intervening benches and, slamming the heavy door, shot the stout bar.

With a roar of anger Bill seized a heavy split log bench, sending a couple of lumber-jacks tumbling among the feet of their fellows, and whirling it high above his head, drove it crashing through the door.

The bar snapped like a toothpick, the heavy panel split in half and dropped sidewise, and without a moment's hesitation Bill grasped the half-breed girl about the waist and swung her through the splintered aperture.

Turning, he swept the room with a glare of defiance. For a moment men looked into the narrowed eyes;

and then, as the eyes of the boss rested for an instant upon the inert form of his wife, they saw the defiant glare melt into a look of compassion and misery such as none had ever seen in human eyes.

Then his shoulders stiffened, his jaw squared, and without a word he stepped through the shattered door and disappeared in the black drizzle.

CHAPTER XLIX

ON THE RIVER

That Blood River Jack's fear for the safety of Jeanne was well founded was borne home to Bill Carmody in the story the girl poured into his ears as they pushed on in the direction of Moncrossen's camp.

The night was jet black, and Bill marveled at the endurance of the girl and the unfailing sagacity with which she led the way.

The honeycombed river ice sagged toward the middle of the stream, and the water from the melting snow followed this depression, leaving the higher edges comparatively dry and free from snow.

The drizzling rain continued as the two stumbled forward, slipping and stumbling through deep pools

forward, slipping and splashing through deep pools of icy water. Each moment they were in danger of plunging through some hole in the rotting ice; but the girl pushed unhesitatingly onward, and the man followed.

Between them and the camp of Moncrossen lay upward of a hundred miles of precarious river trail, and with no crust on the water-soaked snow of the forest they could not take advantage of the short cuts which would have stricken many miles from their journey.

It was broad daylight when Bill called a halt, and after many unsuccessful attempts succeeded in kindling a sickly blaze in the shelter of a clay-streaked cut-bank.

He unslung the pack which he had taken from the shoulders of the girl, and removed some bacon and sodden bannock. As they toasted the bacon and dried the bannock at the smoky fire the girl hardly removed her gaze from the face of the big, silent man who, during the whole long night, had scarcely spoken a word.

Her eyes flashed as they traveled over the mighty breadth of him and noted the great muscular arms, the tight-clamped jaw, and the steely glint of the narrowed gray eyes.

Her face glowed with the pride of his strength as she recalled the parting scene in the bunk-house

she recalled the parting scene in the bunk-house when he had hurled the heavy bench, crashing through the door, and defied the men of the logs.

He had done this thing for *her*, she reflected--for her, and that he might keep his promise to old Wah-ta-na-ta. She wondered at his silence. Why did he not speak? And why did he sit gazing with tight-pressed lips into the flaring, spitting little fire?

Her breath came faster, and she laid a timid hand upon the man's arm.

"The woman?" she asked abruptly. "Who is this woman with the hair of gold and the eyes of the summer sky?" The slender fingers gripped his arm convulsively. "She is the woman of the picture!" she cried, and her eyes sought his.

Bill Carmody nodded slowly and continued to stare into the fire.

"She is my--my wife," he groaned.

"Your--*wife*!"

The girl repeated the words dully, as if seeking to grasp their import. Her fingers relaxed, her eyes closed, and she lay heavily back upon the blanket. A long time she remained thus while Bill stared stolidly into the fire.

At length he aroused himself and glanced toward

Jeanne, who lay at his side, breathing the long, regular breaths of the deep sleep of utter weariness; and he noted the deep lines of the beautiful face and the hollow circles beneath the closed eyes that told of the terrible trail-strain.

"Sixty straight hours of *that*!" he exclaimed as his glance traveled over the precarious river trail. Curbing his patience, he waited an hour and then gently awoke the sleeping girl.

"Jeanne," he said as she gazed at him in bewilderment, "you need sleep. I will go alone to the camp of Moncrossen." At the words she sprang to her feet.

"No! No!" she cried; "I have slept. I am not tired. Come--to-day, and to-night--and in the morning we come to the camp."

"We must go then," said Bill, and added more to himself than to Jeanne: "I wonder if he would *dare*?"

"He would dare *anything*--that is not good!" the girl answered quickly. "He has the bad heart. But Wa-ha-ta-na-ta will not starve quickly. She is old and tough, and can go for many days without food; as in the time of the famine when she refused to eat that we, her children, might live.

"Even in times of plenty she eats but little, for she lives in the long ago with Lacombie--in the days of

lives in the long ago with Lacombie--in the days of her youth and--and happiness. For she loved Lacombie, and--Lacombie--loved--her."

The girl's voice broke throatily, and she turned abruptly toward the river.

The fine, drizzling rain, which had fallen steadily all through the night, changed to a steady downpour that chilled them to the bone.

The stream of shallow water that flowed over the surface of the ice swelled to a torrent, forcing them again and again to abandon the river and slosh knee-deep through the saturated snow of the forest.

Broken ice cakes began to drift past--thick, black cakes which scraped and ground together as they swung heavily in the current.

"The ice is going out!" cried the girl in dismay. "We can no longer keep to the river!"

Bill's teeth clenched. "The breakup!" he groaned. "Moncrossen will go out on the flood, and Wa-ha-ta-na-ta----"

He redoubled his efforts, fairly dragging the girl through the deep slush. The rain was carrying off the snow with a rush. The gullies and ravines were running bankful, and time and again the two were forced to plunge shoulder-deep into the icy waters.

At noon they halted, and in the dripping shelter of a dense thicket wolfed down a quantity of sodden bannock and raw bacon. The river rose hourly, and the crash and grind of the moving ice thundered continuously upon their ears.

Progress was slow and grueling. By the middle of the afternoon they had covered about forty miles. The water from the rising river began to set back into the ravines, forcing them to make long detours before daring to chance a ford.

Darkness came as an added hardship, and as they toiled doggedly around an abrupt bend they saw on a tiny plateau, high above the dark waters of the river, a faint flicker of light.

The girl paused and regarded it curiously; then, hurrying to the point, she peered up and down the river, striving for landmarks in the gathering gloom.

"Vic Chenault's cabin!" she cried. "I missed it coming up. I knew it was somewhere up the river. He is a friend of Jacques, and his father was the good friend of Lacombie."

Drenched and weary, the two pushed toward the light, crossing swift-rushing gullies whose icy waters threatened each moment to sweep them from their feet.

Slipping and stumbling through the muck and slush, crashing through dripping underbrush, they stood at

crashing through dripping underbrush, they stood at length before the door of the low-roofed log cabin.

Their knock was answered by a tousled-headed man who stood, lamp in hand, and blinked owlishly at them from the shelter of the doorway.

"You are Vic Chenault?" asked the girl, and, without waiting for his grunted assent, continued: "I am Jeanne Lacombe, and this is M's'u' Bill, The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die."

At the mention of the names the door swung wide and the man smiled a welcome. They entered amid a rabble of sled-dogs and puppies, which rolled about the floor in a seemingly inextricable tangle, with numerous dusky youngsters of various ages and conditions of nudity.

Chenault's Indian wife sat upon the edge of the bunk, a blackened cob-pipe between her teeth, industriously beading a moccasin; and seemed in no wise disturbed by the arrival of visitors, nor by the babel of hubbub that arose from the floor, where dogs and babies howled their protest against the cold draft from the open door and the pools of ice-cold water that drained from the clothing of the strangers.

Chenault pronounced a few guttural syllables, and the stolid squaw reached behind her and, removing a single garment of flaming red calico from a nail, extended it toward Jeanne.

The girl accepted it with thanks, and her eyes roved about the cabin, which, being a one-roomed affair, offered scant privacy. The woman caught the corner of a blanket upon a projecting nail and another corner upon a similar nail in the upright of the bunk, and motioned the girl behind the screen with a short wave of her pipe.

The man offered Bill a pair of faded blue overalls and a much-bepatched shirt of blue flannel, and when Jeanne emerged, clad in the best dress of her hostess, Bill took his turn in the dressing-room.

"Can't be too pedicular in a pinch," he grinned as he wriggled dubiously into the dry garments, and in a few minutes he was seated beside the girl upon a rough bench drawn close to the fire.

Chenault, being a half-breed, was more inclined toward garrulity than his Indian spouse.

"How you come?" he asked with evident interest. Jeanne answered him, speaking rapidly, and at the end of a half-hour the man was in full possession of the details of their plight. He slowly shook his head.

"Moncrossen camp ver' far--feefy--seexty mile," he said. "You no mak'."

Bill looked up suddenly. "Have you a canoe?" he inquired.

The other looked at him in surprise. "Canoe, she no good!" he grunted. "Too mooch ice. Bre'k all to hell in one minute!"

With an exclamation he leaped to his feet. "By gar! De flat boat!" he cried triumphantly.

"She is all build for tak' de fur. De riv', she run ver' swift. In de morning you go--in de evening you come on de camp!"

"I will pay you well for the boat," said Bill eagerly. "I have no money here. Give me a pencil; I will write an order on Monsieur Appleton, the man who owns the woods."

At the words the half-breed shrugged.

"You no got for mak' write," he said. "You tell Wa-ha-ta-na-ta you come--by gar! You come! You tell me you pay--you pay. You no got for mak' write."

Bill smiled.

"That is all right, providing I get through. What if the boat gets tipped over or smashed in the ice?"

Chenault shrugged again. "You De-Man-Who-Cannot-Die," he said. "You got de good heart. In de woods all peoples know. You no mak' write. I got no penzil."

CHAPTER L

FACE TO FACE

Before daylight next morning the two men dragged the little flat boat to the water's edge. The river had risen to full flood during the night and out of the darkness came the crash and grind of ice, the dull roar and splash of undermined banks, and the purling rumble of swift moving water.

After breakfast Bill and Jeanne, armed with light spruce poles, took their places; Chenault pushed the boat into the current and it shot downstream, whirling in the grip of the flood.

There was no need for oars. Both Bill and the girl had their work cut out warding off from drifting ice cakes and the thrashing branches of uprooted trees.

Time and again they came within a hair's-breadth of destruction. The eddying, seething surface of the swift rushing river seemed to hurl its débris toward their little craft in fiendish malevolence. Ice cakes crashed together on every hand, water-logged tree-butts snagged them bow and stern, and the low-hanging limbs of "sweepers" clawed and tore at them like the teeth of a giant rake as they swept beneath, lying flat upon the bottom of the boat.

Bill grinned at the thought of a canoe. In the suck and swirl of the current the odds were heavily against even the stout flat boat's winning through.

He estimated their speed to be about eight miles an hour and devoted his whole attention to preventing the boat from fouling the drift. They were riding the "run out," and he knew that Moncrossen would wait for the river to become comparatively free of drift before breaking out his rollways.

The rain ceased, but the sky remained heavily overcast and darkness overtook them while yet some distance above the log camp and skirting the opposite shore.

Eager as he was to meet Moncrossen, Bill decided not to risk crossing the river in the fast gathering darkness. Gradually the boat was worked toward shore and poled into the backwater of submerged beaver meadow.

Landing upon a slope a couple of hundred yards back from the river, they tilted the boat on edge, and, inclining it forward, rested it upon the tops of stakes thrust into the ground. The blanket was spread, and with the roaring fire directly in front the uptilted boat made an excellent shelter.

An awkward constraint, broken only by necessary monosyllables, had settled upon the two. On the river each had been too busy with the work in hand

never even had been so easy with the woman than to give the other more than a passing thought, but now, in the intimacy of the campfire, each felt uneasily self-conscious.

Supper over, Bill lighted his pipe and stared moodily into the flames with set face and brooding eye. From her position at his side Jeanne covertly watched the silent man.

Of what was he thinking? Surely not of the girl--his wife! She winced at the word--but the tense, almost fierce expression of his face, the occasional spasmodic clenching of the great fists, could scarcely accompany a man's thoughts of his wife of an hour.

Of Moncrossen? she wondered. Of the shooting of Jacques? Of the attack upon her? Of Wa-ha-ta-na-ta? But, no--the gray eyes were staring into the fire calmly, and in their depths she could see no gleam of hate nor steely glitter of rage.

What was it he said the day she told him of the affair on Broken Knee? "I, too, could kill him for that." The girl gave it up, and fell to wondering what the morrow would bring forth.

At daylight, when they poled the boat into the river, Bill gazed in surprise at the surface of the stream. A few belated ice cakes floated lazily in the current, and many uprooted snags reared their scraggly heads as they rolled sluggishly in the water.

But what riveted his attention were the logs. Hundreds and hundreds of smoothly floating logs dotted the river, and as far as the eye could reach more logs were coming.

He leaped to his feet and stood, shading his eyes with his hand. Far up the stream the surface seemed solid with logs, and here and there he could make out moving figures--tiny and frail they looked, like strange, misshapen insects, as they leaped from log to rolling log--the white-water men of the North.

"It's the drive!" he cried excitedly. "*My* drive! Come, pole for your life--we've got to work her across!"

A mile farther down they swept around a wide bend, and before them loomed the cleared rollways of Moncrossen's camp, and on top of the slope, for all the world like fortifications commanding the river, were pile after pile of pyramided logs.

The little flat boat was rapidly approaching, and men could be seen swarming about the rollways. One man with a shirt of flaming red rushed among them, gesticulating wildly, and faintly to their ears came the raucous bellowing of his voice. At the sight of him Jeanne paled visibly. The man was Moncrossen.

Even as they looked the first rollway tore loose; the

logs, rolling and tumbling down the steep slope, leaped into the river with a roar and a splash that sent a fountain of white spray flying skyward. Bill set his pole and fairly hurled the boat into the bank well above the rollways.

"Good God!" he cried. "Can't he see the drive? They'll jam and my men will be killed!" He leaped ashore and crashed through the intervening underbrush in great bounds, closely followed by the light-footed Jeanne.

They gained the top, and while rushing along the rollways could hear Moncrossen roaring his orders--could catch the words that foamed from his lips amid volleys of crashing oaths.

"Cut them toggles! Let 'em go! Let 'em go! Damn you! Foul that drive! I'll show 'em if they c'n slip a drive through me!"

And then--face to face between two high-piled pyramids--they met. The words died in a horrible, throaty gurgle; and Moncrossen's face, livid with rage, turned chalky as his eyes roved vacantly from Bill Carmody's face to the face of the girl beyond. His jaw wagged weakly, his flabby lips sagged open, exposing the jagged, brown teeth, and he passed his hand uncertainly across his eyes.

"It's the greener," he mumbled thickly. "It's the greener hisself."

Another rollway rumbled into the river, and Bill leaped into the open. "Stop!" he cried. "It's murder! There are men on that drive!"

The two lumber-jacks who stood almost at his side turned at the sound of his voice. For one moment they stared into his face, and then with a wild yell dropped their peavies and fled toward the bunk-house. Other men looked, and from lip to lip flashed the word, "The greener!" Men stared at him dumbly, or turned and dashed for the clearing in a panic of fear.

"He come up out of the river!" shrilled one as he ran. "I seen him! An' I seen him go under a year back! He come hell a rippin' up through the bushes--an' a she one a follerin'!"

Men crowded about--the bolder spirits, the matter of fact, and the unsuperstitious among the crew--and Bill turned again to Moncrossen, who stood rooted in his tracks.

"Where is she?" he asked in a low voice that cut distinctly upon the silence. "The mother of this girl?" Moncrossen started. With a visible effort he strove for control of himself.

"Who are you?" he blurted, and the words rasped hollow and dry.

Bill turned to the men

"Do *you* know?" he asked. "An old Indian woman--did he bring her to this camp?"

The men stared blankly from the speaker to Moncrossen and into each other's faces. Suddenly, one stepped forward.

"Look in the storeroom!" he cried. "A little while back--it was at night--I seen 'em drag somethin' in--him an' Larson of the van." At the words, Moncrossen sprang toward the speaker with an inarticulate growl of rage.

"You lie!" he screamed; but before he reached the man, who shrank back into the crowd, Bill stepped in front of him. He raised his arm and pointed toward the clearing.

"To the storehouse," he said in the same low voice. For a fleeting second Moncrossen glared into his eyes, and without a word, turned and led the way, closely followed by Bill and Jeanne, while the crowd of wondering lumber-jacks brought up the rear.

At the storehouse Moncrossen paused. "I'll fetch the key from the office," he leered; but Bill turned to a man who stood leaning upon his axe.

"Smash that door!" he commanded; and a half-dozen men sprang to the task. The next instant the

door flew inward, and the men crowded into the building to return a few moments later bearing the old squaw, gagged, bound, and wrapped tightly in a blanket, but with the undimmed black eyes glaring upon them like a hawk's.

The cords were cut and the gag removed by willing hands. Someone held a bottle to her lips, and she drank greedily. Jeanne dropped to her knees by the old woman's side.

"He has come," she whispered. "M's'u' Bill, The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die, has come to you." Wa-ha-ta-na-ta nodded her understanding, and her beady black eyes flashed.

"She must have water!" cried the girl; "and food!"

At the words a half-dozen men rushed toward the cook-shack, returning a few minutes later laden as to victual a regiment.

CHAPTER LI

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

Again the interest centered upon the two big men who faced each other on the trodden ground of the clearing. Other men came--the ones who had fled from the rollway their curiosity conquering their

from the family, then calmly, conquering their
fear at the sight of the dead man.

And now the greener was speaking, and the tone of his voice was gentle in its velvety softness. His lips smiled, and his gray eyes, narrowed to slits, shone cold--with a terrible, steely coldness, so that men looked once, and shuddered as they looked.

"And, now, Moncrossen," he was saying, "*we will fight*. It is a long score that you and I have to settle. It starts with your dirty schemes that Stromberg wouldn't touch.

"Then, the well-laid plan to have Creed bump me off that night at Melton's No. 9; and the incident of the river, when you broke the jam. You thought you had me, then, Moncrossen. You thought I was done for good and all, when I disappeared under the water.

"There are other things, too--little acts of yours, that we will figure in as we go. The affair on Broken Knee, when you attacked this young girl; the shooting of Blood River Jack, from ambush; the second attack on the girl at the foot of the rapid--and the brutal starving of Wa-ha-ta-na-ta.

"Oh, yes; and the little matter of the bird's-eye. I have the logs, Moncrossen, all safely cached--the pile of ashes you found was a blind. Quite a long score, take it first and last, isn't it, Moncrossen?"

The silence, save for the sound of the voice, was almost painful. Men strained to listen, looking from one to the other of the two big men, with white, tense faces.

At the words, the blood rushed to the boss's face. His little, swinish eyes fairly blazed in their sockets. He was speechless with fury. The cords knotted in his neck, and a great blue vein stood out upon his forehead. The breath hissed through his clenched teeth as the goading words fell in the voice of purring softness.

"But it has come to a show-down at last, between you and me," the greener went on as he slowly and methodically turned the sleeves of his shirt back from his mighty forearms. "They tell me you are a fighting man, Moncrossen. They tell me you have licked men--here in the woods--good men, too. And they tell me you have knocked down drunken men, and stamped on their faces with your steel-calked boots.

"Maybe--if you last well--I will save a couple of punches for those poor devils' account. I think you will last, Moncrossen. You are big, and strong, and you are mad enough, in your blind, bull-headed way.

"But I am not going to knock you out. I am going to make you *lie down*--to make you show your yellow, and quit cold; for this is going to be your

last fight. When I am through, Moncrossen, you won't be worth licking--no ten-year-old boy will think it worth his while to step out of his way to slap your dirty face."

With a hoarse bellow, Moncrossen launched himself at the speaker. And just at that moment--swarming over the bank at the rollways--came the men of the upper drive. The leaders paused, and sizing up the situation, came on at a run.

"A fight!" they yelled. "A fight! H-o-o-r-a-y!"

Then came Appleton and Sheridan with their wives, and beside them walked a slender, girlish figure, whose shoulders drooped wearily, and whose face was concealed by a heavy, dark-blue veil.

The two lumbermen guided the ladies hurriedly in the direction of the office, when suddenly the shrill voice of Charlie Manton broke upon their ears.

"Whoo-p-e-e! It's *Bill*! Go to it, Bill! Swing on him! Give him your left, Bill! Give him your left!"

They halted, and obeying some strange impulse, the girlish figure turned and made straight for the wildly yelling men, who stood in the form of a great circle in the center of which two men weaved and milled about each other in a blur of motion.

Old Daddy Dunnigan was the first to see her

hovering uncertainly upon the edge of the crowd. Brandishing his crutch he howled into the ears of those nearest him:

"Give th' lady a chanst! Come on, miss! He's *her* man, an' God be praised! she wants to see 'um foight!"

The men made a lane, and scarcely knowing what she did, Ethel found herself standing beside the old Irishman, who had wormed his way to the very front rank of the crowding circle. She stared in fascinated terror, throwing back her veil for a clearer view, regardless of the men who stared at *her* in surprise and wondered at the whiteness of her face.

Bill Carmody met Moncrossen's first rush with a quick, short jab that reached the corner of his eye. With an almost imperceptible movement he leaned to one side, and the flail-like swing of the huge boss's arm passed harmlessly within an inch of his ear.

Moncrossen lost no time. Pivoting, he swung a terrific body blow which glanced lightly against Bill's lowered shoulder, and the greener came back with two stiff raps to the ear.

Again and again Moncrossen rushed his antagonist, lashing out with both fists, but always the blows failed by a barely perceptible margin, and Bill--
always smiling, and without appreciable effort

always smiling, and without appreciable effort, stung him with short, swift punches to the face.

And always he talked. Low and smooth his voice sounded between the thud of blows and the heavy breathing of the big boss.

"Poor business, Moncrossen--poor judgment--for a fighting man. Save your wind--take it easy, and you'll last longer--this is a *long* fight, Moncrossen--take it slow--slow and steady."

The taunting voice was always in the boss's ears, goading him to blind fury. He paused for breath, with guard uplifted, and in that moment Bill Carmody saw for the first time the figure of his wife. For an instant their eyes met, and then Moncrossen was at him again. But Bill's low, taunting voice did not waver.

"That's better," he said, and moved his head to one side as a vicious blow passed close. "And now, Moncrossen, I'm going to hit you on the nose--I haven't hit you yet--those others were just to feel you out."

With an incredibly swift movement he swung clear from the shoulder. There was the wicked, smashing sound of living flesh hard struck. The big boss staggered backward, pawing the air, and the red blood spurted from his flattened nose.

"That one is for trying to get Stromberg to file a

link." Bill ducked a lunging blow without raising his guard. "And now your ear, Moncrossen; I won't knock it off, but it will never be pretty again."

Another long swing landed with a glancing twist that split the ear in half. "That is for the Creed item--and this one is for the river."

The boss's head snapped backward to the impact of a smashing blow; again he staggered, and, turning, spat a mouthful of blood which seeped into the ground, leaving upon the surface several brownish, misshapen nuggets.

"God!" breathed a man, and turned away. "It's his teeth!"

The yelling had ceased and men stared white faced. This was not the fighting they were used to; they understood only the quick, frenzied fighting of fury, where men pummel each other in blind rage, fighting close--as tigers fight--gouging and biting one another as they roll upon the ground locked in each other's grip.

The men gazed in awe, with a strange, unspoken terror creeping into their hearts, upon the vicious battering blows, the coldly gleaming eyes and smiling lips of the man who fought, not in any fume of passion, but deliberately, smoothly, placing his terrific blows at will with a cold, deadly accuracy that smashed and tore.

Moncrossen rushed again.

"And now for the other things," Bill continued; "the attacks upon the defenseless girl--the attempted murder from ambush--and the starving of an old woman."

Blow followed blow, until in the crowd men cried out sharply, and those who had watched a hundred fights turned away white lipped.

Moncrossen fought blindly now. His eyes were closed and his face one solid mass of blood. And still the blows fell. Smash! Smash! Smash! It was horrible--those deliberate, tearing blows, and the lips that smiled in cold, savage cruelty.

No blow landed on the point of the jaw, on the neck, on the heart, or the pit of the stomach--blows that bring the quiet of oblivion; but each landed with a cutting twist that ground into the flesh.

At last, with his face beaten to a crimson pulp, Moncrossen sagged to his knees, tried to rise, and crashed limp and lifeless to the ground. And over him stood Bill Carmody, smiling down at the broken and battered wreck of the bad man of the logs.

Gradually the circle that surrounded the fighters broke into little groups of white-faced, silent men

who shot nervous, inquiring glances into each other's faces and swore softly under their breath--the foolish, meaningless oaths of excitement.

Minutes passed as Ethel stood gazing in terrible fascination from the big man to the thing on the ground at his feet. And as she looked, a hideous old squaw, apparently too weak to stand, struggled from her place of vantage among the feet of the men, and crawled to the limp, sprawled form.

Leaning close she peered into the shapeless features, crooning and gurgling, and emitting short, sharp whines of delight. Her beady eyes glittered wickedly, like the eyes of a snake, and the withered lips curled into a horrid grin, exposing the purple snag-toothed gums.

Suddenly the bent form knelt upright, the skeleton arms raised high above the tangle of gray-black hair, the thin, high-pitched voice quavered the words of a weird chant, the clawlike fingers twitched in short, jerky spasms, and the emaciated body swayed and weaved to the wild, barbaric rhythm of the chanted curse.

Terrible, blighting, the words were borne to the ears of the girl. Bearded men looked, listened, and turned away, shuddering. The sun burst suddenly through a rift in the flying clouds, and his golden radiance fell incongruously upon the scene.

Ethel stood as at some horrid phantom, the rough

eyes gazed as at some horrid phantasm--the rough men with gaudy shirts of red and blue and multicolored checks, standing in groups with tense, set faces--the other man--*her* man--standing alone, silent and smiling, by the side of his blood-bathed victim, and the old crone, whose marcid form writhed in the swing of the thin-shrieked chant.

And then before she sensed that he had moved he stood before her. She raised her eyes to his in which the hard, cold gleam had given place to a look of intense longing, of infinite love, and the long-pent yearning of a soul.

He stretched his arms toward her and she saw that the bruised and swollen hands were stained with blood. Suddenly she realized that this man was her *husband*. A sickening fear overcame her, and she shrank, shuddering, from the touch of the blood-smeared hands.

A look of terror came into her face; she covered her eyes with her hands as if to shut out the horror of it all, and, turning, fled blindly--she knew not where.

As she ran there still sounded in her ears the words of the high, thin chant--the blighting curse of Yaga Tah.

CHAPTER LII

THE BIG MAN

Darkness settled over the North country. The sky had cleared, the wind gone down, and the air was soft and balmy with the feel of spring. A million stars sparkled overhead and above the intense blackness of the pines the moon rose, flooding the timberland with the mystery of her soft radiance.

Ethel tossed uneasily in her cot and glanced across to where her aunt and Mrs. Sheridan slumbered heavily. Then she arose and stood at the window gazing out on the moonlit clearing with its low, silent buildings, and clean-cut, black shadows.

Noiselessly she dressed and stole into the silvery world. Utterly wretched, dispirited, heartsick, she wandered aimlessly, neither knowing nor caring whither her slow, dragging steps carried her.

Somewhere in the distance, sounding faint and far, came the shouts of men. Unconsciously she wandered toward the river. On the edge of a high bluff overlooking the rollways and the rushing waters she paused, leaning wearily against the bole of a giant birch.

Thanks to the quick action of Bill Carmody Moncrossen's scheme of fouling the upper drive had taken no toll of human life. The few rollways

that were broken out, however, were sufficient to cause a nasty jam, and far below where the girl stood the men of both crews worked furiously among the high-piled logs.

Weird and unreal it seemed to Ethel as she gazed down upon the flare of huge fires built upon the bank, the tiny flash of lanterns and the flicker of torches, where the men swarmed out upon the uncertain footing.

Rough calls of rough men sounded above the crash and pound of logs and the roar of the rushing waters. Now and then a scrap of rude chantey reached her ears, a hoarse oath, or a loud, clear order in a voice she knew so well.

It was like some eery fantasy, born of an overwrought brain. And yet she knew it was real--intensely real. Down there among the flashing lights men played with death--big, rough men who laughed loud as they played, and swore mighty oaths, and sang wild, full-throated songs.

From the shadow almost at her side came the sound of a half-stifled sob. She started. There was a soft footfall on the leaf-mold, and before her stood Jeanne Lacombe. The soft moonlight touched with silvery sheen the long hairs of the great, white wolf-skin which the girl wore thrown loosely across her shoulders.

As Ethel gazed upon the wild, dark beauty of the Indian girl her tiny fists clenched, and her breath came in short, quick gasps.

Why was she here? Had she followed to taunt her to her face? A mighty rage welled up within her, her shoulders stiffened, and as she faced the girl her blue eyes flashed.

And then the Indian girl spoke, and at the first words of the soft, rich voice, the rage died in her heart. She looked closely, and in the dark, liquid eyes was a look the white girl will never forget.

She listened, and with few words and all the dramatic eloquence of the pure Indian the half-breed girl told of the rescue from the river; of her own love for M's'u' Bill, "The-Man-Who-Cannot-Die"; of his firm rejection of that love; of her pursuit of him when he started for the land of the white man; of the scene at the camp-fire when old Wa-ha-ta-na-ta called him "The One Good White Man"; of the broken knife; of The Promise; of her peril at the hand of Moncrossen, and of the cold-blooded shooting of her brother.

And then she told of Bill's all-absorbing love for her, Ethel. And of how he always loved her, even when he believed she hated and despised him, of his deep hurt and the misery of his soul when he believed that she was to marry another.

Until suddenly there in the moonlight the girl of the city saw for the first time the bigness of the man--*her man*. She saw him as he was now and as he had been in the making--the man who had been dubbed "Broadway Bill, the sport"; the "souse," who had "soaked a cop" and then "beat it in a taxi."

And then the man who, without name or explanation, had won the regard of such a keen judge of men as Appleton, and who, under the stigma of theft, held that regard without question; the man who beat the booze game after he had lost his heart's desire, and had been sneered at as a coward and a quitter; the man who having gained his heart's desire, in the very bigness of him, had unhesitatingly risked wrecking his whole life's happiness to keep his promise to an old, toothless, savage crone; and who, in brute fashion, bare-fisted, had all but pounded the life from the body of the hulking Moncrossen in defense of a woman's honor.

And *this* was the man who, eighteen short months before, had turkey-trotted upon the sidewalk in front of a gay resort, and had "pulled it too raw even for Broadway!"

The flood-gates of her soul opened, as is the way of women in all the world. The great sobs came, and with them tears, and in the tree-filtered moonlight the two girls--the tutored white girl and the half-savage Indian--women both--went in each other's

arms.

Up the trail from the river, almost at their feet, wearily climbed a man, dog-tired from physical exertion; and worn out with responsibility and heart-rack he toiled slowly up the steep ascent.

At the top he paused and removed his cap to let the cool air blow against his throbbing temples. At the sight of the two forms he drew back; but at the same moment they saw him.

With one last, long look, and no word of farewell save a dry, choking sob, the Indian girl glided silently into the darkness of the forest, which was her home, and the home of her people.

On the edge of the bluff the other stood silhouetted against the star-flecked sky. She, too, gazed at the man who stood motionless in the moonlight. Then with a lithe, quick movement she opened her arms to him, her lips parted, and in the blue eyes blazed the love of all the ages.

As her body poised to meet his the man sprang toward her. His arms closed about her, their lips met; and for a long, long time they looked deep into each other's eyes.

Then slowly the tiny fingers closed about his, the girl raised them reverently to her lips and covered with kisses the great, bruised, and swollen hands.

THE END

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