

THE GREAT DIVIDE

ALAN SULLIVAN

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ALAN SULLIVAN



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FOREWORD

THIS story is an attempt to recapture something of that period when Canada, as we Canadians know it, did not exist; when the hinterland of the Pacific Coast north of the United States Boundary had just ceased to be administered from Whitehall; and, implementing a promise given in previous years in order to divert British Columbia from the open arms of the neighbouring Republic, Sir John Macdonald's government in Ottawa embarked on the greatest railway gamble ever conceived.

But for that promise and later building of the line, the United States had controlled the entire Pacific Coast from Mexico to Behring Strait, there would be no Imperial highway to the Orient, and Canada's western frontier would follow the axis of the Rocky Mountains.

Aiming at a fair picture of what happened fifty years ago, I have re-vivified many who now live only in memory, associating them with a half-dozen others who, for the purpose of this writing, are fictional, which seems a reasonable thing to do when one considers the strangely assorted multitude that either preceded or followed the steel. A few, a very few, are biographically recorded, but the great majority, their work done, have slipped unrecognized into the shadows of the past, and if this tale does nothing more than give some presentment of the army that lived and died that the steel might go through, the writing will not have been in vain.

With the exception of Big John and Mary Moody, the characters depicted in Yale are all authentic, and I am indebted to my friend Joe Mackenzie, who still lives on the banks of the Fraser, for many of the details in that part of the book; to the Hon. Judge Howay, British Columbia's noted historian, for his kindly guidance; and to Mr. James Taynton of Windermere, B.C., who had personal dealings with Bulldog Kelly.

Also I had the benefit of talks with Tom Wilson, Rocky Mountain Guide, companion of Major Rogers, a man of clear brain, courtly presence and quiet assurance; and with Donald Mann, another pioneer, giant in stature and courage. These two have now passed over the long trail taken years ago by Father Lacombe and those unconquerable personalities in Ottawa and Montreal who breathed life into the all-red line.

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PART I

SHAPED like a gigantic "S" with shallow curves, the pass lay between a tangle of mountains on whose precipitous flanks wild goats sprang from ledge to ledge: above it towered scarred peaks, first to blush under the rising sun, last to retain the dying glory: eastward, westward, the land fell away to ravines and hanging valleys and glacier-fed lakes in whose shining surface shimmered the reflection of gaunt, inaccessible summits.

Each lake, lonely in its beauty, smiled up, bordered with stretches of dark green conical spruce of which the multitudinous spires were guarded by ten thousand feet of solid rock, and swayed by no disturbing winds. Here in a season of the year stalked the gigantic elk, deliberate and unafraid: here were meadows of a lighter green, traversed by winding streams where the beaver built his heavy-roofed home of earth and sticks, damming the vagrant creeks till only a rounded crown was unsubmerged.

By rocky shores where scented cedars curled their gnarled roots over naked boulders, the otter, the mink, and fisher played and hunted, while everywhere spread a chuckle of hidden runnels, and a murmurous sound born of snowy cataracts leaping from mountain palisades into gulfs below. Baldheaded eagles with sheathed eyes and unquivering pinions floated across circumambient space, crumpled talons drawn close against the grey-white of their breasts. They alone could scale the heights and look down on the austerity of the mountain tops.

This might be seen from the pass in summer time.

In winter an alien world was revealed, a world of white, relieved only where the stony ribs of earth rose vertically, and the spruce still held their warm and verdant hue. Here and here only was there life. No cataracts transfixed the purple distance, every lake was iron-clad, wraiths of drifting snow circled diaphanously around the upper peaks, and the glaciers glinted stark in vast folds of the eternal solitudes.

In the upper regions, smitten by gales born in the Aleutians, nothing stirred, but down where the evergreen spruce gave shelter a wild population moved across the blanket of snow. Pink-eyed rabbits, white as the snow itself, frisked and made their runways, wary of marauding fox and lynx: elk thrust their gigantic antlers between young trees, pawing the snow till succulent moss lay bare: red deer passed daintily in the crumbling trough of their own making, partridge fed in the hemlocks, and the otter ploughed his sinuous overland course in search of food. The black bear drowsed in his burrow, and ivory-beaked ravens with great ragged wings winnowed over crystalline silence.

Near the middle of the pass, a spring formed a tiny pool that overflowed in opposite directions, one part of it moving hesitantly to the west, where, joined by other trickles, it began to hurry down the sunset slope. The other ran eastward towards the Columbia River.

The pass was unknown, and the range made the backbone of a continent: no crossing had been accomplished, and its fangs filled the sky, unmapped and unconquered.

It fell on a day that Apau, the Weasel, was camped on the slopes of the Selkirk Mountains, and sat with his head between his hands, saying nothing. On the other side of the teepee crouched Anatoki, She of the Pretty Head, while at her empty breast sucked her first and late-born son, Light in the Morning. Her face was thin and troubled as she looked down at the child, then at her husband.

Nodding silently, he put on his heaviest moccasins and capote, slung axe, knife and powder-horn in his belt with the little deerksin sack of bullets, and picked up his long, single-barrelled gun. There was no word of farewell when he went out.

Stooping a little as he walked, he skirted first the edge of the timber, slowly working his way higher: he knew that the greater his altitude the less the chance of finding elk, but somewhere among the naked ridges might be a mountain sheep whose flesh was good, and of whose coat Anatoki would weave a winter blanket for Light in the Morning.

Moving without sound, he came clear of the timber: the day had a quiet greyness, with a touch of snow in the air, and far below he could see his lodge, a yellowish speck in a gulf of distance.

This country was strange to him. A man of violent passions, he had not been acceptable to his tribe on the eastern foothills, so in a season of the year when Anatoki was already with child he crossed the Kicking Horse Pass and journeyed west in search of elk. For weeks he travelled: then Light in the Morning was born, and they moved on, the child packed in moss and strapped to a board carried on Anatoki's back. Now Apau looked for a place to winter where game was plentiful, but so far with no success.

Leaning on his gun, he stared westward where, it was said, lay the Bitter Water, and there lived other Indians who ate only fish. Searching the ground he could distinguish no sign that any man had ever preceded him: north and south lifted the crests, tossing their heights into a sunless sky, lonely, austere, except at one point where, a little below his own level, their nakedness was broken by a patch of scanty

timber that nestled in a cleft of this gigantic rampart: it was miles away, but guided by some instinct, he turned in that direction.

At this moment came a sudden clatter fifty yards off, and a bull elk with great branching horns galloped southward along the slope.

Quick as thought, Apau fired. Usually he would have stalked the animal till he could get a standing shot and make sure of a kill, but to-day he was weak, with no saying how far his strength would carry him. It was a hit. The elk swerved, stumbled, came to his knees, scrambled up and dashed off. Apau, his heart pounding, reloaded, ran forward, and found a gout of blood: scraping this up, he swallowed it, took courage, and hurried on.

At this height the air tasted thin, and his breast rose with long, deep inhalations. Presently he found more blood, dark and thick. Not stopping this time, he progressed in a sort of shuffle, arms hanging loose, knees bent, his black eyes fixed always some twenty feet ahead: he missed nothing; a broken stick, an overturned stone, a scrape of moss—all were eloquent. Smiling, he thought of Light in the Morning, of Anatoki's sigh of relief at the burden he would carry back, and the bubbling of a pot as it hung over the teepee fire.

Watching the trail, he watched also the country he traversed. Behind the patch of timber which he now neared there seemed to be a great hole in the mountains with nothing beyond but emptiness and air. That on the western side. On the east the ground fell away very quickly into a wide ravine floored with spruce much bigger and older than that higher up: it was sheltered down there, with wood and water, a likely spot for game, and a very good place to camp in. He must remember that.

The elk now came into sight, floundered across a rockslide, swerved into what seemed to be a mountain meadow, and stood for a fraction of time outlined against the sky. Beside a spring it lowered its head to drink, when Apau, steadying himself, fired again: the bullet went in behind and below the shaggy shoulder, the beast quivered, gave a choking cough, and died reaching for the water.

Apau nodded, grunted, reloaded, and moved forward. He was, he reckoned, ten miles from camp, but that did not matter, and fifteen minutes later his strong teeth were shearing into a wedge of half-scorched meat. Devouring it slowly, life began to course more buoyantly in his veins. He would take a hundred-weight back with him, leave the carcass protected in a cache of big stones, and to-morrow pack the rest of it down to camp. Where he stooped to drink at the little pond, he noted that it ran both east and west.

Perched here on the very summit of the divide, and looking westward, on right and left the slopes pitched steeply down, leaving this unexpected roadway towards

the setting sun. In front the land fell away to a lower level in a series of prodigious steps, and widening valleys were visible. These must lead toward the Bitter Water. Regarding them with a mild curiosity, he wondered what the country was like farther on, and determined that some day he would find out.

It gave no promise of the plains whence his people had come, and was far too rough for buffalo, but ought to harbour elk, beaver and deer. His keen microscopic eyes could distinguish no teepees, no feather of smoke, no cutting, no faint suggestion of a trail: he saw a baldheaded eagle, and heard the distant croak of ravens, but that was all. Then, feeling sleepy and a little tired, his lids began to droop.

But Apau, the Weasel, was not alone. Eyes watched him from fifty feet away, small, bright, brown eyes in a leathery skull topped by short triangular ears; for behind a boulder, motionless save for the slow regular breathing of its enormous body, lay a two-year grizzly. The crack of a gunshot had come to him an hour previously, and since then the Lord of the Mountain, who feared nothing that walked the earth, had marked every step of the approaching hunter. Never before had he seen anything that went on two legs.

His deep tawny hide blending marvellously with the tone of his shelter, the great brute had not shifted even when the dying elk shambled up to the spring, for instinct had warned him that danger was drawing near, and like a master of strategy he waited his moment. The smell of meat was in his nostrils, but now it was lost in that other smell of humanity, than which there is no sharper signal to the wild things of the forest.

He did not stir till Apau's head sagged forward, then with extraordinary quietness he began his attack, a soundless brown mountain, ears back, his terrible jaws bared: very softly the great paws progressed, sheathing their long, copper-coloured claws, spreading sponge-like on the hard ground while a light wind ruffled his shaggy fur. He had covered half the distance when one displaced pebble made a tiny clatter.

Instantly Apau's full senses revived, but, snatching at the gun and whirling as he sat, his heart faltered. Little chance was there of stopping this mass of bone and muscle when it came head on. The gun leaped to his shoulder, and he fired. In the same second "He who walks like a Man" lifted on his huge haunches.

The bullet grazed his skull, ploughing through leathery skin and furrowing the lower jaw. There came an infuriated cough as Apau darted to one side. A stone turned under one foot, and he fell. He was conscious of a smothering weight, but after the first swinging blow he knew no pain.

An hour went by. The grizzly, gluttoned, drank deeply at the spring, and carried

what remained of the elk to a cranny in the rocks. Returning, he stood for a moment over the lifeless body of Apau, sniffed, and pushed it with one great paw. Then, leaving the first discoverer of the pass to ravens that would shortly drop out of dull-grey skies, he took his lurching unhurried way to a cavern in the western slopes.

ON a dull autumn afternoon in 1880, a man past middle age stood in front of the fireplace in a first-floor sitting-room in Batt's Hotel, Dover Street, London: occasionally he glanced impatiently at the clock or stepped to the window to look out. The hour was five and the street unusually quiet save for the *clop-clop* of horses drawing four-wheel cabs.

The features of this man offered points of interest: they had a faintly Jewish cast, though a second glance would have convinced the observer that he was not a Jew: his age was sixty-five, his name Macdonald, his office that of Prime Minister of Canada.

He had greying hair, a large, flexible mouth with curving, mobile lips, thin like the edge of a saucer. They were sensitive lips. The slightly hollow cheeks and shrewd, highly intelligent eyes set far apart under prominently arched brows were suggestive of daring and seemed to invite disputation: the thick mass of hair was tossed back, baring the right forehead, bringing into definition the longish nose with narrow bridge and bulbous tip: the features presented a curious blending of matured youthfulness and benignant cynicism, and in an age of bearded men Macdonald was clean shaven.

He had been waiting for perhaps half an hour when he was joined by two other men, with one of whom he exchanged a quick searching glance that appeared to impart to each the same disturbing information, whereat Macdonald shrugged.

"Well, Charles, I was afraid of it: the stars in their courses do not favour us."

Tupper, Canadian Minister of Railways, and Macdonald's faithful ally, shook his head.

"What did you find, sir?"

"Depression! I reached Hughenden at the hour arranged, and Lord Beaconsfield saw me at once, but what a change! He, too, was very conscious of it. Ichabod! Charles, and the glory has departed: an old, old man now, crippled with asthmatic bronchitis and gout. We talked for an hour—a great effort for him at this stage—and only a spark of the former Disraeli is left. I don't think he can last long. He still likes the idea of our all-red line, but of course can do nothing now. He asked if we had seen Rothschild—I told him that George Stephen was looking after that—then described how he'd sent Corry—Lord Rowton, y'know—to the Baron five years ago for four million pounds in twenty-four hours to buy the Khedive's Suez Canal shares. The Baron, who happened to be eating grapes, asked what the security was, and Corry said: 'The British Government.' He got the money."

“And that secured control of the route to India and the Far East,” said Tupper emphatically. “Well, we propose to open the other route the other way round.”

“Beaconsfield agreed at once, and referred to our previous talk in ’75; also he said that if our party had been in power five years ago when he was at his zenith he could have provided what backing we needed. It is too late now. One anticipated that, but—well——”

“How does he look?”

“Like some eastern magician in a fez, a fantastic red dressing-gown and slippers. He still gets affectionate notes from the Queen, but sees practically no one: he reads, dreams, and examines his collection of portraits, calling them the Gallery of Friendship. He says he would prefer to live, but is not afraid to die, and that he never hated Gladstone but simply couldn’t understand him. He’s only a mummy now, a dried-up human pod kept alive by the fading vision of former triumphs. It was all rather sad.”

Tupper nodded, and for a moment nothing was said while their minds reverted to the purpose that brought them here. That, too, was a vision. They had landed in England with hopes high, hopes that in past weeks had cooled considerably, and Tupper for one experienced a chill in the stuffy chambers of this centre of world finance. British money bags were full, but British eyes turned east rather than west, and the fairy tale of a three-thousand-mile railway through a wilderness of hostile Indians and unchartered mountain ranges did not appeal to Lombard Street. But Macdonald had risked his political life on the construction of that road, and refused to withdraw. Now the vision was encountering the solid unimaginative weight of London, with its power, its bland self-sufficiency, its politic indifference.

“Well,” said Tupper heavily, “if Stephen bumps into the same thing there’s only one thing for it: Canadians will build the road themselves, and Stephen must form the syndicate and subsequent company. Pope, what’s your view?”

Pope, Canadian Minister of Agriculture, agreed at once; then with a smile: “Sir John, you’ll have to make it sufficiently inviting.”

“If he will take it up, that means the Bank of Montreal, too,” suggested Tupper thoughtfully.

“To say nothing of a certain Donald A. Smith.”

At this the Premier put back his head and laughed. “Donald by all means, though perhaps not officially—that is to begin with. John Henry, can you suggest suitable terms with such a syndicate?”

This question, the signal for an earnest conversation, occupied them till there came a knock at the door, and there entered the two men who completed a

Canadian group that had set out from Montreal a month previously.

George Stephen was tall, with a long, loose, graceful body, flowing brown beard and moustache, and large, kindly, intelligent eyes that held a lurking readiness for humour. Now he looked dejected, and, observing the gravity of the three already assembled, he frowned slightly. Difficulty was in the air, and only on Macdonald's face might there have been discerned a faintly satirical tinge. The other man was Macintyre.

Nodding to the newcomers, Macdonald resumed his position on the hearth rug:

"Well, gentlemen, after some arduous prospecting along different trails we meet again, and I hope you unearthed more than we have. What about it, Mr. Stephen?"

"Practically nothing, sir."

"That's encouraging—very."

"We have learned, Sir John, that your idea of an all-red line from the Atlantic to the Pacific strikes no spark of interest in the city, but a good deal of opposition."

"H'm," he murmured, "you discussed it with Barings?"

"Very fully, and lunched with Lord Revelstoke."

"Then you did get something out of it?" chuckled Macdonald. "We should have gone with you instead of elsewhere. Yes?"

"Barings knew all about the scheme—they've known about it since the first—and won't touch it: they think it a gamble, and——"

"It is a gamble—yes?"

"Lord Revelstoke holds that one cannot sell shares in a shot in the dark. Very polite, of course, and I like him immensely, but he was quite firm; he did ask, however, if your Government would guarantee interest on the shares."

"Impossible," said Tupper firmly, "that was agreed on the way over. The Government is not going to build this line: we desire it done by private enterprise."

"So I told him, and got no farther."

"Rothschilds?" asked Macdonald.

"The same thing," replied Macintyre, "but more so. My impression is that the Baron considers us too young, the whole country too young to embark on such a project. We came away feeling that the Rothschilds were too accustomed to dealing with crusted old kingdoms and European States to entertain business with a youth like Canada. We smelled money all round us, but couldn't reach a cent."

"The City's like that," nodded Stephen, "and I'd like to be back in Montreal: you meet a man here and he seems interested—he is interested because he can't tell when your information may not be of considerable use—he listens—he nods—perhaps asks you to lunch, and you talk yourself dry. Then he asks you to come

back in a fortnight. You do come back, when he tells you that having gone into your proposition very thoroughly, he regrets that he cannot avail himself just now—later on, possibly—but not now. The reason is that anyone having anything to sell brings it to London, and he knows perfectly well that within twenty-four hours he'll be offered something more to his liking. So there's no hurry about anything. Oh! Macintyre and I have learned a lot since we got here." He paused and shrugged. "What happened in Downing Street, Sir John?"

Macdonald made a grimace. "Tell him, Charles."

"Much the same experience as yours: Canada and our affairs are not of present interest in Downing Street, and we weren't even asked to come back—let alone lunch. We waited three hours for an interview—then nothing. Mr. Gladstone is——"

"Is not Disraeli," put in Macdonald with a touch of bitterness, "nor is he Lord Salisbury, worse luck, but puffed with recent victory. We were about six months late, but I couldn't anticipate Disraeli's defeat. The last time I saw him he was Prime Minister with the country at his feet. Now he is the dying leader of the opposition in the House of Lords. Well, I know how it feels to lead an opposition. Mr. Stephen, it seems that you've shot your last bolt?"

"There is one glimmer of support we have heard of, sir."

"From whom?"

"Morton Rose and Company—they'll participate to a limited extent—perhaps a few millions—if you approve."

"Did you ever hear of my disapproving of millions?" scoffed Macdonald.

"It's the British firm, but American dollars."

At this, Tupper looked a shade uncertain. "What about it, Sir John?"

"Grab them, Stephen, grab them. Nothing else?"

"Possibly a little from Holland: that exhausts the possibilities on this side."

"Yet here we are sitting in the middle of the richest city in the world! Frankly, gentlemen, I am astonished."

This sobering truth left them all silent. The biggest political and mercantile figures in their own Dominion, they were but small fry in London, and each underwent the nostalgia born of fruitless effort; of a sudden Macdonald turned with an exclamation.

"The Grand Trunk is behind all this: I feel it in my bones. What do you think, Charles?"

"I agree, and after encountering that stone wall, I rather anticipated what would follow. Stephen, they were willing to build the line for us, and run it—yes, I can see Sir Henry while he laid down his terms—if—he was very smooth when he came out with that *if*—we did not require them to have the entire road in Canadian territory:

that is, they would run through the State of Michigan, then up across the boundary to the prairie country.”

“Which he knew perfectly well we would not have,” snapped Macdonald hotly. “By God! we won’t: ’twould be playing straight into American hands: defeating the whole project, and putting your friend James Hill in strategic control. No, no, he’s thick enough already with the Grand Trunk. I know that you two gentlemen, with Mr. Hill and my political thorn in the flesh, Mr. Donald A. Smith, have shared a good many millions cleaned up on a certain railway deal in the United States not long ago, but that’s your affair, not mine, and what we’re talking about now is a Canadian line with every damned spike in it a bright red. I defy Mr. Hill to get control of that. At the same time he might be very useful with his money and experience, so I’ve no objection whatever to his joining you. The Opposition would howl, but that’s nothing new. What do you say, Charles?”

“I agree.”

Macintyre and Stephen exchanged glances, the Minister of Agriculture began to converse with Tupper in a lowered tone, and presently Macdonald gave his head a characteristic toss.

“Mr. Stephen,” he said, “I am going to make you a proposal. Some twelve years ago I pledged my faith to the people of British Columbia that if they would join the other Provinces already in the Federation, the Government would undertake to link them by rail with eastern Canada. But for that they had seceded, and naturally enough, to the United States. I think you are fully informed of this. As you know, I could do nothing till two years ago.”

“I understand, sir.” Stephen had a shrewd anticipation of what was now coming.

“Well, we began at the Pacific end—with an American contractor. It was not possible to do otherwise: that coast was cut off from us—no communication through Canada—and California the only source of labour. Also it seemed wiser to break the first ground in the Province we were determined to keep under the flag. Mr. Onderdonk is a reputable man, we are safe in his hands, and he’s already at work on the Fraser River. Also we are building from Winnipeg to the Great Lakes—about six hundred miles in all.”

“Out of three thousand, Sir John.”

“About that. As to the remainder, England is evidently not interested, so it is forced upon me that this must be a Canadian enterprise—in contrast to the Grand Trunk. Canada must play her own hand without English aid. Mr. Stephen, if you and Mr. Macintyre and Morton Rose and others of your friends—including James Hill if you like—I’ll take a chance there—will sign a contract to complete this all-red line,

my Government will vote you twenty-five millions of dollars in cash, twenty-five million acres of fertile land in the west, and such legislative protection as may be necessary.”

Stephen, feeling his pulse quicken, stared fixedly at the speaker. Macintyre sat motionless: Tupper’s large eyes were regarding the two merchants with luminous urgency, and into the quiet room crept the consciousness shared by all that here and now gigantic issues were at stake. The thing was too big to be more than fractionally visualized: they all perceived that, and no man could foresee what might not be involved: but it presented an aspect defiantly stimulating that mocked, intrigued and dared all at once. Like growing pains in the muscles of youth, it invited the unproved strength of a young Dominion.

“A big order, Sir John,” said Stephen in a voice not quite steady, “and no syndicate could dream of it without constant Government support.”

“I agree fully: I had hoped that we would find assistance in England: now we’re cast on our own resources.”

“Would you protect such a line from invasion by other roads across the border?” asked Macintyre tersely.

“Certainly,” Tupper assured him, “the object being to create traffic east and west, whereas now it runs north and south.”

“I’m thinking of the mountains,” interjected Stephen, “especially the Selkirk Range: from what I hear not one of your Government Surveys—and there are a lot of them—indicate a suitable pass anywhere near the border, so the line might be shoved up north, shoved anywhere, to get through. Also, so far as my knowledge goes, there’s a thousand miles of territory east of Winnipeg and north of Lake Superior which is simply barren rock and would not bring any traffic whatever. How about that? Admittedly the prairie section might pay, but what else?”

Tupper, glancing at his chief, made a gesture. He was a big man with a broad, square immobile face, large confident mouth, masses of dark hair and opulent whiskers trimmed well back from a strong, clean-shaven chin. He exhaled repose and a sort of comforting solidity.

“As a Canadian, Mr. Macintyre, do you desire Canada to end on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains?”

“What real Canadian does?”

“Then I put it to you that that is the big question. Sir John, Mr. Pope and I have decided that Mr. Stephen and yourself are in the first instance the men we need. The Government will back you to the extent indicated: you may capitalize a company for what you think desirable. As to the pass through the Selkirks, Mr. Moberly, one of

our best engineers, believes that there is one: as to the thousand miles of barren rock, it is through, main-line traffic rather than local that will justify the road. Its political and national effect will be enormous, and it should bring this city of London within two weeks of the Pacific Ocean.”

Stephen sat silent, feeling in brain and body an electrical tingle: he was a little breathless. No opportunity here to weigh this matter coolly and cautiously. On the voyage over he and Macintyre had considered the possibility of drawing a blank in Lombard Street, and their own position in such an event. Now that the blank was drawn the alternative had in some notable fashion assumed proportions infinitely greater than they could have anticipated: it was concrete, yet nebulous: fascinating, forbidding: he could see a beginning, but no end. And Macintyre’s expression told him that exactly the same reaction was going on there.

“Is it too big for you, gentlemen?” asked Sir John in a slightly provocative manner.

Stephen, a proud and high-spirited man, felt the blood rush to his face. “We’ll try it, sir,” he said in an unsteady tone, “we’ll do our best.”

IN the month of June, the year 1881, Kelly, The Rake, whose financial prospects were intimately connected with the all-red line, sat on the north bank of the Fraser River, 300 miles west of where Apau died, pulling a narrow strip of fine sandpaper between the lightly compressed tips of thumb and forefinger of either hand: his manner was deliberate, he found apparent satisfaction in the feeling of friction, and when the skin, which was smooth and white, had been reduced to a thin tissue beneath whose transparency the blood was clearly visible, he examined the result with grave approval and drew on a pair of cotton gloves. The Rake being a professional gambler, it was of importance that by touch alone he should be able to determine the pinpoint markings on cards which were practically invisible and too slight to be detected under the horny cuticle of miners and railwaymen.

He was attired in highly-polished leggings of black leather, narrow sharp-toed boots of American make with a glossy shine, a white silk shirt with loosely knotted black silk tie, a long black frock coat, full at the breast, close-fitting over the hips, reaching to his knees, and a large black sombrero hat. His face was sallow and clean shaven, cheeks a shade hollow, his eyes large, dark and mournful: the wide mouth had little pits at the corners of the lips, and his sombre dress and air of thoughtful detachment gave his general appearance a touch of the ecclesiastical.

He sat some thirty feet above the river, his back to the straggling town of Yale with its irregular ranks of flimsy houses, log shacks, tents, frontier hotels with narrow balconies at first-floor windows, stores, saloons and woodpiles, with here and there a squat, stone-built structure. This agglomeration, for the most part devoid of paint, displayed every sign of hasty occupation, and stretched perhaps a half-mile north-east, ceasing abruptly where a mountain torrent called Yale Creek established the boundary of the Indian Reserve on which no white man might build. To the south-west along the clay bank it widened till it ended amongst scattered clearings on the rough shoulders of a rocky mound known in virtue of its outline as the Jew's Nose. On the other flank rose Mount Linhey, dotted with jack pine to its great rounded crown, while still farther north-east the tawny river appeared mysteriously to emerge from a vast rampart of higher peaks, down whose scarred flanks coursed transitory cataracts that at this season of the year escaped from hidden recesses in the mountains, and leaped to sunlight in waving pencils of argent foam.

Sometimes, when Yale enjoyed a quiet night with the wind from the east, one might hear the distant voices of these cataracts blending with the low monotone from the river, which was now sixty feet deep, half a mile wide, and flowed at some six

miles an hour; but since Andrew Onderdonk, the American contractor, was building a 200-mile railway through the mountains and had chosen Yale, the head of navigation on the Fraser, for his headquarters, there were but few moments of silence.

Now, a hundred yards behind The Rake, a small saddleback tank locomotive was snorting at the head of a train of flat cars from which a gang of Chinese were unloading material; steel clanged on iron, the voices of men rose in free profanity, waggons creaked, and from upriver sounded the boom of dynamite where Onderdonk was slowly blasting his way through the formidable gorges of the Fraser.

These sounds, however, woke no answering chord in The Rake, and his slack figure lounged comfortably till he heard a voice close by.

"Hello, Kelly: fingers in good shape?"

The newcomer was a man of different appearance, shorter, broader, with heavy face, cold eyes and shoulders like a Texas steer. Known locally as Big Mouth Kelly, he held a position of considerable importance, having secured the contract for burying Chinamen dead of the China plague, a mysterious malady, little understood, which began in the legs that immediately turned black, then mounted to the heart and carried off its victims in a few hours: it did not attack the whites but was common amongst Orientals, and since Onderdonk had on his payroll some five thousand chattering labourers from the Yellow River, and twenty dollars was the interment fee, Big Mouth found no cause for complaint. He was reputed at times to be a shade prompt in his official duties, but because no Chink had ever been known to survive an attack of the disease this was hardly a matter for criticism.

"My fingers are all right."

Big Mouth lit his pipe and nodded affably. "How's business?"

"Not so bad: how's the plague?"

"She's holding up pretty well: four yesterday, and to-morrow looks good. Coming round to-night?"

"Maybe I might. Where?"

"Graveyard's looking for a game at the Stiffs' Rest."

The Rake gave a faint smile. Graveyard, a leading Chinese merchant of Yale, was an adversary opposite whom he found a definite pleasure in sitting. Here was a player to be respected. Hour after hour he would remain, his sallow features entirely blank, his slanting eyes betraying nothing, always wearing the same conical straw hat, shaped like the flattened thatch on a haystack, the same loose, blue silk tunic and voluminous trousers. Graveyard, admitted The Rake with frank admiration, passed all understanding at poker. Otherwise and elsewhere he did a large trading business

with his countrymen, bought for twelve dollars an ounce amalgam of gold washed from the Fraser, and as a side issue owned a very profitable installation wherewith he distilled a potent liquor from a mash of pounded rice and other ingredients whose identity passed beyond common understanding: it was known as Chinese gin, had a short range, and provided a popular substitute for the genuine and more expensive article.

"I guess I'll be round. Who else?"

"Bulldog Kelly."

"Sure of that?"

"He says so: I saw him just now: he's kind of laying for you."

"Well, there's room enough."

The Rake, speaking placidly, set his mind on Bulldog, a rival gambler, but of dubious reputation and a bad record, and lest there be any confusion concerning the tribe of Kelly as represented in Yale in '81, let it be said that in addition to these three there was Silent Kelly who played solitaire day after day, did no stroke of work, yet existed in what Yale called comfort: Molly Kelly, known favourably of all and interested in a house of dalliance where four girls lived not far from the jail: and finally Long Kelly, Molly's man of business, who would have liked the reputation of being a dangerous person but lacked the necessary guts. Between these six lay no bond of relationship or prior acquaintance elsewhere, but as flies to the honey they had gathered on the banks of the Fraser soon after the Macdonald Government in Ottawa accepted Onderdonk's deposit cheque for half a million dollars and turned him loose in the south-west corner of British Columbia.

The Rake was thinking about Bulldog, by general repute a bad hombre, when his attention was drawn to a young man who came unsteadily towards them along the river bank, paused, and said in a thick voice:

"Either of you Kellys lend me ten dollars?"

The two regarded him with distant unapproval. He stood a full six feet, had masses of unkempt flaxen hair, blue eyes now decidedly glazed, and the shoulders of a giant: he swayed as he stood, favouring them with a loosely vacuous smile. His age might have been twenty-five years, and he suggested a young god gone to seed. The Kellys exchanged a glance of mutual understanding, and The Rake held out a five dollar bill with an air of distaste.

"That'll last just as long as ten, John. Say, why don't you take a job?"

"I guess I will, maybe next week. Thanks: see you later."

He slouched on and the benefactor looked after him disgustedly. "That sort of fellow gives Yale a bad name: can't drink without fighting. Fact is I know more about

him than he does himself.”

“Which ain’t any particular asset to either of you. What is it?”

“Kind of private,” said The Rake suavely. “None of your business. What’s the latest news round town?”

“I heard Donk talking yesterday, and he said he was going to build a steamer and take her up the canyon to Lytton,” said a dry voice close by, “and I’m allowing there’s a camel.”

The speaker, a tall man with a long straight nose and lean, bird-like face, had come up without sound, a large, shallow sheet-metal pan under his arm, and now halted, staring dubiously at the swollen Fraser. His untrimmed hair fell in a greyish fringe to the nape of a long sinewy neck. He did not look at the Kellys but remained shaking his head and chewing vigorously: presently he spat with flat trajectory, turned and waved a hand.

“Yes, sir, I’m saying there’s another camel. It can’t be done: look at that goddam river, an’ she’s nothing to what’s higher up.”

“Joe, what in hell has a steamer to do with a camel?” inquired Big Mouth.

“You been here how long?” demanded the last comer with a touch of condescension.

“Eight months.”

“Then there’s a lot you don’t know: I struck Yale more’n twenty years ago, an’ the camels come soon after me.”

The Rake, rousing himself, flicked the ash from his cigar. “You said camels right here in B.C. Do I get that straight, Joe?”

“You sure do. Them was the Cariboo days, and I guess there was eight of ’em imported from over the line, half bucks, half does. Round about then freight from Lilloet to the Forks of the Quesnel was fifty cents a pound an’ as much more as the traffic could stand: all bull-teams, mind you, with maybe sixteen pair of widehorns yoked to the same drag chain so the darned wagon had to move. Of course there was horses and mules too. There might have been five thousand men up in the Cariboo that year, an’ they just had to be fed an’ damn the expense. Yes, sir, it took twenty days’ good going to make the round trip from Lilloet.”

“At the same time there’s a kind of difference between bull-teams and camels,” suggested The Rake mildly. “Go right along, Joe.”

The tall man, gnawing another chew from a sticky plug, nodded agreement.

“That’s how it looked in ’62. There was Frank Laumeister in it—he made his pile in good gravel up in Richfield, an’ Harry Ingram an’ old Adam Sheffly—there’s a creek coming into the North Thompson called after him: an’ this crowd had seen

camels in Arizony where they worked all right for the Yanks, who'd brought 'em from Australy—it being kind of sandy in Arizony—so danged if they didn't send a bunch to Victoria, then up to the head of the Harrison River, an' over Douglas Portage to Lilloet to tote stuff over the Cariboo Road. The fun started right away because the syndicate figured them animals would walk off with maybe five hundred pounds, take a drink about once a week as convenient, feed themselves in their spare time, give no trouble that you'd notice, an' travel faster'n bulls or mules. Well, it didn't pan out like that: they couldn't carry what a good mule could tote an' when they struck a hill they just lay down, groaned, an' quit right there. Feet got all cut in loose stone, an' by heck! when a pack train of horse or mules saw them scarecrows on the skyline there was hell to pay with everything on its hind legs an' language wide an' free."

"How did it finish?" inquired Big Mouth.

"Syndicate got sort of tired after the first trip, everyone sick with laughing at 'em, so they turned the camels out to rustle for themselves in Lac la Hache Valley—that's near the 144 mile post past Lilloet. I saw 'em on my way to Barkerville in '65. Harry an' old Adam went into the ranching business next Kamloops an' sat up nights trying to crossbreed camels with bulls, but they fell down on that. I guess there are some up there now. Harry went back to San Fran an' died there in '67, an' a Douglas Lake Indian called Alexander bought one: I guess he used to worship it. Camels! Hell! Bad as the road steamers."

"What's that—what kind of steamers?"

"I said road steamers, with a boiler in 'em drivin' the engines that drive their wheels—sort of road loco: that was another syndicate reckoning to corral the freighting business of the Cariboo Road, and bringing the steamers from Scotland round the Horn the way Donk gets his rails. They got 'em here to Yale, and again there was hell to pay with the cayuses and bull-teams an' horses. You couldn't tell what you'd strike on the Road in them days. I guess the steamers weighed a couple of ton, an' the syndicate made their pile out of oats."

"Oats," murmured The Rake with growing interest, "you said oats?"

"Sure I said oats. It was like this—they hadn't been delivered more'n a day or two when the bottom fell out of the price of horse feed. Some of the syndicate had gone up the Road and told all the farmers what was coming, and how there'd be no more use for pack-trains and horse feed, so the farmers got cold feet and sold their oats for what they could get, which wasn't much. The steamer crowd bought 'em in on the quiet. Y'see by that time they'd begun to have private doubts about the damned machines, which were like to shake themselves to pieces on a trial trip, so

they played safe. Well, sir, when they'd bought all the oats in sight, the big day came, the steamers hooked up with some waggons and started up the canyon with a hell of a hurrah an' everything wide open, but danged if they didn't lay down an' die at the foot of Jackass Hill forty miles from here. Licked, b'God! They never got no farther. Then the price of oats shot right up again, so the syndicate broke more'n even on the whole game. It's going to be the same with that boat of Donk's; they'll pull the nose out of her an' nothing more, so I'll bet fifty dollars right now she's wrecked in Hell Gate. God Almighty never meant anything to float in them waters. Well, so long, boys; the Fraser is falling a little, and I guess I'll try my luck."

The Rake stretched himself and got up, amused but not impressed, his only real interest being in his profession: he had a remarkable memory, a brain which, were its moral texture differently woven, might have carried him far, and no nerves whatever. Abhorring anything that resembled work, he dressed with care, took pride in personal cleanliness, never drank intoxicants, and found in cards a pursuit that exactly fitted his discriminating taste. It enabled him to choose his company. Maintaining a natural sense of humour, he found small satisfaction in rooking the stupid or defenceless, but matched himself with pleasure against those he considered worthy antagonists, amongst whom Bulldog Kelly ranked high.

It was now nearly a year since The Rake reached Yale from the Golden Gate, and he had not even been shot at.

The Fraser, taking its source amongst a nest of mountains forming the Carson Range far to the north, debouches into the Pacific some 400 miles to the south-west through a widening alluvial plain a few miles north of the United States boundary. Between its mouth and the western prairie, tower four massive mountain ranges, Coast, Gold, Selkirk, and Rocky, this heaven-tossed barrier, so far impenetrable, cutting off the late Crown Colony of British Columbia from eastern Canada. A little above Yale begins the Fraser Canyon, through which for some forty miles the river finds escape to the sea between precipitous walls that rise abruptly to summits snowcapped for half the year, and here the flood is compressed to narrow, tortuous dimensions by prodigious battlements of unyielding diorite.

In a season the Fraser falls low; this is late summer and through the winter, when along its course are exposed sand and gravel bars from which fortunes have been won in gold; but in early summer when the upper snowfields are melting, and dripping glaciers contribute their icy streams, the river, fed by a thousand roaring tributaries plunging from the high playground of the gods, rises to incredible heights,

expands to an extraordinary volume, and, ripping through the canyon, bears in its troubled bosom the detritus of ravished slopes and great trees that avalanches have torn from their rocky foothold.

In such a season the Fraser is uncontrollable. At Hell's Gate, twenty miles above Yale, where two monoliths of granodiorite obstruct its passage, the flood climbs to eighty feet above winter level, hurling in one sharp second of time ten thousand tons of swirling, turbid water toward the Pacific.

To this wild theatre some twenty-two years previously had hurried the gold hunters from across the line, the first Americans to make their mark in that country, many of whom had traversed the western wilderness from Iowa and Ohio and Illinois on their perilous way, and skimmed wealth from the gulches and river beds of Arizona and California. When that fine frenzy was spent, this high-spirited human tide, leaving embryonic cities in its wake, beat restlessly against the shores of the Pacific till word came that gold had been discovered in the Fraser; then, gathering its old impetus, it swarmed on rotting wharves, and, drunk with the old hunger, turned northward in thousands carried by anything that would float.

Those were wild days in Yale, for the river bars were rich, and ere the best of them had been panned and washed, again from farther north came word of gold in the Cariboo, whereat once more the Argonauts set out, little guessing that ere Barkerville became a poor man's camp a maddening whisper would reach them from the solitary banks of the Subarctic Yukon. That was their Ultima Thule.

Now it is written that on the heels of the man of gold follows his brother of steel, and this brought Andrew Onderdonk in 1880, with a contract in his pocket and the problem of the Fraser canyon in front of him. There was no other feasible railway route toward the east, and this section of the line, practically a water-level route, had been located by Tom White and other engineers through the canyon up the smoother reaches to Lytton where the Thompson River joined its greater brother, thence up the Thompson to the vast basin where that river was born in the depths of many-armed Shuswap Lake. Only by following the run of water could the Coast and Gold ranges be crossed by a line of steel.

Onderdonk found the town in a sort of twilight sleep, the aftermath of the second great gold rush of '61 when Yale was the gateway to the Cariboo District, but at low water there was still won a dwindling amount of dust. New York Bar, Hill's Bar—most famous of all—and Sawmill Bar a mile below, were spasmodically worked with pan and rocker, being to some extent re-enriched by every springtime freshet, but the coarse, heavy cream, the lavish accumulation of centuries, had disappeared, and one made but an uncertain wage. The bars continued to be sprinkled with whites

and Chinamen, and of these the latter did best: they took more care, worked harder, caught finer gold and made a profit out of aureate gleamings at which the white man shook his head. Gone were the times when in a single day nearly two thousand excited men swarmed on perilous craft in San Francisco, Sacramento, and Seattle, and set out for the golden Fraser, times when the river bed was alive, and all night and all round the clock came the creak and rattle of grizzlies and rockers. A thousand dollars a shift was nothing to brag of then.

Next came the discovery that while the Fraser was good, the gold in its bowels grew coarser higher up, and thus advancing gilded mile by mile adventurous man, braving rapid, canyon, and hostile Indians, worked his way northward till amongst the bristling hummocks of the Cariboo he uncovered a natural mint. Here one might and did win a hundred dollars a pan in nuggets from the size of beans to that of walnuts, and towards this isolated amphitheatre near the headwaters of the Fraser pack-trains traversed the dizzy wilderness that marooned it from outside. So great became the traffic, with five thousand miners in Richfield and Barkerville, so insistent the need for transport, that in the early 'sixties the Cariboo Road was built by Royal Engineers under orders from Whitehall.

The Cariboo had its day, fortunes were made, and in one season it shipped four million dollars in gold, till presently there ensued the inevitable lean years: five thousand diminished to five score, only an occasional wagon climbed northward, and old sourdoughs who had wandered back to Yale sat in the sun talking of past glories, of Frank Laumeister and his camels, of road steamers, of Frank Barnard, who, when not driving mules, carried letters on his back for the round trip of 760 miles, and the time when Sergeants Lindsay and McMurphy, handcuffed in turns to Perry, the murderer, drove him 380 miles over the road from Yale to Barkerville in thirty hours.

Finally, Onderdonk inherited the lower end of this historic highway, it being the only means of getting men and material to work higher up the river. Traversing ravines on high causeways of logs crossed and notched to hold them in place, clinging to narrow benches blasted in the face of overhanging cliffs, the Road was at times depressed close to the surface of the tawny river only to make an aerial flight over some mountain flank: such was the trail the Argonauts took with careless laughter to the bellowing of straining oxen and the raucous voices of rebellious mules, but to Onderdonk, who surveyed it with the eye of the railway builder, it was only a stopgap. It followed the canyon through which he, too, must build, but transport over the vertiginous track would cost too much ere it reached the smoother reaches of Boston Bar higher up. Steam! he needed steam on the Upper Fraser, and steam

he would have.

At the outset this railway was in general opinion a political gesture, two ribbons of steel over which there could be but little traffic, finishing in a maze of mountains. There was a promise of building from the Atlantic, three thousand miles away, but British Columbians suspected that this expensive strip of metal was merely to assuage their discontent. Between their territory and the east rose the mountains, unconquered and seemingly unconquerable; all lines of communication ran north and south; British emigrants reached Vancouver Island round the Horn in sailing ships, a three months' journey of no little danger; the week's news came from San Francisco: the lure of gold had brought countless Americans over the border; Gladstone, six thousand miles away, was more interested in the disestablishment of the Irish Church than in the future of British Columbia. Such was the state of affairs when Sir John Macdonald embarked on his prodigious political gamble.

Onderdonk knew all this, but, being a railway builder and no politician, was not much interested, and on his arrival a surge of life animated the wooden skeleton that was Yale, while the resident population shot up to perhaps four thousand, and the town became the assembling point for thousands more, a motley army whose entire lack of docility had earned them the satirical sobriquet of 'Onderdonk's Lambs'. By shipload he had brought them to New Westminster nearer the mouth of the Fraser, asking only that they be sound and whole, and transferring them in midstream to shallow-draught river boats lest they get ashore and change their minds. But once at Yale he had them.

All afternoon a long queue of men had moved forward a pace at a time through the small office where Onderdonk's paymaster sat behind a counter with trays of small, yellow envelopes on either side and a revolver immediately in front but out of sight. Behind him a flight of wooden steps descended to a subterranean stone-built vault with an iron door where the contractor kept his cash. From the advancing queue there were few words, and as it progressed towards the counter the average weekly wage which ran from fifteen to twenty dollars was spent many times over ere the magic envelope was pushed out. Once clear of the office the pace quickened, features brightened, anticipation achieved a sharp point, and money burned in the pocket.

Yale was ready for the occasion, and it did not burn long. Before the sunset glow died on the mountain tops, every lamp had been lit down the length of Water Street, the yellow light flooding a trampled road where now surged the population of this

frontier town. Every house in this straggling line faced the Fraser, while between them and the steep clay banks ran Onderdonk's recently laid track over which now flowed in eddies and conflicting currents a jostling human tide of sharply varying character.

From the dance halls, seeking a taste of fresh air, came fair, flaxen-haired, straight-bodied girls arm-in-arm, most of them Germans or Scandinavians, popularly known as the 'Hurdy Gurdies', with whom for a dollar and a drink one might dance, but nothing more; a curious company, still virginal in all this riot, many of them destined for marriage and contented motherhood. One took no liberties with a Hurdy Gurdy. Tipsy men progressing by uncertain stages halted unsteadily to chuck under the chin other girls, more garish, more painted, who confronted them bareheaded, skirts trailing in the dust, dressed in low-cut gowns that displayed naked necks and invitational bosoms. These were bold-faced 'fluzies' from such establishments as that of Molly Kelly, and Sadie the Jewess. Siwash women were there, squat and supple of body, with black, slanting eyes and pendulous breasts, some from Juneau in far north Alaska, and known as the 'maneaters'; these three, Hurdy Gurdy, fluzie and maneater, representing the descending grade of female relaxation in the town of Yale. Coast Indians with flat, copper-coloured faces, greasy black hair, and wide, thin lips carried over their shoulders great freshly speared salmon from the Fraser; the narrow sidewalk sprang under the tread of American and Canadian engineers; track-layers; Britishers in bowler hats, leather leggings, and short-cut, tight-fitting coats that ended ere they touched the buttocks; teamsters in sombrero hats, corduroy breeches, and leather belts; clerks; axemen; Cornish single-handed drillers, known as Cousin Joes; mounted men on bucking cayuses; groups of chattering, yellow-visaged Chinese labourers; blue-eyed, fair-haired Swedes; small, sinewy Italians who took station work contracts for sections of earth embankment. One observed, too, Ki Tee and Fee Wong Long, oriental merchants, parading in grave sobriety, masking their impressions of the Occidental behind broad, imperturbable features. Straight men these, who like Graveyard wore conical straw hats and sold wholesale liquor in stone-fronted stores that faced the river. There were Jewish peddlers, leathery prospectors, and, circulating genially amongst this polyglot assemblage, one uniformed authority in the person of Jack Kirkup, the single arm of the law, in helmet, brass buttons, tight-cut breeches, blue tunic, and truncheon. Jack carried no gun, and occupied most of his time in depositing unconscious men behind woodpiles, or the favoured ones on heaps of empty gunny sacks.

Payday in Yale!

The packed saloons and gaming houses, where proceeded such diversions as poker, faro, chuckluck—a dice throwing pleantry—and three card monte, buzzed like wasps' nests, periodically ejecting intoxicated men who gradually disposed themselves for slumber in the softest corners available, their now empty pockets compelling them to give place to others more recently arrived from Onderdonk's pay office. The sound of fiddles, mouth-organs and concertinas mingled with laughter, oaths and the shrill voices of women: hotels like the Oriental, Cascade House and Palace; saloons such as the Stiffs' Rest, the Rat Trap and the Railroaders' Retreat; Clarke's dry goods, Uriah Nelson's, the Jew store, Power's grocery and Macartney's Drugs, all wooden shells from which the lamplight streamed out in yellow bars that danced across the dusty air—all were doing good business.

Payday in Yale!

Through this assemblage paraded the sombre figure of The Rake, immaculate and self-contained, nodding gravely to occasional acquaintances and preserving an air of dignified detachment. In his dark eyes was a look of abstraction, since from various sources the hint dropped by Big Mouth had been fully confirmed, and without doubt Bulldog was camping on his trail. Bulldog, it appeared, had concluded that in Yale there was hardly room for both his rival and himself, and the time had come for one of them to seek some farther, fresher field of activity. In such circumstances, admitted The Rake, any open hostility was detrimental to their mutual profession, and it was desirable to settle the matter at once.

This because he took gambling seriously: it was an art: it meant to him far more than the acquisition of other people's money, and he maintained there were two ways of doing the thing—the right and the wrong. One liked to leave one's victim puzzled but not hostile, and, if possible, a little piqued with himself so that when next in funds he would not be unwilling to try again. The Rake was, in short, an aristocrat amongst his kind, finding in the pleasing variety of his own observations a sufficient mental provender, and preserving always that faintly contemptuous and slightly mournful air which, aided by his distinctive attire, distinguished him from the run of ordinary men.

Bulldog, he considered, was low grade: he had no finish: was careless about his linen: he boasted too much, carried a gun, cared not whom he plucked, and was from the technical point of view a poor advertisement for the profession. Yale would certainly be better off without him.

In the Stiffs' Rest a long bar with an indented surface filled one side of the saloon, the other being occupied by chairs and tables. The floor lay two inches deep in sawdust. Opening off this was another room in which stood one small square table

and four straight-backed wooden chairs, beside each of which a glazed spittoon gaped invitingly. Here the floor was carpeted, a thin chintz curtain hung from an iron rod screened the single window, a large oil lamp swung from the ceiling by a triple brass chain. On one wall an unglazed lithograph of President Garfield, clad modestly in citizen's garb and liberally freckled with yellow fly-stains, gazed with democratic affability at an equally spotted portrait of Lord Beaconsfield in Court dress, thus expressing the nationalistic commixture of the population of Yale: and in one corner surrounded by a three-foot guard of sheet-metal stood a small tubular iron stove. Such was the only equipment, and this apartment, providing as it did all possible amenities of privacy and comfort, was preserved for the use of gamblers of the highest order; in its privileged seclusion one heard only a muffled reverberation of what went on outside.

The Rake, lounging to the bar, found himself next a short, thick-set man with heavy bluish chin and broad face now slightly flushed. He inclined his head with dignity.

"Evening, Bulldog."

"How's yourself, Kelly?"

"Usual health—and you?"

"Not complaining: have a drink?—no, you won't."

The Rake expressed his readiness for a lemon sour, and lifting this syrupy concoction, which was devoid of anything remotely resembling a lemon, nodded politely.

"How's business?"

Bulldog, hazarding the opinion that business was not what it might be, glanced at the delicate finger-tips and suggested a small game, adding it to be more than possible that Graveyard and Big Mouth would make the four; whereat The Rake signified his entire willingness to participate. Already by a slight and apparently inadvertent touch against the other man's hip, he had become aware of a revolver, a thing he never carried himself: revolvers, he argued, were apt to complicate matters, and real art should need no such reinforcement.

"Sure," he repeated, "I'm agreeable. Leaving town, ain't you?"

Bulldog bridled at once. "Who said I was leaving town?"

"Well, I don't exactly remember: but that's what they're saying—just sort of heard it: here's your friends now."

As he spoke the merchant came in wearing his customary wide-sleeved blue silk tunic with seed pearls sewn into the collar band, felt slippers with finely plaited straw uppers, and great conical straw hat. Under this tapering crown, resembling a candle

extinguisher and tilted back so that one marvelled how it stayed in place, his broad yellowish face with its parchment skin was blandly suave, the wide mouth placid. His age, impossible to estimate, might have been anything from forty to sixty. It was peculiar of Graveyard that he seldom moved his head to either side: it nodded but did not rotate, and remained poised on a short invisible neck, the chin exposing a scattered plantation of small blackish hairs curving at the tips, whose growth, mysteriously arrested, knew no razor; while his small uncommunicative eyes—eyes that oscillated swiftly in narrow slanting sockets—selected with impassive calm the individual he was about to address. No one had ever seen Graveyard laugh, smile, or frown; he neither rejoiced nor mourned; he lost and won with the same aspect of frozen unconcern; making no promise, he betrayed no confidence, and to all men white and yellow presented the same undecipherable front.

Behind him came Big Mouth, who, after a satisfactory day in the Chinese cemetery—situated in a soft, sandy, easily dug patch of ground lower down the Fraser—felt in amiable mood: he was not a highly-skilled player, but liked cards and found satisfaction in the company of this evening. Also he liked The Rake, disliked Bulldog, and had a sincere admiration for what might be called the table manners of Graveyard. The immediate future had dramatic possibilities, there were four hundred dollars in his pocket, and he reckoned that with care he could last till the climax was reached. This would not, he anticipated, be any ordinary game.

Bulldog put down his glass, and jerked his head toward the inner room: no words were said till the door closed and four packs of well-thumbed cards had been laid on the table.

“Poker?” he hazarded.

“Sure,” nodded The Rake.

“Suit you, Graveyard?”

“Suit me velly well,” agreed a flat voice.

“Kelly?”

“That’s all right.”

A certain dignity characterized what followed: no chips were employed in this game for the sound reason that as such tokens were of standard size and colour purchasable anywhere, their use might create a vague sense of insecurity; so Graveyard opened proceedings by drawing from some recess in his tunic a flat packet of bills bound with yellow tape, which he placed on his left hand: it was so fat a packet that Big Mouth’s eyes bulged at the sight of it, and he saw his own finish, but silence remained unbroken till the others duplicated this action. It was, however, understood that there existed further reserves not yet exposed to view.

“Velly good game to-night,” remarked Graveyard approvingly.

“Cut for deal,” grunted Bulldog.

Big Mouth got that, dealt, and the game began. Silence resumed its sway save for monosyllabic bids, and there became observable on the part of the rivals an atmosphere of diffidence that might have misled a casual observer, but Big Mouth was not deceived. Staying out when his hand was poor, making modest rises when his cards were strong, he kept eyes and ears open, aware that the two who faced each other were in deadly earnest, and more than money stood at stake. Graveyard, playing like an automaton, did most of the winning, but his expression changed not at all.

“Jacks or better?” suggested The Rake affably. “Fifty ante!”

When shuffling he held half the pack in either hand well away from his body with his soft cuffs pulled back, brought the corners nearly touching, moved his thumbs a fraction of an inch, and with a sharp flip the halves were magically blended in a casually graceful motion. As often as he did this he looked straight across the table with a ghost of a smile as though inviting criticism: his finger-tips had never been more sensitive, and the tiny markings along either end of the backs of his own pack—miniature craters that the ordinary man would require a magnifying glass to distinguish—were to him as perceptible as Braille letters to the sightless reader. He felt rather inspired and his blood had a pleasant tingle.

Poker is perhaps more of a psychic and physiological science or exercise than a mere game, in that one’s success turns on the ability correctly to interpret the expressions or lack of expressions of others, to diagnose what is genuine and what assumed, to unravel the secret reasoning of the opponent with due regard to his tendencies, strength, weakness and general comportment away from the card table, and at the same time so to mask one’s own tactics as to leave that opponent in ever deepening fog. Thus in the higher and metaphysical intricacies of this pursuit it is the player rather than the cards that counts, and to no human occupation is more applicable the scriptural warning that “to him that hath shall be given and from him that hath not shall be taken what he seemeth to have.”

The faint and provocative elevation of brow—the elusive movement of lip—the visibly arrested shrug—the apparent resignation with which one receives three of a kind—the subtle suggestion of pleasure when one is dealt nothing—the impassive humility in victory and assumed indifference to defeat—these present but a fraction of the finer points in an exercise that may well baffle the wisdom of the sage, ruffle the calm of the philosopher, and shatter the self-command of the ascetic.

The Rake wasted no time on Graveyard, who, he admitted, passed all

understanding—one could not interpret a graven image that bought retorted amalgam, sold Chinese gin, smoked opium, and played Mah Jong all in the same inscrutable manner; nor did he desire to rook Big Mouth for whom he had a touch of affection; so now he watched the man opposite, awaiting an opening that was hard to find. Nothing crude or inartistic would serve to-night.

It was his deal, and feeling experimental he distributed honestly as the cards came, finger-tips signalling that Graveyard had a king, Bulldog two knaves, Big Mouth an ace, and himself nothing. In turn Graveyard took three cards, Big Mouth four—thus displaying a lack of finesse, and Bulldog two which, observed the dealer with faint interest, included a third jack. For himself he took but two, and betting began when he opened for twenty dollars. Graveyard on his left saw and raised this another twenty, Bulldog added two double eagles, and Big Mouth with a shake of his head dropped out. In five minutes some seven hundred dollars were on the table, and the next bid lay with The Rake.

“See you,” said he casually and put up a final fifty.

Graveyard intimated that he also desired to see, and after Bulldog exposed his three knaves, the merchant contentedly produced three kings, whereat an inquiring glance was directed toward The Rake, but that artist only shook his head.

“Too heavy for me,” he murmured. “Your deal, Graveyard.”

For the next three hands he played moderately, losing a little each time but always with the same manner of agreeable detachment, noting that Bulldog was now still more flushed and had lost something of pugnacious watchfulness; so allowing the silk cuffs to work farther down his agile wrists, he shot the ace of spades to the bottom of the pack. It was at the end of this hand, which Graveyard won, that with a lightning movement he conveyed the ace to his left sleeve, and in the same instant caught the faintest quiver in the heavy lids. Bulldog had seen it! Bulldog had him!

The next three hands were an agony, and he yielded to a sense that was not so much fear as shame for an artistic failure. The manner of the man opposite was undergoing a perceptible change; his voice had lifted, he played almost carelessly, blinking his lids, hardly glancing at his cards; his mind was elsewhere, he waited till it was again his opponent’s turn to deal and with sharpened eyes followed every slightest movement. If Graveyard had observed anything, he gave no sign, and the situation was too skilfully masked to be grasped by Big Mouth’s slower wit.

The Rake searched his brain with growing anxiety: he dared not touch his pack till the deal came round again, and the ace of spades burned out of sight against his arm. He imagined he heard Bulldog’s rasping demand for an inspection of cards, his insulting triumph at the result. But did he really know? How could one be sure? He

was earnestly trying to convince himself that it was imagination when for the first time that evening he perceived at the corners of Bulldog's mouth the slightest possible smile. That settled it.

Then in the nick of time, under the pinch of circumstance, inspiration dawned, and he thrilled in every nerve.

"Feeling dry, you fellows: what about a drink and sandwiches?"

Graveyard nodded, Bulldog made a gesture of consent: they were all dry, very dry, and this suggestion came at exactly the right time for him, so he fixed a hard eye on The Rake's pack, and leaning over, pounded on the door.

A head was thrust in, an order given: in a few moments there appeared a bottle that had come round the Horn, a jug of Yale creek water, three empty glasses, another filled with lemon sour, a plate piled with sandwiches an inch thick. Set on the table, these were flanked by some two thousand dollars in notes.

"Take your poison, boys," said the host cheerfully, "them sandwiches were cut with an axe, but I guess they're all right. It's pig, Graveyard, but you're no Jew. Shut that door, will you, Bulldog? Help yourself, Kelly."

The merchant, emitting a little grunt, turned his attention to the bottle, and it was in this instant when Bulldog reached towards the door that The Rake achieved salvation. With one hand he selected a massive wedge while the other, in a motion inconceivably swift, thrust a card between the gaping slabs of bread. In the next moment he was eating.

There ensued a pause in the conversation: Bulldog, champing steadily, continued to regard his rival's pack which to his certain knowledge had not been touched, and felt assured: no card had been slipped in there during the interruption; it was indubitably on The Rake's person, as it would shortly be a pleasure to demonstrate. This reflection appealed to him greatly: with growing geniality he emptied his glass of raw liquor, took a chaser of water and nodded across the table.

"Ain't seen much of each other lately, eh?"

"That ain't my fault, Bulldog: you've been sort of side-stepping me. Any particular reason?"

"Your imagination is sure at work this time. Why should I?"

"That," said The Rake, "is just what I was asking myself. Why should you? Room for us both in Yale, ain't there? I was talking about you to Big Mouth here only this week, and saying you played the neatest game north of the boundary, which is going some."

"Excepting yourself, Kelly," countered the other with increasing gallantry. "No, sir, I ain't in it with you."

His rival, whose sense of humour was beginning to get the better of him, coughed slightly: he was in fact making hard going, and his teeth, strong as they were, faltered when at every single bite they encountered a layer of cardboard of unimagined toughness. He had not dreamed that cardboard could be so tough, and these segments, once arduously severed, required an inordinate amount of mastication before they were reduced to pulpy balls that now well-nigh choked him. So he sat there with an affable if frozen smile, a violent disturbance in his thoracic region, the muscles of his lean jaws working as never before, his chin lowered to conceal the smothered gulp as each nauseating lump was forced down his protesting throat.

“No, sir,” he repeated, feeling the last of them descend to regions of darkness, “not excepting yourself: you’re the artist, I ain’t in your class, and that’s a fact.”

Bulldog shrugged; this interlude of silky palaver had begun to make him uncomfortable: there sat The Rake with a card up his sleeve, quite aware that he had been detected, yet seemingly deluding himself with the hope that artificial compliments would save his neck: his face was almost cheerful, his manner that of one who, without a care in the world, faces the future with equanimity. Big Mouth, who had seen nothing, quite failed to interpret this interchange, and was openly puzzled, while Graveyard’s sphinx-like countenance looked blank as mid-ocean. Now there was just one thing that Bulldog waited for, and The Rake played straight into his hand.

“You fellows want any more grub? No? Well it’s my deal.”

At top speed he distributed twenty cards, and was examining his own with customary ecclesiastical gravity when the other man laid down his hand face up, plucked the revolver from his pocket, and thrust forward his heavy shoulders.

“This game is crooked! Come on, Kelly: I’ve got you.”

“Crooked!” breathed The Rake, with childlike astonishment.

“Sure, it’s crooked: there’s a card up your sleeve. Come on . . . it’s a showdown!”

“Is . . . that . . . so?”

The Rake said it slowly, almost with an air of regret: Graveyard stared at him sideways, wide lips slightly compressed, while Big Mouth’s brow was deeply wrinkled. Loathing Bulldog and admiring The Rake, he felt greatly troubled. Those fishy eyes must have spotted something.

“Come on!”

“Sure . . . quite sure?” The Rake was now smiling a little.

“Gimme those cards, you fellows, all of them.” He sorted them into suits, face

red, eyes with growing heat; then, triumphantly: "Where's the ace of spades? Kelly, you tell me that!"

"Ain't it there? Why no, neither it is. Ain't swallowed it have you, Bulldog?"

"You know damn' well it ain't. By God! I've got you this time: been laying for you quite a while too." He was on his feet, revolver up. "Take off that damn' parson's coat . . . quick!"

"Laying for me? Now just think of that!" said The Rake smoothly. "Look here! maybe you know more about that ace than I do . . . didn't save it over from my last deal, did you?—an' how about your own coat?"

Bulldog, glaring at him, nearly choked, his right hand gave a jerk, and it was at this moment that the bland voice of Graveyard spread soothingly over troubled waters.

"Velly stlange thing no ace of spades: each Kelly say other Kelly have it. I think best both Kellys take off both coats and be searched by Big Mouth. Pelhaps take off shirts too . . . that fix it."

Thus spake the ageless wisdom of the Orient. Bulldog, nothing loath, put down his weapon and ripped off his coat: his adversary, still wearing that distant smile, did the same, and Big Mouth at a sign from the merchant was examining these garments with no result when The Rake, scrutinizing the other man's shirt with frank disapproval, hazarded the opinion that some folks in Yale were too saving on laundry work.

At this Bulldog hurled himself forward, but Big Mouth got between, pushing him back while Graveyard absently pocketed the revolver.

"Velly funny game," he bleated: "now take off those slirts."

They stood stripped to the skin: there was no ace. President Garfield gazed across through his nebulae of fly-stains at the spotted features of Disraeli, while the room was thoroughly searched, till finally Big Mouth, crawling from beneath the table, shook his head.

"Guess you were off that time, Kelly. I ain't got it, nor Graveyard, it ain't on you fellows an' nowhere else in the room. Strikes me there's a sort of apology about due . . . but where in hell is it?"

Bulldog did not answer: he reclothed himself, gathered in his stakes, put out a hand to the Chinaman who thereupon returned the revolver, and made for the door. Fingering the knob, he hesitated, then sent The Rake one extraordinary look: his jaw was a little pushed forward and on one side, his mouth slightly open, he was like one who, having struggled vainly against a higher intelligence, is ultimately bemused, and his eyes held the faintest hint of grudging admiration.

Pearson, the local magistrate, was a man of quiet authority and broad understanding of human nature as found in Yale, whose population regarded him with universal respect: and the town, considering the chameleon-like variety of its citizens, was surprisingly law-abiding. Pearson administered justice with wisdom and toleration; the men of Yale knew to a fraction how far they might go, and this condition of mutual goodwill could be estimated by the fact that one of the most popular local figures was Jack Kirkup, the sole constable in the place. There were no murders: drunkenness was not a malfeasance so long as it avoided damage to property and person, and certain feminine establishments were accepted as part of the general mechanism of life provided they kept within reasonable bounds and did not advertise. In Yale, therefore, one observed a social order admirably adapted to the varied demands of the period, flexible in its working, humane in its theory, and accepted by all. The liquor laws of the Province imposed license for sale, but were otherwise elastic: the Indians remained minors in the eyes of the Government, and could not be sued: the fine for disorderliness was fifty dollars: the jail was roomy and comfortable.

The situation, in short, might have been likened to that of a volcanic area where, through innumerable small fissures in the earth's thin crust, its internal pressure is relieved by scattered geysers and hot springs, their ebullition ensuring a general surface equilibrium without the danger of any major eruption. Yale had its own pressure vents, and they worked to general satisfaction.

Socially, however, Pearson was constricted. For friends he had Onderdonk and his wife: also Hanington, the company doctor, a sympathetic and most skilful surgeon affectionately known as the 'man-butcher'. There was Tom White, Government engineer, a man with muscular figure, short brown beard and twinkling eye. With these was Michael Hagan, owner and editor of the *Inland Sentinel*, Yale's weekly sheet, a journal that kept its ear to the ground, faithfully reflected local opinion of whatever colour, and published advertisements with terse excerpts from outside news. There was no telegraph wire to Yale from the larger world.

Hagan, with the aid of one youthful 'devil', himself produced the entire contents of every issue, did his own composing, and strained his muscles over a hand operated, single platen press to which history was attached. It had been brought by the Jesuit Fathers from France to Mexico some two hundred years previously, the first press that ever reached the Pacific coast, later being sent northward to San Francisco: thence to the Fraser in the gold rush of '62, when it was transported by

Steve Tingley four hundred miles up country to Barkerville in the Cariboo. Here it remained till the gravel beds had been washed out, when in the '70's it was carted back to Yale. In all these journeys its massive levers and thick iron castings had defied accident and rough usage.

One evening when these four men were playing whist at the contractor's house, Pearson, between games, took from his pocket a copy of the London *Truth*, just arrived by way of California.

"Donk," said he, "here's something that ought to interest you."

Smiling a little, he began to read a stinging article attacking the Canadian project of an all-red line. Here was a mad project, maintained the writer, and one might sooner subscribe to a scheme for the utilization of icebergs . . . as forbidding a country as any on the face of the earth . . . frostbound for seven months in the year . . . fifty railways would not galvanize into it prosperity . . . a delusion, of which the promoters were gamblers . . . let British capital beware!

"A pretty gloomy outlook, eh?" said Donk. "Who wrote it?"

"Henry Labouchere, the editor, I fancy. It sounds like one of his blasts: he's a sort of printing-house firebrand, and makes a speciality of exposing what he takes to be frauds—that's where your railway comes in. Incidentally he wants to abolish the House of Lords. He was re-elected to the House of Commons last year."

"Very kind of him too. Hagan, there's an opening for you."

The editor laughed. "Thanks, I'll use it next week, but, y'know, from the newspaper angle I can quite understand. Anyone who went by hearsay and didn't know this country would write in the same fashion. Pure ignorance, nothing else, and that English crowd isn't interested in our affairs: we're too far away."

"I can imagine who put him up to it," suggested Pearson.

"Who?"

"The lot that have their money in the Grand Trunk; and from what I read elsewhere they're getting savage; they think their monopoly in Canada is threatened, and want to queer the market. What do you say, Donk?"

"This thing is a pretty long shot, Judge, we've got to admit that, and Macdonald has backed himself against four hundred miles of mountain ranges. When we built the Northern Pacific there were four millions of people west of the Missouri. What's the total population of Canada to-day?"

"By the last count just that number."

"And in British Columbia how many?"

"Perhaps twelve thousand, not more," put in Hanington, "that's what I read in Victoria last month. What do you reckon the whole thing—I mean completed—is

going to cost?"

Donk shook his head. "Ask me something easier. Call it three thousand miles of rails—that is from coast to coast—at say, well, not less than an average of thirty thousand a mile: roughly a hundred million. Big figures, eh?"

"You're not building up the Fraser for that."

"Not much! Some of my section will cost a hundred and fifty thousand a mile and more, and I haven't got the worst of it. What it really means is that Macdonald is risking a hundred million dollars . . . it will amount to that before he's finished with it . . . to prevent twelve thousand British Columbians from joining the United States. There's an Imperialist if ever there was one."

"You're right," nodded Hanington, "and I hope he pulls it off. We're not really part of anything else yet—more like something washed up on the shores of the Pacific: the rest of Canada looks east and south while we look south and west. We're not sentimentally Canadians in spite of Federation—we're not Americans—I believe British is the word."

"This country is worth the gamble," said Hagan stoutly.

"I agree," nodded Donk, "more than worth it, and if the man who wrote that article would come out here I'd like to show him round. He'd see things differently. British Columbia is just as rich as the American west: there's gold, lots of it; Doc, they'll be getting gold here by one method or another for the next hundred years, and the mountains haven't yet been scratched: fine forests—I don't know of better timber anywhere, and I've seen a lot: plenty of rich soil in sheltered valleys, and all you need is men. Well, you'll get 'em sooner or later. I'm not saying this because I've got a Canadian contract. I believe it! At the same time construction at this end is costing so much that I've had orders from Ottawa to cut my outlay to the bone. It isn't fair to the work and I don't like it, but the Government is getting anxious about money. As the result this section of the road won't be what I'd much prefer to make it."

There was something impressive in his manner as he sat there, young, courageous, with so confident a look in his large, intelligent eyes that always conveyed a readiness to smile. The son of an Episcopal bishop, and himself with the bearing of an aristocrat, Onderdonk was always very particular about his personal appearance no matter what the circumstances; a handsome man with a well-shaped nose, broad high forehead and thick brown hair: he conveyed force, assurance and a large charitableness that showed itself in all that affected his thousands of employees.

Backed by D. O. Mills, an American millionaire, he had landed in Yale a man of reputation from the construction of the sea walls at San Francisco, where he came

into conflict with Dennis Carney, noted riot leader of the Pacific coast, and even before that he was an engineer for J. J. Hill, the master railway builder of the Continent. He knew what naked country looked like as God left it and before man took it over, and in British Columbia he found no deserts. His opinion therefore was to be respected.

"I'm told that Van Horne is laying two miles of track a day across the prairie from Fort Garry," put in Hanington hopefully. "That'll soon make a hole in it."

"Perhaps, but a hole at the easy end: he's got the Rockies and Selkirks in front of him."

Pearson gave a shrug. "The worst has yet to come."

"Moberly—you know him—the Government engineer—a sound man—knows the mountains better than anyone," said Donk, "he believes there's a possible route through."

"By mountain goats . . . perhaps."

"Well, Moberly is rather careful what he says. Ever met J. J. Hill?"

"No, but I'd like to."

"You know he's in the syndicate?"

"Yes, I know."

"Ever hear of a Major Rogers?"

"The chap they call 'Hell's bells'?"

"That's the one: well, Hill has sent him from our side of the line to take charge of the mountain division: it starts up at Kamloops, and if there's a short-cut through the Selkirks, Rogers will find it. That's two men Hill has supplied . . . two damn' good men . . . Van Horne is the other."

There followed a pause while there came to his friends a curious sense of isolation. What if Rogers didn't find it? There was, of course, the long way round by following the big bend of the Columbia, but from all they could hear the Government would have none of that, and insisted that the all-red line keep close to the boundary or no support would be given. So what would happen if Hell's Bells got stalled in the Selkirks? Here they were on the edge of the Pacific, sweating over the tail end of a line that might never be completed; here they were at the disposition of authorities they had never seen and financiers of whom they knew little. A queer situation! Some invisible power came to a decision, and they acted accordingly. There was nothing else to it.

"Doesn't Hill want to build into the prairie himself?" asked Hagan suddenly; "doesn't he want the western wheat traffic?"

Donk nodded. "He told me so years ago."

"Then why is he cutting his own throat by backing this new scheme?"

"I don't know, perhaps," . . . here he hesitated a moment, "perhaps he's gambling it will never be completed, and counts on using what is built to feed his own lines."

"A cheerful outlook, eh? I learn that the Hudson's Bay Company is making trouble in England, while Donald Smith, their Chief Commissioner out here, is in the syndicate, too: a queer business as I see it; I'd give something to know just what's going on inside: 'twould make a good article."

"Don't throw any monkey wrenches into the machinery yet," grinned Donk. "Hot, isn't it? Let's sit outside."

They took chairs on the broad veranda and sat at ease, each man busy with his own thoughts. The four between them ran this town that splayed out through the darkness below with yellow lamps glinting like fireflies along the bank of the river. Silently they looked down at the spangled illumination that died on the lower slopes of Mount Linhey, hearing the softened tumult of payday evening in Yale, the full-mouthed oaths and plutonic laughter of men, the shriller voices of bedizened women. It was like looking through smoked glass at a creeping bush fire, and there reached them the muted throb of urgent passionate life to which they were now so accustomed. Everything normal in Yale, and the Crusaders holding revel.

"To our eastern visitors," said Pearson quietly, with a wave of the hand, "this seems a bit crude, but I find it interesting. I like these men, and hope they like me. Call me a sentimental, if you choose, but to my mind it's rather epic . . . these drunken, shouting Argonauts who take the hardest knocks and longest chances, then roll on as soon as they've made the country fit for other people to live in. They're the real trail-breakers, and I admire 'em. How does it strike you, Doctor?"

"I quite agree. Plucky too, y'know. My chloroform ran out last week with a man's arm half off, and he came to, just grunted, and told me to push ahead. They're generous, and as you say bear no ill-will: but there's too much liquor about."

"I know, but I've got my limitations. A hundred-and-fifty for selling without a licence is all I can impose—which really means little. What do you say, Donk?"

"Ye-es, perhaps there's too much, but in my experience the average man on my payroll can go just so long without it, and no longer. Unless he's married, or sending his wages elsewhere, the possession of money is a sort of irritant: he gets restless without knowing the reason, then blows up . . . or out . . . and is soon himself again. I'd say drinking was less harmful than gambling . . . which leaves the victim with the determination to get even next time. That suggests some of our citizens I'd like to see up before you, judge."

“Bulldog Kelly?” put in Hagan.

“He’s one of them, and what they call in Mexico a bad hombre, while I don’t at all object to an artist like The Rake.”

“I had a visit from The Rake last week,” said Hagan laughing, “he has perfect manners and something that at times amounts to dignity. We discussed current events, on which he was well posted, then he returned a copy of Sydney Smith’s *Wit and Wisdom* I’d lent him and asked if I had anything more by the same author. If his profession has an upper class, I’d certainly put him in it: I like him, but Bulldog is another breed, and carries a gun. Couldn’t you take a hand there, judge?”

“I’m quite ready, but again, there’s no Provincial regulation against carrying firearms. I fancy he won’t last long.”

“Donk, why should you Americans be so much more law-abiding on this side of the line than the other?” queried Hanington.

“Well, there’s something in the way you Britishers do things that’s pretty effective: your laws have the people behind them: ours haven’t—at least not to the same extent.”

“Then why not become a British subject? you’re making your pile over here.”

Donk shook his head. “Better not suggest that to my wife, and a pile isn’t my real objective. I was an engineer before I began contracting, and engineers as a rule are not moneymakers. They’re too interested in the job—if they’re any good at all,” he paused, made an odd little gesture, and half closed his bright intelligent eyes, “that’s the way I feel now—I’m a sort of technical half-breed.”

“Your genealogy attracts me,” nodded Pearson. “Go on.”

“It’s the shaping of things that appeals, Judge; the making of some kind of difference on the face of the earth. That’s what holds the real engineer: he knows perfectly well he’s doing it for the other fellow’s profit, which doesn’t bother him at all; and there’s the reason you can hire a first-rate engineer for very little money: he’s after the perfect thing, knows quite well he’ll never achieve it, but that doesn’t depress him. When the job’s done, he goes over it, takes a last critical look and sees at once where it might and should have been done better. Well, some other engineer will come along—let’s say it’s a railway—and make it better, and perhaps get the credit for the whole thing, but that won’t trouble the first man, for by this time he’s off somewhere else and at it again. You see, whenever he starts in he visions the entirely perfect job—the kind that will never be done. That’s his dream, and he makes a kind of burnt offering of what’s in him on his own private little altar till he’s too old and stiff and perhaps wise to tackle it any longer.”

“Wise?”

“Yes, I meant it: too much wisdom, the kind that comes of long experience, is apt to sap one’s courage: that’s what the grey-haired engineers will tell you, those who have been through the mill. One becomes too conscious of impossibilities, one loses the kind of fiery courage that is partially based on ignorance. Also one is apt to lose *curjean*.”

“Lose what?”

“*Curjean*,” smiled Donk. “You don’t know the word?”

“Never heard it before. You, Hagan? You ought to know.”

Hagan shook his head.

“I got it,” Donk went on, “from a Canadian engineer, a Nova Scotian who was with me in California: he used to speak of so and so, always another engineer, as having or not having *curjean*. If he had, he was all right, anywhere: if he hadn’t—well—he wasn’t. I’ve never seen the word written, but this chap told me it was common amongst his lot in eastern Canada.”

“What does it mean?”

“A quality: it means resourcefulness or adaptableness: if you haven’t the right tools for a job, you’ll find something else and make that serve: it’s doggedness—the refusal to get stuck—the ability to work out your own salvation—a lot of qualities like that.”

“Interesting—where does it come from?” Hagan had taken out his notebook.

“The French: in early days when the French settlers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick felt lonely and far from home, they used to remind each other that only the *coeur de Jean*—the heart of Jeanne d’Arc would pull them through. That was corrupted to *curjean*.”

“You’ll need it in the Fraser Canyon,” ruminated Pearson.

“Yes, but we’ll do our best: then I’ll get back to my own country and start over again.”

“Start on what, Andrew?” said a musical voice behind him.

He laughed, and the men rose as Mrs. Onderdonk appeared from the house with the last issue of the *Inland Sentinel* in her hand.

“What’s coming?” she repeated. “You make me suspicious.”

“Don’t be anxious: we’re here for a while yet.”

“Then why are you all so serious?” she demanded, taking a chair, “and please sit down. Has Andrew been moralizing? He looks guilty.”

“We’ve been getting a glimpse into the soul of the engineer,” said Pearson, “and feel impressed.”

“But don’t you think he’s quite a nice one? I do. When he became a contractor I

expected he'd develop into a heavy-jawed, masterful driver of men, but he didn't. What's the latest news, Dr. Hanington?"

"Let me see—well—Sir Charles Tupper, Minister of Railways, is expected before long."

"In Yale?"

"Very much so: he wants to see what your husband is up to. When the whole story comes out, if ever it does, I think this line will prove to have been his idea more than anyone else's."

"Then I'll certainly be very nice to him. Is that all?"

"The Fireman's Ball looms in the near future."

"I know: they came here first for our subscription all dressed up and wearing those enormous brass helmets. It was hot, and they drank enough beer to put out any fire. Go on!"

"Well, there's a move on to persuade the Governor-General and his Princess to pay us a visit next year."

"Now, that's just right, and I'm delighted: we Americans adore Royalty. Would they come to us—I mean this house?"

"I'm certain they'd be very glad to: you'd have to do the local honours."

"Andrew," said she with conviction, "you may expect me to be in San Francisco for a month just before that happens getting fitted."

He nodded genially. "Why not outfit here and save time?"

"In Yale?" she gasped.

"Let me see that paper." He glanced at the advertisement column on the first page and read, "'Miss Adams, late of San Francisco. Latest styles received from Paris and New York. Orders punctually attended to.' Also I see that Quagliotti has a new shipment of fine black alpaca at the Romano House. What more do you want?"

"When you have a suit made here, and wear it, Andrew, I'll do the same and you'll simply hate me," she said wickedly. "Judge, will you do something—it's not at all difficult."

"I'd like to if I can."

"It's Graveyard: I want him arrested."

Pearson's brows went up. "That prominent citizen! What for?"

"Making and selling Chinese gin—you know he does."

"Ye-es but I can't catch him at it—there's a portable distillery, here to-day and elsewhere to-morrow, and, my dear lady, there's only one Jack Kirkup in Yale."

"I know, but I was at the hospital to-day and—well,"—she gave a swift little shake of the head—"I'll get a lecture to-night from Andrew for trying to influence the

Canadian Bench, so I'd better not say any more. Gracious, have you men nothing to drink?"

She clapped her hands: a felt-slipped Chinaman appeared as though sprung from a trap, vanished, and in a moment reappeared equally magically with glasses, a jug of water in which ice tinkled, and Scotch whisky. She sat smiling at them. Rather under middle height, fair with blue eyes, she had a nature like sunshine and no fear lay in her. She loved her friends, was by them loved, and nothing pleased her more than to assemble them from elsewhere in this comfortable house that overlooked a wild frontier town, and entertain as could only a woman of taste and imagination. She adored her husband and three children, was mutually adored, and had created here a domestic background that might well have been found in San Francisco. She was very proud of Donk, of his work and reputation.

"That's good whisky," murmured Hagan appreciatively, "a good deal better than I fancy they had in Kootenay last winter."

"Why Kootenay?"

"You didn't hear about the election for their local member?"

"No, tell me."

"It was a dead heat, so there must be another. I got it from a prospector not long ago. There were just thirty-five voters, seventeen Grits, seventeen Tories, and one on the fence who said he was an Independent. Also a very limited supply of intoxicants. Both Grits and Tories were determined to convert the Independent, who held the deciding vote and had the election in his pocket. Well, it seems he wouldn't commit himself, so the rival parties, each in fear of the other, supplied him with whisky till the day of election came, and when it did come he was so drunk he could not vote at all. Result a dead heat, midwinter, all trails blocked and no more drink for weeks."

"Well," said Donk amid laughter, "I can't see any clash in political views since I came here. The future of the country is the only thing to consider: opinions differ about this, but nothing else."

"We call them the ins and outs, which confirms your judgment," nodded Pearson. "The future is a very open question: every mountainous country has its secrets, and they unfold slowly, one discovery leading to another as we've already had demonstrated in Yale. I'd like to be able to picture British Columbia say fifty years hence. Where will we stand with regard to England, the Orient, and the rest of Canada? If there's immigration, and there must be, shall we expect white or yellow, and if it's yellow, shall we be cutting our own throats? Does the rest of Canada—I mean the mass of population—care anything about us, really, or are they too busy

with their own affairs: can we expect them to care? We feel lonely, but they don't. Is this line of yours, Donk, just a huge gesture? Are these ranges always going to mean some spiritual or social or economic barrier between them and us; or is the line a prophetic grasp of future possibilities resulting from the fact that the present Prime Minister became member for Victoria when his Government resigned in '73? He never came here, but did he get the idea by telepathy?"

"My gracious, Judge," exploded Mrs. Onderdonk, "who's going to answer all that?"

"No one," he laughed.

"Well, I can tell you one thing, that a great deal depends on us women whether we're ready to take the rough with the smooth. My mother walked or drove, I believe she walked most of the way, from Ohio to California—how far is that, Andrew?"

"Say something over one thousand five hundred miles."

"There you are, and a lot of her party were killed by Sioux and Navajos, and she wasn't a bit the worse for it. It's going to be a lot easier than that when this line is built, and women have just as much of the spirit of adventure as you men if they're only given the chance."

"You're thinking of my Mary," put in Hanington.

"No, I wasn't, but there's a case: why didn't you bring her up to-night?"

"I wanted to, and she wouldn't leave the hospital: there was no real need for it, but her sense of duty is something I can't bridge. Perhaps it's just as well: I don't know what I'd do without her."

"That girl is killing herself," said Mrs. Onderdonk sympathetically. "Andrew, you must get another nurse."

"Certainly, as many as you like, but what's the use: they all get married in a month or so."

"I mean the sort that no man would want to marry."

There was a laugh at that, and they were thinking of Mary Moody with her tender hands and smiling lips and fine courage in her steady hazel eyes. The Angel of Yale, they had named her because she moved like a kind of human spirit of mercy with something in her gaze that healed. Hanington called her his right and left bower, and used to glance up at those calm features, a little averted, while her one hand held a chloroformed-soaked pad on the face of an unconscious man and her left finger-tip counted the pulsations of his numbed heart. But where that slight body got its unflinching strength he could not tell.

"Please God, she won't get married," he murmured. "However, things are better

than they were: I've got more help—local help.”

“Who from, Doctor?”

“Molly Kelly,” said he in an odd tone.

“Oh!”

“She came in last week and offered three hours a day. I jumped at it. She's worth three ordinary women, Mrs. Onderdonk, she has no nerves, she's kind and—and——”

“Understands men, Doctor: why don't you say it?”

“You're quite right. On her own ground Molly is—well—we all know what she is, but take her away from her business, if you call it that, and she's another woman.”

Mrs. Onderdonk glanced at her husband, who looked interested, but had, it seemed, nothing to say in this matter: then at the judge whose expression she thought unusually benignant. He was nodding to himself, but there came no opinion from that quarter. Hagan had his head on one side, a trick of his, and was grinning openly, whereat she decided that she must get in a word on behalf of—of decency.

“But, Doctor, to put it mildly there is a predatory and dangerous woman: I know all about it, and that she has never been arrested: and, Judge, why not?”

“My dear lady, I cannot have her arrested unless she is disorderly or allows disorder, and becomes a public nuisance. But she is not—that is in the eyes of the law. Nor is she predatory. I was talking to her one day when she said it amused her to see men making fools of themselves: it sounded as though—well—that she felt vindictive about something that had happened to herself. Sadie, the Jewess, on the other hand, is quite different: I've fined her the maximum several times.”

“For allowing disorder only, but not her horrible trade.”

“Exactly, and again there is nothing in the statutes of British Columbia to stop her trade so long as she behaves herself. Molly knows that as well as I do, and would not allow a man to be robbed in her house, while I think that the other woman would—and share the proceeds.”

Hanington picked up the *Inland Sentinel*. “Judge, I agree with you, and here's another side to it.” He read:

The party who sent the gift of fruit and ice to the Accident Hospital last week is most gratefully thanked. This present was very much appreciated, and added quite a lot to the comfort of the patients, whose weary hours were thereby greatly cheered.

“The party,” he added, “was Molly Kelly, and she asked that her name be not mentioned, but I'm quite safe here.”

Mrs. Onderdonk made a soft little noise and gesture none could mistake.

"I'm glad," she said, "very glad; now I've a sudden feeling that I'd like to come back here in fifty years and see what the place is like."

"You wouldn't find much in Yale except ghosts of the past," grinned her husband. "No—you'd better not."

"Well, I'd have a look at Yale, and this house if it was still standing, then go to Victoria and Esquimalt."

"And Port Moody?" suggested Hagan provocatively, "you'd love Port Moody."

"No," said Donk, "it won't be Port Moody, the line won't end there, too far up Burrard Inlet and nothing much in the way of a harbour—that won't be the terminus."

"Gastown is an ambitious hamlet from all I hear," chuckled Pearson.

The others laughed, the village in question being a tiny wooden settlement also on Burrard Inlet, but nearer the open sea, that had just been burned to the ground: it took its name from the bombastic loquacity of one Captain John Deighton, principal citizen and owner of a small sawmill.

"Well, why not?" Donk was quite serious. "I've known stranger things happen in the making of a country. Obliterate your present impressions of Gastown, and picture that spot the terminus of a transcontinental line three thousand miles long that has cost a hundred million dollars. No—you can't—you haven't seen what I have when the steel reached salt water—that contact brings about physical miracles—but if my wife and I come back here in fifty years I rather think we'll spend most of our time in Gastown. Why shouldn't it be another San Francisco?"

"Andrew, I'm going straight to bed to dream about that, and you'd better go right over and buy a few lots," said his wife. "Good night, you men."

When she left them there was a silence invaded only by the clink of a glass and a muted turmoil from Yale far below.

"Y'know," said the judge reflectively, "getting back to our friend Molly for a minute, I confess that I like that woman: she's one of the Crusaders, and curiously enough, not a loose person herself. She told me one day in confidence that not a man in Yale had ever touched her, and I believe it."

"I think that's right," nodded Hagan, "and the establishment, as I happen to know, is owned in Sacramento: she keeps an eye on it—a pretty firm eye, too, and nothing more. She takes a drunken man's money from him—yes, but gives it back when he's sober, and seems to be one of the rare souls that can associate with pitch yet remain personally undefiled—a theory with which no living woman of the right sort would ever agree. I wonder what her history is." He got up, stretching his arms. "Well, Donk, thanks for a few more hours in this haven of refuge. Are you really

thinking of getting a steamer up the canyon?"

"I must, somehow: if I don't it means running still farther above my estimate of construction costs, and I've had orders from the Government to keep expenditure at a minimum. I don't like that—it means that the work must be starved now and improved later on: but freighting over the Cariboo Road is too expensive as things stand to-day."

"Local betting is five to one against any boat getting through," said Pearson dubiously, "the men swear she'll stick in Hell's Gate if she ever gets that far."

"In which case," replied Donk placidly, "it's quite time someone tried it."

"Well, you're the only one available, so good luck to you."

The three, judge, editor, and doctor went off down the crooked road that led towards the river. The night was fine, the mountain rampart to east and north looked darkly massive beneath the stars: on their right the Fraser raced towards the sea: twinkling lights scattered about on the Jew's Nose palpitated like an overflow of sparks from the central illumination in Yale itself: the noise had lessened a little but there was still enough to express the jubilation of payday. This would last through the morrow and dwindle out on the next morrow's morn when, with heads sore and pockets empty, a thousand men of many nations would reach again for shovel and hammer, pick and bar, fire, steel and dynamite. Some would be killed, others maimed, but they did not ask or care why they were doing thus or what would happen afterwards. All they knew was that some bloody politicians had decided to build a railway, and it was their job.

Something of the sort had been running through Pearson's mind when three hundred yards from Don's hospitable house, he perceived a prostrate figure stretched limply under a jack pine. The man was big, young, very fair and very drunk: he lay on his side, breathing slowly, heavily, eyes shut, left cheek pressed into the dry moss, his great muscled breast hardly stirring beneath a torn shirt.

"Who is this, Hagan?"

Hagan looked at the man and shrugged.

"Known as Big John: a general favourite and good for nothing."

"Working for Donk?"

"No, he works for naught but his own detriment: most of us have had a try at him, but it's no use."

"Too bad: big fellow, eh?"

"Yes, a big fellow, which is all you can say for him. He's all right here, poor devil!" said the judge, and walked on.

Hours later Big John sat up, put a finger to his left cheek and drew it away sticky with blood: looking at the sun, he reckoned it was ten o'clock: looking at Yale he knew it to be Sunday morning.

Concerning the previous night he remembered certain points quite clearly. He had won some money at the Railroader's Retreat, and got comfortably drunk, but not so drunk that he could not get about: he had met Jack Kirkup who advised him to go home: after that he went to the Rat Trap and drank Chinese gin, then over to Molly Kelly's where a girl he knew was leaning out of an upper window. She waved to him. But when he went in, at once he ran up against Molly herself at the bottom of the stairs. He showed her his money, but she wouldn't touch it, and told him to get out. They argued for a while, but she held her ground, and when he tried to push past she called Long Kelly and another man he didn't know and they threw him out. He had landed on his face against a nail in the sidewalk, and now it was hurting like hell.

After that he wasn't so sure what happened except that he dreamed he was dead of blood poisoning, and a lot of devils came floating down the Fraser on logs and carried him up to the top of the Jew's Nose and were piling rocks on him, and just then the judge and Hagan came along and said: "You can't do that before the inquest, which we'll have right here." So they had one with a Chinese jury all wearing straw slippers, and conical hats with Graveyard as coroner. Graveyard smoked opium all the time. Then the jury put their heads together and brought in the verdict that he was better dead than alive, being of no use to anyone.

Beyond this his memory did not now carry him.

Now his cheek and jaw were aching and sore to the touch, so he went to the tumbledown shack he occupied half-way up the Jew's Nose, put his head in a bucket of water, and looked at his face in a broken bit of glass tacked against the wall. There was a tear in his cheek an inch long. "Blood poisoning!" he said to himself, and felt frightened. He didn't want to die that way.

Better dead, being no use to anyone. He fell to thinking about this, and didn't like it because he could lick any man in Yale when sober. He glanced about the cabin where he lived: some old-timer had built it twenty years ago in the Cariboo rush: the roof sagged, the walls leaned inward, the floor lifted in obtuse angles. In the corner was a frame-work of six-inch jack pine with flat cleats nailed across, a straw mattress, a flour sack stuffed with hay that made a pillow, and three five-point Hudson's Bay blankets, a small cast-iron stove, a table, two wooden chairs, two windows with three panes broken, a gold pan, some pictures from the *Illustrated London News* of twenty years ago pasted on the wall. Outside, a pile of empty cans

crawling with flies.

But because he wanted to live and get even with Molly, who had been standing him off since she came to Yale nearly a year ago, he decided to have the Man-butcher fix his face before it was too late. So he swaggered downhill again. The hour was nearly eleven o'clock with Yale still sleeping off the effects of the night's orgy, and he did not meet many people on the way to Donk's hospital, a small wooden building behind Water Street. There were water-barrels on the roof for use in case of fire: about the only building where this precaution had been taken, though half of Yale had gone up in flames but a few months previously. It was painted, and had a verandah where patients could rest, and it looked clean, and generally one got a strong smell of chloroform. Big John knew the place well from outside, had seen many a man carried in there and not a few carried out, but had never entered it himself. Also he knew Mary Moody by sight—they all did—but had never spoken to her, because he reckoned that nurses were different and not interested in men like other women, or they wouldn't be nurses. So he hung about for a while, and when he did go in was confronted by a slight figure in white cap and large white apron.

She looked at him sharply. "Yes? Oh, your cheek!"

"Got something in it," he rumbled, "maybe it ought to be washed out. Doctor around?"

"No, he's gone up the line."

"Well, I'll come back."

"You'll sit right down here," said the young woman, putting a cool finger on the hot cheek. "You don't need the doctor: I'll do it."

"Eh!"

"Molly," she called, "Molly, bring a basin of hot water and some lint."

Big John, unprepared for this, gave a gulp and sat up, while the young woman, moving quickly and quietly, opened a cupboard and took out a book, then pen and ink. He was aware that her eyes turned to him more than once. Now Molly came in from another room, also in cap and apron, bringing water and lint, and at sight of him gave an exclamation. Hurriedly she put down the basin.

"Hullo, John."

"Hullo, Molly."

"Been sort of careless, ain't you?" this with a queer little laugh.

"Yes—maybe."

"Where did you get that?"

"Outside your place last night."

"Oh!" she compressed her lips, sending the girl a quick sideways look. "I'm

hoping you'll have more sense next time. Here you are, miss."

Mary flushed a little, nibbled her pen. "Your name, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Name is Big John," put in Molly quickly. "I know him: it's all right."

"John what? I've got to put it in the book."

"Hickey," said he, "John Hickey."

"There, Molly, you thought he didn't know his own name. You live here, Mr. Hickey?"

"I guess I do, between here and the Cariboo."

"Age?"

"Twenty-five," said he, wondering what it was all about.

She finished writing, closed the book and smiled.

"I have to keep track of all the new patients like this, especially when the doctor's away. What's the matter, Molly?"

"Nothing, Miss Mary, I'm all right, wha—what about his cheek: is it poisoned?"

"I don't think so, but we'll see in a minute. Put your head back, Mr. Hickey—yes—like that."

He bent his big neck, felt something very delicate and soft like a strong butterfly against his burning face—her finger-tips. She pressed back the edges of the cut and he felt cold Yale Creek water squirted into the wound. Then a probe. Her face was very close to his, and though their eyes did not meet his blue ones stared into hers of hazel: it was like looking into one of those quiet little lakes one finds in a bush country where the wind doesn't reach and there is muskeg and tamarac. He had never been so close to this kind of girl before: she had a very fair, clear skin: he noted the fineness of it and the whiteness of scalp from which the brown hair, not quite covered by the cap, sprang with such luxuriance. She was, he thought, the cleanest girl he had ever seen.

But what was Molly doing here? The last time he saw Molly, not more than twelve hours ago, she had her hair curled tight, face painted, lips like flame, bare arms, a diamond bracelet, a lot of rings, a moonstone necklace with twisted gold links that hung right down between her breasts. Then she was calling to Long Kelly and others to throw him out. Now she had no paint, her hair done in a knob behind, no toughness, a white apron, and was watching him fixedly with an expression he had never caught before: it seemed she wanted to speak, but just didn't. Then Mary put on some plaster in narrow crosswise strips, and before she straightened up, took one square, searching stare right into his eyes. All he saw was a depth of pity.

"I think that'll do now," she said briskly, "there was some sand, but it must have bled enough to carry away everything else, which is lucky for you. Leave the plaster

on till it comes off itself: there shouldn't be any mark. Thanks, Molly; you'd better boil that lint in fresh water: we're rather short."

"How much?" said John.

"Oh, nothing. I'm paid by Mr. Onderdonk, and Molly isn't paid at all."

"Well," he blurted, "well—thanks."

"Come back if it begins to hurt. Good morning, Mr. Hickey."

"Same to you," said he, and stalked out.

She looked after him with feminine interest. "What a tremendous fellow."

"Yes, Miss, he is big."

"He works on the railway?"

"He should, but don't. It's no use talking to him neither, he won't stick at anything."

"What's the matter?"

"Most everything that could be," said Molly, fingering the edge of her apron, "maybe he has too many friends."

It was on the tip of the girl's tongue to say "Not of the right sort," but she checked it just in time: one learned and saw so much in Yale that one didn't talk about. Molly herself, for instance.

"Perhaps when he was a boy he didn't have a chance," she said softly.

Early spring of '82. From Water Street a freighting outfit was just starting for the Cariboo headed by an immense and heavy wagon drawn by ten yoke of grunting oxen all on the same drag chain, making a forest of widespread horns some sixty feet long: other wagons, smaller and also canvas covered, coupled in tandem pairs, were pulled by mixed teams of horses and mules, while the more mobile portion of the train consisted of short-bodied, long-haired Indian ponies with their bundling loads firmly secured by the diamond hitch. This was the BX outfit, run by Steve Tingley, who knew the Road like the palm of his hand.

Nearly a year ago the first locomotive had arrived in Yale amidst gunfire from a little giant cannon, the broaching of beer barrels and general jubilation, so that now the town was on the railway, but only just on it. Northward and eastward between the lower river and the smooth upper reaches, Onderdonk was still blasting his way across the face of cliffs, boring slowly through tunnels, heaping his embankments where it seemed no embankment was meant to lie.

That spring Dalton had built the *Skuzzy* near the west end of the uncompleted Big Tunnel, building her stout and strong for the work she would have to do: she

could float in eighteen inches of water, had a length of one hundred and twenty-five feet, a beam of twenty-four. He reckoned she would register a hundred and fifty tons. In her he put the biggest boiler she would take and a great stern paddle-wheel: while forward she had a wide flat bow and a steam winch.

Mrs. Onderdonk christened her at the launching, and then Ansley, her captain, worked her upstream to an eddy below Hell's Gate and stuck there defeated, whereat Onderdonk only smiled in his own cheerful fashion and called in three Columbia River men who had had experience in other waters nearly as turbulent: Smith, Burse and Patterson, captain, engineer and pilot. His instructions were simple and generally approved by the population of Yale. *Skuzzy* was to climb Hell's Gate if she climbed it in pieces.

A notable affair, this bold enterprise, and exactly suited to the temperament of Yale, though local betting held four to one against success. The point of trial was some twenty miles above the town, but one could now travel by rail for most of this and walk the rest of the way to a spot just opposite Hell's Gate, below which the temporarily baffled *Skuzzy* lay moored to the bank awaiting her ultimate test, so it was an animated train of flats that pulled out on the appointed day loaded with Onderdonk's guests and drawn by the *Yale*, for thus had been appropriately named the first locomotive to penetrate this mountain fastness. Shipped by sea from San Francisco, she had been landed at New Westminster, re-shipped to Emory, landed again there and then rolled triumphantly over Onderdonk's new track, the first track in British Columbia. She devoured cordwood, had a saddleback tank, a squat, cone-shaped, wire-covered stack, and the heart of a giant.

On bumped the train of flats, heralded by echoing toots from the whistle, over the newly-laid track with a grinding of link pins, swaying round sharp curves, each of which opened a new vista, roaring through recently driven tunnels where water dripped from the dark and jagged roof. On over Yale Creek, past the Indian Reserve with its disreputable habitations and naked children, where the rotting bones of squaws and braves had been dug up to make place for the line: round the blunt nose of Mount Linhey, past Lady Franklin Rock, that huge monolith shouldering out of the Fraser in Little Canyon, past New York Bluff, a three-thousand-foot palisade gashed by vertical ravines glistening with snowy cascades, past New York Bar, Rose's Bar, Siwash Creek, Pike's Riffle, all those once aureate sands to-day ravished of their wealth, and this being early summer, now deep beneath the swirling river.

Graveyard was in the company, his stout legs dangling over the edge of a flat, while beside him sat Ki Tee and Fee Wong Lee, so that here was represented the

Oriental and mercantile aristocracy of Yale. Molly was there, dressed in her best, with her girls, recipients of much male gallantry from her clientele, seemingly unconscious of the close proximity of Sadie, the Jewess, who, similarly escorted, was enjoying no less an exciting morning. Mary Moody, who had been bundled out of the hospital by Hanington, was with Mrs. Onderdonk and Pearson in the contractor's private car: before leaving Yale she had looked about for a young giant with yellow hair and eyes like agates, and was secretly disappointed not to find him. Of the Kellys, The Rake, Big Mouth and Bulldog, were in the company: but Silent Kelly, signifying indifference whether or not they pulled the goddam frames out of *Skuzzy*, had elected to stay at home and finish a game of solitaire. Bob McTeague, the Government agent, was chatting with Jack Kirkup, Hagan's eyes were darting about and his notebook busy, Siwash Indians jostled against labourers from the Yangtse River, Cousin Joes from Redruth and Marazion rubbed shoulders with Italian navvies: the sun shone brightly, and the Yale, vomiting sparks and with her valve motion a trifle loose, clanked her triumphant way up the banks of the Fraser.

Now on foot, to climb from the end of the track by the Cariboo Road over the great granite mass through which Big Tunnel was being driven, and halting here high above the river, one got a perspective of Donk's work. From this point one could see men, tiny like flies, drilling into the face of rocky cliffs down whose precipitous slopes they had been lowered by ropes to find a perilous foothold; the strokes of hammers on jumping steel came in faint musical clinks; the mouths of uncompleted tunnels, each with its splintered dump, gaped blackly: there sounded the intermittent thud of blasting, trees toppled like matches, gyrating rocks soared skyward, and the mountain shelf crashed in titanic fragments to the sliding river. Upstream one could see the old Cariboo Road with its timber ramps and straddling trestles clinging to the mountain flank in mid-air and again descending close to water-level where soon it would be chopped to bits by the new embankments, but still carrying its persistent course through the gateway of the Fraser. Its fate was soon to be massacred by the iron road, for in many a constricted spot there would be no room for both.

On the other side of the river a family of Siwash natives camped on a small plateau twenty feet above the river, and quite undisturbed by this foreign invasion were catching salmon in a great dip-net suspended from a long flexible boom-pole balanced across a triangular framework: it descended with a flat splash, was held under water for a few moments, and when it came up one could see the shining jumping fish glitter like silver in the sun. These Indians, the natural inhabitants of this wilderness, looked at home here; they were part of the landscape, and in a curious way their procedure seemed more sensible than the ragged right-of-way that was

costing so many millions. They continued to fish, splitting the salmon and laying them on a wooden grid to dry in the baking sun. *Skuzzy* meant but little to them.

Standing at a vantage point, contemplating the scene with his usual air of detachment, The Rake found himself beside the judge and gave a polite salute.

“Well, Mr. Kelly?”

“Well, sir, it’s one fine morning.”

“Are they going to get her up, you think?”

“Mr. Onderdonk says so.”

“Yes, I know: what do you say?”

“Well, judge, I’m kind of short on steamboats, it ain’t exactly in my line.”

“No, I suppose not.” Pearson strangled a smile. “How long have you been in Yale?”

The Rake, a shade uncertain whether this not might veil a suggestion that he had been in Yale long enough, hesitated a fraction: he could make nothing of the magistrate’s expression except that it seemed friendly.

“Just over two years, Judge, and,” he added blandly, “I guess another six months will finish it.”

“American, aren’t you?”

“I certainly am.”

“You—ah—you like Canada?”

Again a touch of uncertainty: did this precede a hint that Canada did not like him? Professional instinct asserted itself, and he bluffed.

“Yes, sir, I like Canada, and if I weren’t just naturally a kind of rolling stone that don’t gather moss—I guess you understand me—I’d take out my papers right now.”

At this Pearson was forced to smile, and The Rake, catching it, smiled in return: they both understood, and for Mr. Kelly it was a pleasure to meet so broad-minded a member of the bench.

“What do you make of Sidney Smith’s works?” asked the judge unexpectedly.

The Rake for once in his life failed to conceal surprise.

“Him! Oh—why, Judge, I’m darned if I know exactly: he sort of appealed to me, and he sure did tear things to bits when he got well started, not forgetting the Scotch: I feel that kind of way about the Scotch myself. I guess maybe he wasn’t happy.”

“I’ve an idea you’re right,” nodded Pearson. “Well, Mr. Kelly, no doubt we shall meet again.”

“It ain’t likely, Judge,” at this point The Rake breathed with deep relief. “That is not unless you send for me. Good day, sir, pleased to have seen you.”

Pearson went off, grinning, and immediately became absorbed in what was going on around him. A hundred feet below lay *Skuzzy*, straining at mooring posts anchored in loose rock, belching black smoke from the resinous pine with which her boiler was stuffed: she rested in a little backwater at the tail of Hell's Gate, and in front of her raced the stiffest chute of the Fraser, a huge basaltic porch where the stream forced itself between ramparts of brown, adamant columns only eighty feet apart. At ten miles an hour the river plunged, its low, hissing note mingling with a premonitory gurgling from *Skuzzy's* lifting safety valve. In this Olympian setting the vessel looked like a toy, with pigmies in the wheelhouse and around the steam winch on her flat forward deck.

The crowd, plastered on the slope of a wild amphitheatre, stood fascinated: they saw a light line heaved ashore by which a heavier one was drawn on board and made fast, its free end being immediately seized by a hundred and fifty Chinamen. Simultaneously a second line was brought in from the far bank and attached to the steam winch. Then a pause while Patterson, being assured from the engine-room that all was well down there, put his head out of the wheelhouse and looked anxiously at Donk who, with his wife, stood close to shore.

"All ready now, sir; better start—water's rising a bit."

"All right," shouted Donk, "go to it—she's yours." He had risked much on this venture.

Now the moorings slackened, and *Skuzzy*, edging out to the fringe of the backwater, was immediately caught by the tugging current; she swerved sharply, heeled over, steadied and dropped back a little till the shore lines whipped out of the water, came taut and took the strain. Her racing stern wheel was thrashing the mustardy foam, but with every ounce of steam she had to give she just held her own, and already it became clear that never by her own unaided power could she climb Hell's Gate.

"I'm laying you forty dollars to ten she don't make it," said a heavy voice at Mr. Kelly's elbow. "Take me?"

The Rake did not move, he knew that tone, and his lips assumed a faintly satirical smile: for a year past peace of a kind had existed between himself and Bulldog, one favouring the Rat Trap and the other the Stiffs' Rest: they had an awareness of each other, and The Rake at any rate was superficially polite when they happened to meet in public, but nothing more. It intrigued him that Bulldog should still be wondering what had become of that ace of spades.

"Well, I don't know but what I might—it sort of depends on who's holding the stakes. How about Graveyard?"

“That’ll suit me.”

“He’s right there, Bulldog.”

The merchant turned, listened placidly, extended a claw-like hand and pocketed fifty dollars: Bulldog gave a grunt and walked on, while The Rake, promptly forgetting all about him, concentrated on *Skuzzy* and her owner; Onderdonk looked tense but not nervous, and his wife gripped his arm.

Skuzzy had now straightened out and was pointing to the foot of the chute, the wall of water climbing at her bows. Her winch clanked harshly and she seemed to be moving: she *was* moving. On the west bank a long file of Chinamen, stripped to the waist, wearing short cotton pants, were bending yellow bodies parallel with the ground, straining at the heavy rope that bit into their sinewy shoulders, a human centipede with three hundred yellow legs, while the cable swayed, sagged, tightened and gripped. They scrambled, tripped, fell and recovered, taxing their arms and bellies and backs, while from the east bank the other line, anchored to a deadman between two great boulders, began to crawl round the creeping winch. Yale held its breath, and the odds dropped to three to one.

Now she was a little nearer the pitch, while flame licked the mouth of her stack, for Burse in the boiler-room had seized a long slicing bar and was stirring her fire-box to still more glowing heat—incidentally he was also burning lubricating oil. Now she was at the foot of the pitch and hung there irresolute, her shallow nose burrowing into the tawny foam, while the split river raced along her sheathed sides and clawed at her bottom. The decisive moment arrived, and Patterson, who had been waiting for it, measuring her progress inch by crawling inch, reached for the whistle cord, gave the prearranged toot, and *Skuzzy*’s mechanical entrails rose to their highest effort.

She trembled from stem to stern: with the last pound of steam she drew up on the pitch, tow-line swinging, winch whining shrilly, the human centipede gasping under untranslatable exhortations of a slant-eyed foreman from Tientsin who felt that the honour of Asia was at stake: up she came a slow foot at a time, quivering in every timber, testing every bolt, till the betting on shore ceased altogether, and men and women, both white and pagan, held their breath: it was like climbing the slanting roof of a house, and the big stern wheel revolved at a speed it was destined never to reach again. Now it was make or break!

Just at the top she halted for an agonizing instant, balanced precariously between triumph and destruction, then with a jaunty little dip and one ultimate throaty blast shot ahead, clear of the deadly pull of Hell’s Gate into gentler waters beyond. The tow-lines slackened into the river with a long, thin splash, the centipede fell flat on its

sweating faces, the three hundred citizens of Yale yelled their profound satisfaction, while Kelly the Rake, aware of Graveyard's straw-thatched figure close by, stroked his smooth chin and smiled contentedly.

The month of October and Big John in gaol, a stoutly-built, log-walled, lock-up with iron bars over its small, square windows, and no other light: it stood for convenience as an extension to the courthouse, where three times a week Pearson sat behind a table on a small dais facing the jury box at the other end. There was a waiting-room and a jury retiring room. This courthouse dated from the days of the Fraser gold rush in '58, and a line of trees along the street provided unaccustomed shade to interested groups that were wont to congregate here when court was being held.

John squatted on the floor, his back against the wall, his pockets empty, a pain in his head. His blue eyes, like agates, were cloudy. He remembered quite distinctly a dispute with Bulldog Kelly in the Rat Trap, but could not recall the subsequent riot or what happened after that except Jack Kirkup's grip on his shoulder and the voice of authority in his ear: he had a vague belief that he had smashed Bulldog.

Now, quite at home in these surroundings, he breathed deeply, rubbed his flaxen head, and, realizing that court would not sit again for two days, gave himself up to indefinite thoughts. He had no sense of shame, no settled aspirations of any kind except that every now and then he would resolve to stop gambling and fighting, and save money for a change, but just so often as the money reached three figures it ran away from him. There would follow an interlude while he lived on his friends, a flush of contrition, a spasm of work, and the same thing over again.

James Hickey, his father, had come from San Francisco to Yale in '62 shepherding a four-year-old boy, and made straightway for the Cariboo, at that time in the zenith of its fame. Three years before this, his wife—and John could not remember her at all—had disappeared suddenly and not been heard of since, and the child was launched into the mêlée of mining camp life when he had hardly emerged from infancy. His father, a small, pockmarked man of no ability and aimless methods, loved the lad in his own fashion, till in '64 he was buried by a cave-in on one of the Cameron deep diggings, and from that hour John became dependent on the good nature of others.

A hard life, but physically he thrived on it: in bone, fibre and muscle, he increased mightily: at ten, his big, clumsy joints, strong neck and barrel chest proclaimed the embryonic Hercules. By this time he could pan gold with the best, swing an axe to

good purpose, drive mules, and ride any bucking cayuse he found: it was the great hour of his life when Steve Tingley beckoned him up on the box of the fast Barkerville-Lilloet mail-stage, handed him the reins and asked to see what he could do.

Those were the halcyon days of youth with all men as friends and before women had begun to trouble him. When he saw other boys with their mothers, he would wonder about his own, but there was no one of whom to ask questions, and his father had always refused to talk about her except on one occasion when pestered into speech he had said, "She was a good-looking bitch who ran away with a Dane." She must, reflected John, be dead by now and it seemed had left nothing of herself behind, not even a photograph, or if there ever was one, James Hickey must have destroyed it.

When he was eleven John walked back 400 miles to Yale where he remained ever since in a town that was but the skeleton of its former self with rows of empty houses for the taking, but one found more company, and life was easier than in those distant solitudes of the Cariboo: salmon swarmed up the Fraser, and when one had collected a few ounces of amalgam, New Westminster, further down the river, satisfied a natural craving for a larger sphere of action, though such excursions were too expensive to last long; he hunted, fished, and washed gravel for six months in the year, loafing for the rest of it. This life suited him exactly, and there was no one to care what he did: the coming of the railway had no special significance: he made money, flung it away, and repeated the process. All women liked him, as much on account of a certain attractive untamed simplicity as his blue eyes and good looks, while to his disadvantage he liked all women.

Having again searched his pockets for tobacco, he returned to unprofitable thoughts. There was no one to bail him out, and he grew restive, glancing uncertainly at the window bars which he could easily rip off, but that meant only further and certain trouble. From the south window he could nearly see the tail of Sawmill Bar where his own claim was staked: the falling river had exposed it, and the gravelly sand was populated by Chinamen working hard, these Orientals being admitted experts at catching fine gold on claims that more impatient and less skilful whites abandoned in contempt. Now that he could not get at it the bar seemed inviting, so he sat down again on the floor, and putting his head between his hands felt the slight scar that would always remain in his left cheek.

The touch of it made him think of the girl. The week after she patched him up he had gone to the hospital—that was a year ago now—with an envelope addressed to her, and in the next issue of the *Inland Sentinel*, the hospital acknowledged with

grateful thanks a contribution of ten dollars from Mr. John Hickey, a paragraph that infuriated him and roused widespread mirth in Yale. The week after that he drove a pack-train into the Cariboo country. When he returned to Yale Mary had gone away for a rest, and he did not see her for months.

She came back in early winter, looking better and stronger. Then he made bold to speak to her. He remembered that talk and how she looked at him with a faint smile that was not altogether happy, and hesitated, and abruptly without any warning begged him to stop gambling away his money and his life. She said to his surprise that he was meant for better things: there were now great opportunities that might never come again and some day he would count the time back and be sorry. He had had much the same advice from others, though put in a vastly different and more forcible way: the others cursed him, but she did not, nor talk down to him, nor patronize, and all the while kept watching him with large hazel eyes in which moved something that baffled him entirely, so it seemed that actually she cared whether he made good or not, at which he was the more puzzled. Then she asked about himself, his childhood and parents, and where he came from.

John told her about that childhood, but nothing of his parents except that his mother had run away: he could not remember her and he had no idea what she looked like: he told her about the Cariboo country where as a boy he could choose what camp he fancied most on account of the cooking, and stay as long as he pleased; and the sort of place Yale was before Onderdonk came and waked it up, and why cards had a sort of power over him and swallowed all the money he could lay hands on. But in this, his first real talk with anyone, he never said he was lonely, and kept looking at her as though she was something different and not of his world at all. He had no love for her, nor could he imagine himself ever being anything like her with the same kind of friends, the same quiet way of talking, and it wasn't in her to rouse a man as did most of the other girls one knew in Yale. She was quite different in that respect and he was secretly glad of it.

There had been other talks, and he got into the way of trying to meet her, but this didn't happen often, there being too many accidents, most of them from premature explosions of dynamite when it was being thawed out in the rock cuts beside a fire, so she had to work hard. He never went to the hospital, nor did she ask him there. At Christmas he sent her a nugget shaped like a tiny pear: he drilled a small hole in the top, hoping that she would put it on a chain and wear it, but she only thanked him very sweetly and he didn't see it again. That made him sulky. Once again he broke loose, lost what money he had saved, and matters became worse when he smashed furniture in the Rat Trap as well as Bulldog Kelly's leg. Bulldog was in hospital now.

Reviewing all this in the solitude of the jail he felt restless and defeated.

Firm footsteps sounded outside, the rasping of a key, and Jack Kirkup entered smiling: he gave a friendly nod.

“Get out of this: you’re a free man.”

“Go to hell,” scowled John, “I want my dinner.”

“You’ll get no dinner here. Out with you!”

His manner could not be mistaken, but what had happened? The prisoner rose to his feet doubtfully.

“You mean that?”

“Sure I meant it—think I want to lose my job? Your fine is paid.”

“Who paid it?”

“Lady in Yale: you know her well.”

A wild idea flashed into the young giant’s brain, but it was too wild: and he shook his head like a great dog.

“Come on, Jack, who is it?”

“Lady at the hospital,” grinned the constable. “Some ladies’ man you are. Get out, I want to lock up.”

“Miss Mary?” stammered John.

“Hell—no—Molly Kelly: what’s the matter with you?”

“Not her!”

“Why not? She heard you were here, I guess she got it straight from Bulldog, and went right off to the judge. He wasn’t for it at first, but I guess she talked him down and he said she could pay the fifty to the clerk and save the Government two days’ board on you. What are you waiting for?”

John walked out, his brain in turmoil. Damn Molly Kelly! Then he wondered was it possible that someone else had found the money and got her to do the rest. Whoever it was, he’d sooner stick in jail than be beholden to a woman, so he went straight to the hospital where he came on Mary, not Molly, sitting outside, looking tired, hands folded in her lap. She glanced up uncertainly, and motioned him to sit beside her, but he would not do that and stood twisting his fingers, feeling like a fool.

“Where’s Molly?” he asked bluntly.

“She went home an hour ago.”

He paused irresolute: she looked so cool in her white cap and big white apron, so calm too, with nothing to trouble her, and suddenly he felt envious of that calm. On the other hand, he reflected, any woman who lived as she did must miss a lot.

“Thanks, I’ll find her.” He turned away.

“John?”

“Yes, miss?”

“I want to talk to you: please sit down—that’s better. I know why you want to see Molly, but I wouldn’t—just leave it.”

“She’s bailed me out,” said he, flushing. “I had a mix-up with Bulldog and broke something, and——”

“I know that too, but please let it stand as it is. Molly did it because she wanted to: she does lots of things like that: she’s doing them all the time, but they’re not often discovered.”

“She isn’t fit for you to touch,” he blurted, and was immediately astonished at his own protest.

The girl gave him a strange glance, shaking her head slowly, gently.

“Never say that of anyone again.”

“She’s no use for me and never had, and why in . . . ? I want to know why she’s done this.”

“No, she has no use for you in one way,” said Mary under her breath, “but don’t go to her now, please, please, don’t even thank her—she doesn’t want thanks. John, can’t you see? We both think the same about you: we want you to do better: you’re missing so much with such big things going on all round you and you no part of them: that’s what is the matter.”

“Who cares?” said he, dully. “As for Molly, I’ve no use for her: I didn’t take her money.”

“Nor she yours, John—ever, and she can do what she likes with her own. Why don’t you go away?”

“From Yale?”

“Yes, from Yale.”

“You mean clear out for good?”

“For better and best,” she said earnestly, “it’s your only chance: not the Cariboo, but follow the steel like other men. I hear so much about the chances from Mr. Onderdonk and Dr. Hanington: they say it won’t be the same again.”

John considered that: sometimes he had pictured himself foreman of a rock cut, or trestle building, but it would mean taking orders from others. He didn’t like orders, and now said so.

“You’ll never give them if you can’t take them,” she objected firmly.

This for some reason got under his skin, perhaps because it was just the stark truth but more probably since it came from a wisp of a girl in a white apron.

“I’m taking orders all the time,” she added wistfully, “and it’s the same all the way up the ladder. Why can’t you? Are you afraid?”

"Afraid?" he flushed.

"You're big and strong," she went on, pressing her point, "and not afraid of any other man, which is natural enough, but you are afraid of things. I've wanted to say this for a long time—afraid of things—afraid of having to do something you don't like. Isn't that cowardly: isn't that yellow?" She jerked out the last word with a swiftly rising colour that presently left her cheeks pale. "Isn't it, John?"

"You—said—yellow," he stammered.

She nodded, biting her lips, white fingers interlocking stiffly.

"It's what I meant, and when you've decided what to do about it come and tell me: there's something in you that wants to get out and assert itself, but you won't give it a chance. A little more and you'll kill it."

"I never thought of it that way," he frowned. "How do you know there's anything?"

She sent him a glance, proud yet shy, candid yet pleading, such as he had received from no other human being in all his life. "I can't tell you that," she said gently, "but if you look you'll find it: then come back and tell me."

The river had fallen a little farther, and near the tail of Sawmill Bar John was washing gold, first shovelling the gravel into a rocker. This contrivance, shaped something like a baby's cradle, was some four feet long, actually on rockers, and had a perforated bottom with small holes which, when the affair was operated and water poured in, allowed only the finer portion to pass through to a pan beneath while coarser stuff worked on and out. Periodically these screenings were washed by oscillation in a large sheet-iron flat dish in which a small quantity of quicksilver had been placed, thus forming an amalgam with whatever gold was present. The day of bonanzas had far sped, ten cents to the full pan now being considered good, though small nuggets the size of a bean were occasionally recovered, and what gold remained was in the form of thin flakes, much waterworn, which on account of their lightness might only be caught by painstaking skill.

His claim was twenty-five feet square, and around him in other allotments toiled some fifty Chinamen wearing only cotton pants and straw hats: they maintained a continuous jabber, were artists at the process, and content to win four dollars a day.

On the next bar the owners had rights in a wooden flume that carried water overhead from a creek tributary to the Fraser, which running supply saved them an infinity of toil and trebled their output. These larger operators used a sluice, a long, wooden, gently sloping trough a foot square, with narrow slats nailed across its

bottom. Quicksilver lay in the corners above these slats, and here amalgamation automatically took place, a simple process handling much more material than any rocker, the only labour being that of shovelling gravel into the head of the sluice. A clean-up was going on after a week's run, and the amalgam, squeezed through a chamois skin, left a small stiff ball, silver-grey in colour, that was three parts gold and creaked when pinched. John, bending over his rocker, eyed these men enviously. He had no water rights.

He worked stolidly. A construction train coughed eastward towards Boston Bar upriver, which point the steel had nearly reached. Yale, though still Onderdonk's headquarters, was not the place of a year previously: its population had diminished, spreading out up the Fraser: the town had passed its prime, and this western end of the all-red line, having blasted its way through cliff and canyon, was now advancing at a faster rate.

But Yale remained the social centre of the Lower Fraser country: to its saloons and other places of dalliance still from the upper line repaired at the end of every week a multitude of eager men in whose pockets money could not lie without burning: they came to the Stiffs' Rest, the Rat Trap, the Railroaders' Retreat, came to be doctored by Hanington, bandaged by Mary Moody, and sentenced by Pearson. Yale, however, did not hold them for long.

John kept his rocker in motion, but a weight lay on his brain rather than his arms. Yellow! A woman had called him yellow. The word slept with him, was there when he awoke and stuck like a plaster. She had blanched a little when she said it, her face seemed to flatten as she got it out as a man's face flattens when he fights hard, and in the large eyes that looked straight into his own he had caught a queer light he had not seen before. She had called him yellow, yet didn't seem to despise him for it! Also she wanted to know what he proposed to do about it. Naturally, he would have to do something, and to begin with he must leave Yale: no man could stay there after a girl had called him yellow. So now he gazed eastward at the tumbled mountains, and for the first time they looked inviting, mysterious, secretive, as though hidden in their gigantic recesses was something that mocked him. "Big as you are," the mountains seemed to signal, "you're not big enough to tackle us."

At this he began to nod slowly, decisively, arguing that after all he was sick of Yale, of its saloons, tired of borrowing money or earning money only to waste it: now it seemed he had been tired for some time, but didn't know it until he was called yellow, therefore, since any move was likely to be for the better, perhaps he ought to be grateful. Against all these favourable points was the other one—he was ashamed to clear out owing a woman fifty dollars.

Considering this angle of it, fuming because he had reached the stage where it was impossible to borrow money, Kelly the Rake being no longer responsive, he saw Molly on the bank a hundred yards away waving to him.

She had on her best; a blue alpaca dress, cut very tight over breast and waist, showing the rich lines of her figure, and with a small bustle that to him resembled a portable seat from which she had just slid before standing up: her jaunty felt hat had a rolled brim, and on the left side of it perched a flaming yellow bird with glass eyes, wings, claws, and a green berry in its beak: she wore black silk stockings, American button boots of shiny kid, black kid gloves, and carried a blue parasol with a deep fringe. In this bright plumage, glowing exotically against the stark structures on Water Street and the rockstrewn slopes of the Jew's Nose, she suggested something luxuriantly tropical, some gaily-feathered wanderer from distant jungles alighting here for an instant to rest its brilliant pinions. The entire outfit had arrived from San Francisco a week ago and she was highly pleased with it.

John, hostile and unimpressed, applied himself to his rocker. "To hell with her," he grunted, wishing he had fifty dollars to push in the gloved hand. "If she doesn't want to be thanked, what's she doing here?" Now she waved again, and this time he made a gesture that needed no words.

She caught it, and without a moment's hesitation plunged down the steep, clayey bank, digging her high heels into the slope and landing forty feet below with a slide of loosened earth. Between them lay a stretch of bar just clear of the river, flat, scattered with shallow pools inches deep, and straight through these she came splashing, lifting her skirts, showing her full calves, regardless of the staring Chinamen. Panting a little, she perched on the rocker and gave him a cheerful nod.

"Hullo, John: I wanted to see you."

"Why did you do it?" he growled.

"Who cares about getting wet?"

"I didn't mean that, I meant bail me out."

With no attention to soaked feet and dripping skirts, she began to trace an aimless pattern in the moist sand, crumpling her strong, dark brows, glancing up at him with so odd an expression as to leave him confused. She had never looked like this before: there was about her at that moment something strange and novel so that for once he did not associate her with what went on in the red-curtained, two-storey house just off Water Street: she appeared to have divested herself of all that just as when working in the hospital, and now to present a softer, less blatant and much more respectable personage.

"Well," she said after an uncertain pause, "I suppose I can do what I like with

my own money: what's fifty dollars anyway."

John, admitting this, argued with rising resentment that his affairs had nothing to do with her, and she could keep her money to herself.

"You didn't get it," she objected, "the Government did. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing you don't know of already."

She seemed not to hear this and balanced on the edge of the rocker, a spot of bright colour in this primitive setting, swinging her legs, while her gaze went roving amongst the Chinamen. Then she gave him a straight stare in which moved the crude sagacity of a woman who knows most that there is to be known about men: all except one or two of her friends were men: she recognized herself as an outcast from decent women, but this did not abate her spirit, and in her breast flowed a deep tide of humanity that made her strong. Nothing in the world she feared except old age, and was, though she had never thought of it in that way, an essential factor in this western drama of human effort and danger, since from the beginning of things her sisterhood had followed the pioneers to the ends of the earth to share peril and high adventure.

"If you're looking for more trouble," she said quietly, "there isn't going to be any; that's not what I came for—or the fifty dollars either. I just want to talk. Miss Mary told me what she told you—well—I feel the same."

"You're not called on to feel anything that I know of: better do the talking yourself: you'll get the fifty as soon as I have it."

"But I do, John, I do: I can't help feeling something: you can take that—it's straight: forget the fifty."

He shook his head. "It's too sudden to sound straight: why would you never have me in your place?"

"Because," here she faltered an instant, "because I guess I didn't want you there: there was enough without you, and that's all I'm saying. And I didn't come here to talk about that either—there's something else."

"Well, what?"

"You've heard already, so don't be a dam' fool any longer. Get up and get out!"

"Run out of Yale by two women?" said he sardonically. "Can't you see me going?"

"John, you don't mean a thing to anyone but just us two."

Sincerity was in her voice, and he felt disturbed: nor did he understand the way in which she continued to watch him with no boldness in her face, not frowning, but very earnest and almost pleading: but she had never been known to plead with

anyone—it wasn't her method, she generally went straight for the thing she wanted and got it—so it was difficult to imagine what was at the bottom of all this fuss. It made him suspicious.

"You don't mean anything to anyone else," she repeated firmly, "and that's a fact. There's just us two. I know I don't count for much—you needn't tell me that, but once in a while I like to do a—a man a good turn if I can, and you're next on the list. As for the other woman, I guess she does care—a little, but she'd hate me for telling you."

"I'm nothing to her," said he, glowering.

"She never said so to me, John."

"She called me yellow."

"Maybe if she hadn't been interested she wouldn't have bothered to do that much."

"Aw, go on!"

Molly, regarding the black gloves, began stripping one from her plump, white hand, finishing with a nervous wrench that tore it across: she examined it deliberately, squeezing her lips, her expression proclaimed that her thoughts were elsewhere. Suddenly, crumpling it in a ball, she threw it away.

"John, will you clear out of Yale right now and take a contract?"

"I haven't any money," he parried.

"Will you go if I stake you?"

"You're damned anxious to see the last of me, aren't you?"

"I'm wanting to see the best of you," she said very softly. "I'll stake you, John."

She was leaning forward now, breathing faster, lips parted, again presenting, it seemed to him, that other type of woman, more gentle, and, strangely enough, somehow far more attractive. If she had been like this before he would have talked to her about a lot of things, because in this mood she suggested the idea of some family to which she might have belonged, and it would be nice to pretend that one was a member of a family and not just a knockabout of no more importance than one of the battered logs that came down the Fraser with the spring floods.

"This is your claim?"

He nodded.

"How much do you want for it?"

From the way in which she shot this out he knew her to be in earnest, and his surprise was tinged with a sort of regret: she was a decent kind after all, and he had been too rough. Perhaps he didn't understand her, which might explain why even in his most unbridled moods he had never wanted her as a man wants a woman: now

that idea seemed even more foreign: he yielded to an impulse to be decent himself, and wished that in the past he had treated her in a different fashion. He seemed to have missed something here.

"This claim ain't worth anything, Molly," said he frankly. "Not a darn cent: the next man can have it for nothing. You don't want it either: there's wages for a Chink, but no one else. Say, what's behind all this?"

"I am. Got your papers and licence?"

"Sure."

"Then look here: you go up the line and get a contract in rock or earth—rock would suit you better, and I'll give you five hundred for the claim. You'll need that much to start with. I want you out of Yale, John. Oh God! I do, clear of all those hell-houses where they take your money, clear of Sadie and—and me. It hasn't done you any good to smash Bulldog, so don't come back here—don't ever come back here. Understand?"

He gaped at her. How queer women were—especially this one: you could never tell what women would be up to next.

"Well," he admitted slowly, "I might do that."

"Then get busy and do it," she flamed with sudden passion, "you come up to Graveyard's with your papers: I won't give you the money here in Yale or you'd lose it—Sadie would get it, but you just let Graveyard know when you nail down the contract, and he'll send it. I'll fix that: and John, I never gave a promise I didn't make except one, and that was a long time ago." Faltering a little, she stared round at the swarming river bed. "Sick of all this, aren't you?"

"You're right, Molly: sick as hell."

"I reckoned you were: now you get up the line and make good: don't bite off more'n you can chew to start with, then something bigger. If you figure too low and get stuck, let me know: and maybe," she added wistfully, "in a couple of years if you keep off cards, you'll be bossing a big rock cut with a pile of men working for you like Donk has. I'd feel kind of—of pleased about that, John."

It was just a fairy story, but had something infectious about it, and the young man began to smile.

"I'd never get so far, Molly: it ain't in me."

"You never looked to see what's in you, now get busy. Meet me at Graveyard's in an hour."

"Sure."

"Shake on that, John."

He put out a great fist, then after a smothered exclamation she turned away and

made for the bank, splashing blindly through shallow pools with tears raining down her face.

SOMETHING more than 150 miles east of Yale, old chief Louis of the Shuswap tribe sat at his cabin door in the warmth of a spring sun talking earnestly to a sparely built white man of about fifty years, whose wide, flowing whiskers, which had the shape of a pigeon's wing, spread out revealing a square and jutting chin. This man had also very steady eyes, set far apart, a wide mouth slightly downturned at the corners, and an expression of satirical confidence: he was chewing tobacco, spitting with accurately flat trajectory, and his appearance of restrained energy suggested a sort of human projectile.

Louis regarded him with interest as the means of possible profit. Several strange white men had passed through Kamloops of late, a settlement on the Thompson River at its junction with the North Thompson where the Jesuits had long since maintained a mission, and there was now a demand for able-bodied Indians good in the bush, sturdy with a tumpline: and to-day this stranger desired no fewer than a dozen young tribesmen for an expedition eastward into the mountains across the Columbia River.

Rogers grew impatient, the talk having lasted fully a week, but, knowing the type of man he dealt with, the engineer was wise enough to bide his time: they had discussed many things: the sort of country that lay beyond the Columbia, the distance a good Indian could travel through it between dawn and sunset with a hundred pounds on his back, what food and kind of food he would need, and what amount of game might be picked up. Finally an agreement was reached, the Church called in, and a Jesuit Father drew up the contract for the services of ten sound-bodied Shuswaps.

Three weeks later, having traversed Shuswap Lake and crossed the Gold Range by way of Eagle Pass, Rogers caught the glint of running water, and pushing his way through the underbrush stood frowning at the Columbia: that great stream, greatest of all the north-western rivers, was in flood, its vast volume plunging between heavily-wooded banks from which it had ripped trees, logs and stumps that now whirled southward towards the Arrowhead Lakes.

"Hell's bells! Albert, look at that damn river."

The other white man, his nephew, young, slim, straight, mopped a blistered face. The river was a full quarter-mile across, of immense depth, and they had no boat.

"Well," he said dubiously, "how about it?"

"We'll raft it down to the mouth of the Illecillewaet." Rogers turned to his Indians: "Get busy, you fellows."

In two hours the crazy craft was fashioned of cedar logs that floated high when light but now settled down under a quarter-ton of flour, half as much bacon, salt, baking powder, rifles, a length of rope, two small tents, blankets, and axes. When all this was loaded in a heap and the two white men stepped gingerly on board, there was a pause; the raft could obviously carry no more, and the Shuswaps hung back.

"Swim and keep hold, damn you," barked Rogers.

Now the contract made in Kamloops, while it secured good wages, provided also that if orders were disobeyed there should be no pay at all; so, pushing off the raft, the Indians waded in neck deep, one hand clutching the timber, swimming with the other, thus forming a kind of floating pyramid with the circle of brown, black heads and cedar logs for a base, above it the piled sacks, and for an apex Hell's Bells with the wind in his bifurcated whiskers.

This primitive fragment was received by the Columbia on her wide, deep bosom, rotating in the grip of undercurrents that stencilled the surface into greasy eddies, while ten sinewy arms constantly edged it nearer the opposite shore. Here the river was flowing from the north, but the whiskered man knew that on the farther side of the snowcapped Selkirks and nearer its source it had come from the south, thus describing a gigantic bottle-shaped bend of a hundred and eighty miles, the body of the bottle lying in the heart of great mountains now out of sight behind. To cut across the neck of the bottle, to save a hundred miles of track-building, Rogers must establish a feasible route for the iron road through soaring ranges not yet trodden by the foot of man.

Balanced on a hundredweight of flour, he considered this point, and better than most men he could imagine what lay ahead of him, for he was mountain trained. Glancing at his nephew, he smiled inwardly: he was expected to locate a line, or a possible route for a line, across and not around the Selkirks; also he knew that his report was anxiously awaited in Montreal, and on it great things might turn. The Canadian Government wanted the line near the American boundary to forestall incursions by one James J. Hill with rival roads from the south. The Government insisted on this—the Government would view with displeasure anything else—and unless the route were located, the Government might withhold its most essential support. Rogers, weighing these matters, spat in the Columbia and bit off another chew.

Slapping at mosquitoes that now approached in clouds to welcome him ashore, he went on thinking. Moberly, one of the best engineers who ever looked through an instrument, had inspected the Selkirks from the other and eastern side, and considered the thing feasible, but that was only a bit of scientific guessing. Rogers,

however, had a good deal of respect for Moberly, for had he not discovered Eagle Pass across the Gold Range by following the flight of a real white-headed eagle who winged to his eyrie in that remote fastness with a great wriggling fish in his talons? So there was something to be said for scientific guessing.

Further, old Louis, squatting in the sun at Kamloops, remembered that once there had been an Indian trail across the Selkirks from the Columbia to the Columbia, used intermittently in former days of savage warfare: it was said to have been very rough, with much climbing, so that now if it had not been obliterated by snowslides, rockslides, fire and flood, the man with whiskers might possibly come across it—or bits of it. Louis, however, did not know anyone who had passed that way, nor did he think that it had ever been blazed: Indians, he explained, did not trouble to blaze trees.

Perched a few inches above the Columbia, for the raft becoming waterlogged was settling deeper, oblivious of the splashing and wearied Shuswaps, and conscious that this was the only real rest he would have for some time to come, Rogers continued to probe his own thoughts while his grey eyes photographed peak after peak of the surrounding ranges.

Jim Hill? Why had Hill, who was up to his neck in American railways, sent him to Canada to work for a road that, if successful, was bound to be a serious competitor? That wasn't like Hill unless—yes—unless later on he reckoned to get whatever had been built of this all-red line into his own hands. It was imaginable, because Hill was a wrecker as well as builder of railways; but it didn't quite explain Van Horne—another American—who had also been sent over and was now raising the dust in Fort Garry, firing the old crowd right and left, making as many enemies as friends. Rogers would have liked the opportunity to discuss the whole matter with Van, whom he had not seen since two years ago when they were both working for Hill. The situation puzzled him but he did not dwell on it now; he was not interested in politics or finance or freight rates, nor did he much care for whom he worked provided he was turned loose to locate a railway.

“By God, Al, know what strikes me?”

“This raft is sinking!”

“You're right, but she'll float long enough—no—it's that it takes us Yanks to build a Canadian road: I'm here, Van in Fort Garry, and Donk out on the coast. At the same time, Jim Hill is cutting his own throat—that's what gets me.”

Albert cared nothing for Hill's throat, and said so: they were now close to land: the Shuswaps could feel the mud under their feet, and presently the raft grounded. At once unloaded, it was pushed off and went gyrating downstream on its way to the

Arrowhead country and the United States. Rogers ran his brown fingers through his whiskers, combing out the mosquitoes, felt in his pocket, began to masticate dry raisins, his favourite food, and gave the Indians a masterful look.

“You boys have got to tote a hundredweight each to start with. Understand?”

They exchanged glances and grunted: already, packing across Eagle Pass, they had discovered what kind of man this was, and were now too far into the wilderness to rebel with any hope of success, so presently with him in the lead they moved off, leaning forward against the tug of taut tumplines, and came before long to the mouth of the Illecillewaet.

This glacier-fed torrent, whose milky waters were impregnated with the fine sludge ground by moving icefields from the surface of underlying rock, came down in turbulence from uncharted ranges to the east, and Rogers knew that its birthplace must be near the summit. To that summit he reckoned would be perhaps forty miles in a straight line, but in a railway hardly a mile of it could be straight. Where he now stood the aneroid gave him 1,500 feet above sea level. He checked this by boiling water in a pan, noting the temperature at which it boiled.

Next morning the party was put on strict rations: travel at once became exceedingly difficult, and of Louis's reputed trail there was no sign. Following the river, traversing snow bridges a hundred and fifty feet above its bed—these the giant reminders of avalanches through which the prisoned stream had burrowed—struggling over fallen moss-covered timber six feet in diameter, pushing through clumps of villainous devil's club, a spiky growth which to touch was torture, such was the test, and on the fifth day, when Rogers estimated they had made but five miles toward the divide, the stream forked.

That night camp was pitched close to the water under a great cedar, and the engineer sat by the fire, rather silent, his jaws working fast. Life, it seemed, just called for one decision after another, and here was an instance, since one leg of the fork came from south-east, the other from north-east, and which should he follow? It was a grave question with nothing to guide them, and the volume of the streams about equal. He decided to go south-east.

“Al,” he asked parenthetically, “what's a railway engineer?”

“Haven't you found out yet?”

“A fellow who don't know any better. Good night.”

Two days later he was sure of this. Drenched, weary, bitten and scarred, they reached the mouth of a box canyon or gorge, walled in by vertical cliffs, in places not thirty feet apart, between which the constricted Illecillewaet tore itself to spume. This cleft, this gash in the solid frame of earth, was not passable, and, toiling to its summit,

they found the snow deep and going heavy. Above the gorge the river reappeared, but the ground was so broken that for the next few miles progress was by wading up the stream bed, till on the fourteenth day it forked again. Here for the second time they held to the south-eastern branch.

It was cold at night, freezing hard in these altitudes, and the human body, exhausted by toil, chilled with wading through snow and ice water, began to protest. Rogers, whose sinewy frame possessed extraordinary resilience, was unmoved, but he knew that the others were approaching their limit, and that night, after staring at lonely peaks gleaming under the stars, he came to another decision.

"Al, carrying all this stuff we'll never get there and back at the rate we're going."

"I guess not."

"At the same time I'm scared to push on with you and leave these Shuswaps: pay or no pay they're ready to jump the job."

"That's what I think."

"And it's no use one of us going on alone: something might happen."

"That's right, too."

"So we're all going, every damn one of us: we'll cache all this grub except two days' rations, and each man will carry his own—that means we've *got* to get there and back here in two days or say three. We're starting as soon as there's light enough before the snow softens."

"Yes, I understand."

"I told you we were going to have a hell of a trip, didn't I?"

The young man, half numbed under the blanket now pulled up to his ears, grinned agreement: grub was low, the Indians restless, an arduous passage remained to be forced back to the Columbia, his bones were aching, his skin torn and blistered, but nevertheless something made it all worth while. In company with Rogers one felt association with the simple dynamics of human life: his fashion of doing things answered the question before it was asked; the man was incapable of indecision, and possessed a congenital faith in himself that in some mysterious fashion communicated itself to others. One's instinct was to follow, one could not imagine him defeated, and the pictorial blasphemy of his humour seemed but a decorative adjunct to his unflinching courage.

With the spreading of that grey half-light that ushers dawn into the big timber, in the hour when monstrosities spawned in darkness reassume formal outlines of actuality, they broke camp and, clearing the thick bush, saw suddenly as though a curtain had been lifted the prodigious backbone of the Selkirks with one great triple-fanged mountain dominating the eastern sky. Now it was apparent that they

approached the Height of Land, and came on the next morning to a large level opening: pushing on into this, Rogers halted on a patch of ground where a spring gurgled into a small and crystal pool. He stared at it fixedly.

“Jesus! that water is running both ways!”

His nephew, panting, was struck to silence. It was quite true, and this limpid trickle, escaping by two tiny runnels, one to the east and one west, was eloquent. Here lay the birthplace the Illecillewaet, and they stood on the crupper of the Selkirks.

“I guess it does, Major,” he breathed with a touch of awe. “I’m betting we’re the first that ever set foot up here: old Louis was telling fish stories about that trail.”

The older man, shrugging, examined the spot closely and shook his head.

“I’ll take that for five dollars, Al. Look!”

In the grass something glinted whitely, and he rolled it with his foot. “That’s an Indian skull—you get the slope of the eye cavities—high cheekbones and receding frontal: it’s cracked too, so I guess something hit him, something with fur on it—those are teeth marks. What is it, Alec?”

A Shuswap had lifted his rifle while his black eyes peered at a belt of spruce trees a hundred yards away: at first they could hear nothing except wind amongst the peaks, but presently caught a sound, large, soft, heavy, with the snapping of brush. This died out and there came one coughing grunt. Then silence during which the Indian lowered the rifle.

“Grizzly,” he said laconically, “I guess he lives round here.”

“Well, he won’t have the place to himself much longer. Get out that aneroid, Al; you owe me five dollars.”

Dismissing the skull from his thoughts, he went about the rest of it very swiftly, checking his readings, and presently looked up with the enigmatical expression he so often assumed. He examined the ground to the east, but heavy timber shut off all view in that direction.

“Al, if this ain’t the pass we’re after, I guess God Almighty forgot to make one: we’re about 2,800 feet above the Columbia where we crossed it, and I’d say forty miles to make the climb—that’s a seventy foot grade to the mile. Hell’s Bells, it’s easy.”

“What about getting down the other side?” questioned his nephew, not yet converted.

The answer was a queer look which did not invite discussion, and Rogers, filling his mouth with raisins, gazed at the triple-crowned mountain.

“How are your legs?”

“All right.”

“Then come on: we’ve got to see farther than we can from here.”

At sunset they had climbed two thousand feet to far above the timber line with the wild country expanding magnificently beneath. Over wind-shapen cornices of snow, kicking to hold in the crust, across the course of tumbled avalanches, swarming up crevices and clinging spider-like to rifts in the solid rock, they came at nightfall to a narrow ledge, and here spent the shivering hours of darkness.

A hard night, and Rogers always thought it the hardest he had ever spent. Nibbling bannock and dry meat, stamping in the snow to prevent frost-bitten feet—there being no wood for a fire, whipping each other with tumplines to stimulate circulation, the hours dragged out till came an ineffable dawn when a panorama unrolled that took their breath. Far as the eye could carry rose a succession of peaks each crowned with a whirling eddy of snow: down below lay a timbered valley that formed the pass, and they could discern at its eastern end a great rift where must collect the head waters of the Beaver River: beyond it a blue belt that only could be the upper Columbia valley; farther still, and east of the Kicking Horse Gorge, the gaunt precipitous framework of the Rockies. All this upper world lay white, bare and desolate as regions of the moon, the home of eagles, grizzlies and mountain sheep, while beneath one could follow the timber line where league after lonely league the spruce and jack pine died against the stony slopes.

“Aylmer’s somewhere over there working towards us down the Kicking Horse—that is if he has obeyed orders and not broken his neck,” said Rogers, in a subdued tone. “Maybe he’s looking at this peak now. Seen enough?”

“Yes, and we’d better get down before it thaws.”

Risking their lives at every step, they descended: one of the Shuswaps dropped out of sight between walls of blue ice and was hauled up out of the glacier with spliced tumplines: at the edge of the timber they killed an elk and filled their bellies; then down the Illecillewaet and back to the Columbia lean as greyhounds in seven days of hard going.

Since they left that point three weeks previously the river had risen thirty feet, and now Rogers, who had hardly spoken on the return trip, came to another decision.

“Al,” said he, “we’ve found just half that pass, the west half.”

“That’s what I’ve been thinking, just half.”

“But water runs down hill don’t it?”

“I guess so in this country.”

“So the Columbia on the other side would be considerably more above sea level

than it is here.”

“Why not?”

“That suggest anything to you?”

Albert, realizing that no answer was desired, said nothing.

“Well, getting at it another way, it’s about 180 miles round the Big Bend and in that distance the Columbia will fall, say, eight feet to the mile—which is a drop of about fourteen hundred feet all told: in other words, it’s about fourteen hundred feet nearer God’s footstool where we’d have struck it if we’d gone right across than it is here. Got that? Hell! you must get it.”

“I can’t very well miss it.”

Rogers unavailingly searched his pocket for a raisin, then took out his last plug of tobacco, gnawing off a carefully measured corner.

“From the east crossing there’s fourteen hundred feet less climb to the Pass than from the west, or half as much.”

“Ye-es?”

“And all the distance we want to make it in. Al, I’m going to take a chance!”

“Just for a change, eh?”

“Look here,” chuckled Rogers, “between ourselves, very strictly between ourselves, I’m going to do some scientific guessing in the form of a report to Van Horne telling him I have found a feasible route across the Selkirks.”

“But dammit,” exploded his nephew, “how can you? We haven’t been down the other side yet.”

“That’s got to wait. What makes a good engineer, Al?—it isn’t being a mathematician—I’m just a God Almighty fool at figures myself—or a good draughtsman—I can’t draw worth a cent—or even a good instrument man, but just having a sort of instinct for side-stepping the natural depravity of inanimate objects. That’s what counts most, and if the world don’t come to an end right now the other side of this pass will be the easier of the two. I’ll put my name to that. Where’s the nearest telegraph office?”

“Spokane, isn’t it?”

“About how far?”

“About two hundred and fifty miles—you know better than I do.”

“Well, Van needs that report, needs it badly and by God he is going to get it pronto. Build me another raft Al, I’m starting for the United States.”

SMOKING a large black cigar, a great, black-bearded bull of a man came striding across a new steel bridge; there was a smell of newly sawn timber, hot rivets and red lead paint, and he paused more than once to turn a critical eye on the finishing touches now being given. Beneath the bridge floor, a river, constricted at this point between steep rocky shores, took its curving dip towards a plunge of thirty feet, and farther down one could follow the broadening stream, flecked with foam, sliding past flatter banks thickly grown with poplar, spruce and silver birch. Here the waters of the Lake of the Woods moved northward towards Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg.

The big man, wasting no time, forged ahead, accompanied by one younger in a blue flannel shirt and long boots laced tightly to just below the knee: he did not speak, and glanced occasionally at his companion as one might at a very superior officer. The other had a brusque masterful air: his vest was open, his unbuttoned collar sagged round a massive column of neck: a broad, strong face and Olympian forehead suggested an admirable mental balance and power of decision beneath his eruptive energy. The cigar angled dominantly from a wide, firm mouth, his clothing was much rumpled, his eye held a lurking sense of humour.

"Well," he jerked out with a backward glance at the bridge, "that's another link forged between Ontario and Manitoba: Canadian steel too. A damn' sight easier to get across a river than some swamps not far from here. I'm glad it's a Government job, not mine, but we'll be taking over soon; one of Sir John's contributions to the C.P.R. You heard about that sinkhole south of us?"

"Down by Savanne, sir?"

"Yes, and a hell hole of mud!"

Van Horne shook his big head, "They lost a whole train with a thousand feet of track yesterday: the dump slid to one side, then over it went—sucked in like—well—we'd better look at your siding layout: I'm reckoning on forty-car wheat trains before long."

He strode on following the newly-laid and only partly ballasted track. On his right the town of Rat Portage sprawled along the shore of this north-east corner of the Lake of the Woods, and here the rocky wilderness which reached southward four hundred miles to Lake Superior showed signs of dipping under the fertile lands of Manitoba, so that at Rat Portage one stood on the boundary line between solid rock and deep rich loam, between timber land and grass land, between the domain of lumberman, trapper, prospector, and that of the future farmer and grazier. It was across this worthless wilderness that the Government was building a section of the

all-red line which they would shortly convey to the new company.

It had been a bad country, patched here and there with great muskegs, level moss-covered stretches from which rose the stiffly naked trunks of dead tamaracs, scabrous and cataleptic, whose black roots wove a sodden blanket over the hidden morass, and through this floating blanket one could drive a fifty foot pole into abysses of slime and find no bottom; such places were alive with mosquitoes in summer, and loathed by all men at all seasons.

Van Horne was now looking at the siding crowded against a hill of gravel: he liked the feel of ties under his feet and puffed a little when he turned to inspect the curving bay with its flimsy landing stages for canoes and small steamers. From a sawmill came the scream of a circular as it tore into dripping pine logs, acres of which were boomed in still water close by; a tall cylindrical black iron burner disposed of the refuse, looking at night like a gigantic torch, and opposite the mill stretched a sandy spit dotted with teepees where thin pencils of pearl grey smoke climbed into the motionless air. Bark canoes lay on a yellow beach. The contrast rather pleased him, this mixture of ripping saws, steel rails, bridges, and against that an Ojibway background, but this new present he was now making would soon elbow the apathetic and primitive past out of the picture, and he mentally photographed it with an eye of an artist, tucking it away in a corner of his rapacious brain later to be put on canvas, when he saw hastening towards him a tall, agile figure in a disreputable, wide-brimmed hat, rusty soutane, and on his breast a small gold cross.

The priest waved his hand in gay salute.

"Ah, Monsieur Van 'Orne, but I am glad to see you: it was told me on the line you were coming."

Van Horne smiled back at him, for here came one of whom he knew much and felt ready to know more.

Lacombe, the Oblate Father, for many years past a figure of distinction in the west, was a man of whom strange stories were told so that already he had achieved an almost mythical reputation. He would vanish for months till one heard of him as being on the Red River, or a thousand miles west of the Saskatchewan on the slopes of the Rockies, now in Montreal, now interviewing the Government in Ottawa or across the Atlantic talking to the Pope in the Vatican. A strange man this, restless, quite fearless, an ardent soul, Master of Indian tongues, and with an unfailing sense of humour. To-day in the spring of '82, he was Chaplain for the Canadian Government to a thousand navvies on the Lake of the Woods. Van Horne greeted him warmly.

"Well, Father, I've been hearing things lately; do you like Rat Portage any better?"

"Why do you ask me this?"

"I'm told your first impressions were not favourable."

Lacombe looked a shade abashed:

"Ah, perhaps, yes, that is so: no, I did not like it at all, but now it may be I understand better. I think it was that new bridge."

"Eh?"

"*Certainement*—the bridge. For weeks I have watched how it grows; I hear the hammers; another rivet goes in and another and in that sound I find something significant: each of them, I say to myself, is holding fast; not much—no—but what it should hold, and they do not yield. So, frien' Van 'Orne, since I too have felt human blows perhaps I should be more like a rivet."

"Aren't the men behaving themselves?"

Father Lacombe stroked his brown chin, then shook his head.

"Monsieur, they are not: but, again does anyone quite behave? They are good at heart, but not too good, and my experience is with those whose wildness is of another sort. I hold confessional be'ind a blanket in the cook camp, I bury their dead, I write their letters, their money I send away, but when I preach they do not come, therefore I am *un peu triste*."

"Why don't they come?"

"Because in the House of God there is no alco'ol. No, monsieur, I do what I can here, but I am not at home: you see I myself am *un peu sauvage*, and long for the west."

"I am going west next week."

Lacombe glanced at him hungrily. "Do not tempt me like this: you go to Winnipeg—when?"

"Soon, in an hour or so."

"You have a little portion of that perhaps to spare?"

There was a petitionary note in the voice, and Van Horne, to whom an hour meant much, was oddly impressed.

"I can spare you a while: not trying to convert me, are you?"

"Monsieur," smiled the priest, "truly I believe that for your conversion this is not the best time; you are too much *occupé* here."

"That's very broad-minded of you, Father."

"By their works shall ye know them," murmured Lacombe.

"Come into my car and have a chat."

Lacombe, glowing with pleasure, followed the big man into the dusty home on wheels in which Van Horne lived for perhaps half the year. It had reached the west from Montreal by way of Chicago and St. Paul to Winnipeg, for as yet there existed no Canadian steel road to the prairie country, and never did its master feel quite so free as when he travelled in this caravansery fitted for his own use and work. In front it had a dining-room and small kitchen, in the middle two berths, and the rear half held tables, chairs and sofas that could be converted to beds. There were rolls of blue-prints, piles of dispatches, estimates, engineers' reports, all the paraphernalia essential to one who represented the driving force of the all-red line, and here with the clicking rail joints beneath, the sound he loved best, he would labour hour after hour till the night waned, snatch a minimum of sleep, smoke incessantly, swallow his food like an impatient wolf, and while light lasted spend the forceful day with engineers and contractors, stranger to fatigue, praising, blaming, encouraging, criticizing, and damning in a torrential spate of words whose vividness was never unfair, and which communicated to those he dealt with something of his own virile energy and determination. Here, in this car, the throne from which his thunders proceeded, he was more than an ordinary man: he was the central, whirling dynamo that pulsated through the whole gigantic project. And always wherever the car went it was heralded by a whisper that sped along the twin lines of steel over which it rolled. "Van's coming up the line."

To-day, the Oblate Father, seated in one of the big well-worn chairs, felt that he had been admitted to the inner shrine, and they regarded each other with mutual respect, one the man of the spirit, the other the man of steel counting on the human body, its imagination, courage, and endurance. Lacombe's tanned face was alight with pleasure: his fine features radiated a delightful sense of companionship.

"Smoke, Father?"

"No, my son, I thank you."

"I thought all you Westerners smoked."

"I have once tried the Kinikinick, the bark of the red willow, when I was very hungry, but that was enough."

"Have something to eat now—there's lots in the car."

Lacombe looked about, smiled and shook his head.

"My frien', as it is, it is just right: I am content; and for one of my cloth this is a change, a rest. My mind for a little while is diverted from your wild men and my Indians: also I do not often get the occasion to talk with one like yourself."

"Getting tired of it all, Father? I wouldn't blame you."

"At night I am tired, yes, often, but not on the next morning."

Van Horne glancing across the burnished bay, fixed his eyes on the line of teepees.

"Y'know," he said, "I've sometimes wondered what there is in those fellows to convert, and what difference it would make. Is it worth all the work? They won't last long anyway: they're just a bit of the past: I've seen what's called the educated, or anyway, civilized Indian, and didn't like him half as well. It seems to me you're liable to take from him as much as you can give—which doesn't sound very Christian on my part."

"You 'ave put to me one 'ard question," nodded Lacombe gravely, "and so often do I ask that of myself. What has 'appened to the *sauvage* is our fault, your fault and mine."

"I'm not sure I agree with that."

"Consider one moment! For shall we say a thousand years—I speak now of my Indians in the west, for I know them better—they lived in freedom: their spirit gods were of the rain, wind, storm and thunder, of the things they knew, that which was manifest, and these they worshipped."

"Every man's got to worship something, Father," said Van Horne, whose gods were steel rails.

"With that I agree, but consider my Indians. Food is in abundance, the buffalo cover the plains, the tribes are large and strong: *alors*, comes the white man with his gun, his 'stick that kills a long way off', also with him the scourge of new diseases, smallpox he brought, and measles, and most fatal, consumption. Then what 'appens? Fifteen years ago the buffalo are no more, the tribes hungry, and the white man, who was to these poor people something more than human, said, 'Your gods are false gods—they have no power—you must take our God who is all powerful.'" He paused, smiling. "Is it perhaps a strange way for a blackrobe to talk?"

"Go on," said Van Horne, seeing that this priest was fair. "But you can't stop the march of the white man: he means civilization: that's what I'm doing now—civilizing—but perhaps I don't look it."

"My frien', we're in the 'ands of *le bon Dieu*! Believe me that when the first white appeared with his gun that was the doom of the Indian; that and the fire-water, for one swallow of which he would demand one beaver skin, did the rest; and so I said to myself, 'Albert Lacombe, if perhaps you cannot make these poor Indians believe the word of the white man's God, you can at least be a medicine blackrobe to assist hunger and disease.' The belly that is empty cares not for the soul's salvation, and so many have I seen that were empty."

"It sounds like sense to me," rumbled Van Horne. "What else is in your mind?"

"J'ai la chance aujourd'hui—yes, I am in luck, so often I 'ave 'oped we might meet like this."

"Did you say you had Indian blood?"

"But yes, and my mother, Agathe Duhamel, has her descent from that Duhamel girl who one hundred years ago was carried into captivity by an Ojibway chief, so it is my blood that calls, monsieur, and at one time the call was very loud."

"What do you mean?"

"It is, I fear, a long story, and already I do all the talking: my tongue it has become too loose."

"Drive on, Father." Lacombe, he thought, in spite of the gold cross and soutane, looked, as he sat there, more of a *voyageur* than a priest. "I believe you'd make a good railway man: let me know if you change your mind."

"Sometimes I think so myself, but first I must extend my *vocabulaire*. Tell me, you have heard of *La Chasse Galerie*?"

"Never."

"It is a legend, a vision, a dream, and dear to my French children on the Saskatchewan, that on the eve of the New Year their spirits may depart from their so lonely bodies to embark in ghost canoes, and riding through the clouds they are in a moment of time back in French Canada with their families on the Saguenay or Baie des Pères, in Gaspé or on the lower St. Lawrence. *Alors*, they are mos' gay; they dance with the girls, they drink the *vin blanc*, they sing the old songs like *Malbrouck* and *La Claire Fontaine*, and then, *subitement*, when the midnight shall strike, at once they voyage back again through the sky to awake next morning amongst the Crees and Blackfeet on the buffalo plains. Yes, sometimes I like to think of that."

"Cheap transportation," murmured Van Horne; "but what brought you here?"

"I came this way with Monsieur Charles Tupper two years ago, and he asked the Archevêque, Monseigneur Taché, to appoint a *curé* to speak of God to these wild men who work for Monsieur Tupper's Government. That was after I had returned from Rome where I went representing the Oblates, and the Holy Father, Leo XIII, stooped to accept a copy of the *dictionnaire* I had made of the Cree tongue. And the very next day my pockets were robbed."

"In the Holy City?"

"*Malheureusement, oui*, therefore at once I came home, and on the way I borrowed twenty thousand dollars for the College at St. Boniface."

"I wish my road could raise money like that. 'Twill need a lot of it."

"To me you are one who will get what he wants. But if you ask me am I happy

here, I say not very 'appy. My heart is on the Saskatchewan."

"Why so far? Don't these fellows keep you busy?"

The black-robed medicine man lifted a brown hand in a curious gesture: his face in full sunlight gleamed like copper, and in that moment the strong aquiline features with deep-set eyes and large firm mouth looked very much Indian. He did not speak at once, and Van Horne gave an encouraging nod: perhaps, he thought, Lacombe regretted what he had just said.

"The Saskatchewan's a long way from here."

"My frien', to explain I must go back, and that will take some time. Can you spare the time?"

"I have till there's trouble somewhere else."

"*Alors*, have you ever slept in a coffin?"

"God, no!" said the big man hastily, "in most other things, but not that."

"I have, and it was warm. Thirty-four years ago I journeyed west by Lachine, Buffalo, Dubuque, and up the river Missouri to St. Paul—in St. Paul, monsieur, there were thirty log buildings—and I the guest of Father Ravoux, a Jesuit, but alas, he had only one bed. There was, however, a fine new coffin not yet in use by the dead man, and with a good blanket it was comfortable and warmer than the floor. You are not *ennuyé* with all this—you do not tire of my talk?"

"No, no, go on, it's new to me."

"From St. Paul with Father Belcourt's brigade of oxen and Red River carts I journey to Pembina, and on that journey we are robbed by those Salteaux whom we go to serve. Then the big buffalo hunt! The scouts who have been watching for days wave their blankets that the plain is black, and one thousand men go mad and leap on their horses—the earth trembles and the sound is like thunder—these men play with death—they shoot with gun and arrow riding close—the 'orses, and how very wise are those 'orses—need no guidance—they scramble—they run this way and that so that the master may shoot behind the big woolly shoulder—a thousand buffalo are killed—there is a smell of hot blood—there is——"

His voice which had grown sharp and tense suddenly lowered: his eyes lost their gleam, he gave his head a vicious little shake as though shaking something out of it, and his lips trembled: of a sudden he fell silent, then gazed at Van Horne with a shamed expression.

"*La, la!* my frien', how my tongue travels when I am *un peu excité*."

"It's a fine story, Father, the best you've told me yet."

"But no, I have said too much, nor is it the right recitation for a black-robed medicine man, but it was then that I thought perhaps I had learned something, and

the best time for converting these wild companions of mine was after such a hunt when the bellies of the fighting men were full and they sat smoking, while the women prepared the meat for drying in the sun. Monsieur, it was I myself, with the fire of that hunt in my blood, who nearly became an Indian, or at least a *voyageur* and not a priest any longer: only my vow it was that prevailed and needed much strengthening, so I journeyed back the way I came to St. Boniface to serve my novitiate as a secular priest, a missionary of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whose life must be poverty, charity and obedience.”

“How many Indians do you suppose you’ve actually converted for good and all? I can’t tell ’em apart,” teased Van Horne.

“Of myself I dare not ask that. My frien’, I have known a Blackfoot accept the Christ before he died, and I put a cross on his grave, and in another few days on that cross would hang a *petit panier*, a little basket, monsieur, with corn and buffalo meat for the soul of that man on its way to the far country. But I do what I can.”

Van Horne, unimpressed by this, changed the subject. “You know Donald Smith? I’ve heard him speak of you.”

“But yes, *le gros Ecossais*—it is now thirteen years past when I met him on the winter trail from St. Paul to Fort Garry, and we travelled by stage, dog sled and snowshoe. So polite he was, and yes, considerate, yet beneath so cold.”

“I’m inclined to agree with you: what was he doing up there?”

“*Une affaire politique* concerning Louis Riel. You are aware that Monsieur Smith had sold to the Government the privileges of his Hudson’s Bay Company?”

“Yes, and as far as I know, didn’t lose by it.”

“*Alors*, at once there is trouble in the west, so the Government of Sir John Macdonald said ‘we will not pay you till the trouble is over,’ and at this Monsieur Smith embarks for Fort Garry to see Louis and his Metis half-breeds, who are in rebellion against such selling business. These Metis say ‘we will not be sold by our old masters,’ but of course they know nothing, they have not been told and the matter not explained, which is the mistake both of the Government and Monsieur Smith. The Metis cannot get—what is it in English—*le titre*?”

“Title?”

“Yes, the title to their land, and Louis has caused to be shot young Scot, who is nothing more than a boy: that was the trouble, my frien’, and Monsieur Smith, greatly desiring the price for his company, goes to Louis as I said, and is made a prisoner in Fort Garry for two months, where he played with that long beard of his and could do nothing. These Metis are wild children; of the world they know nothing, they desire no change, no police, nothing but to be left alone. *Alors*, Monsieur Smith is

sent back to St. Paul, having failed to reason with poor ignorant Louis, and next year comes the English general by the Lake of the Woods—this lake, he passed close to where we now sit—with many English soldiers who cut their own feet with good Canadian axes. Again Monsieur Smith comes with him, but when at Fort Garry they arrive, taking ninety-five days from Lake Superior instead of the fifteen days of the *voyageurs*, Louis has run away to the United States. You will perhaps hear many stories about his rebellion, but that is the true one.”

Now a good deal of this was a page from the life of a man intimately associated with the all-red line, and Van Horne perceived that the hour was well spent.

“What happened then?”

The Oblate gave an inimitable shrug.

“But nothing at all: the English general marched in to find himself most welcome, and presently the Metis got *le titre* to their land, which very soon they sold for—yes, a bagatelle, and thereupon spent the money on whisky, and after that many went west to the Saskatchewan where there was more land for the taking.”

“I’ve been told that Louis is mad.”

“*Le pauvre Louis*,” murmured the priest. “When last I was in St. Boniface I went to see his mother, Julie Lagemaundière, and she told me of his childhood: and so strange a childhood. But do not let us forget that while he was king of Fort Garry he turned back the American Fenian invaders on the border. Yes, he was half mad: he feared assass—how do you say that?”

“Assassination?”

“*C’est ça*, and at one time proclaimed himself to be the Holy Ghost. *Mon Dieu!* consider that, my friend, the Holy Ghost! It was in a house of restraint at Longue Pointe *près* Montreal. Also for a day or two he told him a member of your parliament in Ottawa. How impossible, when all he wanted was the free life I want for myself.”

Here Lacombe, pausing, sent his companion a glance, half-grave, half-smiling. “Monsieur, concerning this same Louis there is something in my mind.”

“I wouldn’t take him seriously.”

“He may not stay in the United States.”

“He’s not wanted here.”

“No; but consider this: it is only ten years since came the hunger moon of the Blackfeet, and all those western tribes must eat dog, horse, the carcass of the poisoned wolf, moccasins, the hairy feet of rabbits, and now you, the master of a still greater change, will build your road across the prairie among those same people, many of whom have journeyed from Fort Garry in order that they may live alone.

There is the danger, my frien', and I know these sorrowful children of mine in whose hearts still sleeps some spark of the ancient fire."

He paused, sighing deeply, but Van Horne shook his great, dark head. To the railway man it was not important what happened to the Indian, and surely the life of this priest was being wasted to no real purpose: also time was very precious, but Lacombe, ignorant of his own loquacity, was enjoying himself so greatly that it would be heartless to cut him short.

"Father," rumbled the deep voice, "let me tell you something. This road is going through—it must go—and all the Indians that ever let out a war-whoop won't stop it. If they're wise they'll keep out of the way, and that's where we'll count on you. It takes all kinds of brains to build a road. There'll be trouble here and there, but we reckon on that, and we don't want to hurt anyone, least of all your friends in the west, but human flesh can't stop steel. According to what you've said yourself, those fellows look at the past. Well, let 'em look; but we're for the future, and that's the difference. You've told me about the big buffalo herds, but do you know what will make the first freight we haul into Winnipeg over the new track?"

"I cannot imagine that."

"The bones of those same buffalo to sell for fertilizer: and we'll make a good profit. There's an instance of how the prairie's going to be swept clean of what was once there, Indians included. Instead of teepees like those on that point, you'll see houses: wheat instead of grass, locomotive smoke instead of prairie fires, and your Indians just a sort of human curiosity on their reserves. It'll hurt 'em, and they'll have less use for us than ever, and I'd like to see you doing work that'll give a better return. You're missing too much."

"My frien'," answered Lacombe gravely, "who can know what he has missed?"

"That's true enough, but what about women? Candidly, like most Protestants, whenever I see a priest I ask myself how he manages with no woman in his life—no woman to go home to—and to me that's against nature—mine anyway. You're the first priest I ever talked to about it, but I'd like to know the price of celibacy. Don't answer if you don't want to, and don't think that all railway men have as little tact as I'm showing, but I can't help wondering every now and then how the thing works."

Lacombe sent him a delightful smile.

"You are wrong there, and since I become a priest there are two women in my life—which is enough."

"Father, Father! What's that you're saying?"

Lacombe, laughing, nodded vigorously. "My mother and another, that second being an Indian girl. I bought her."

"You, the shepherd of the west." Van Horne gave a great rioting, gargantuan laugh. "Father, I've misjudged you entirely."

"*Alors*, it is quite true," the Oblate's eyes were twinkling. "Fifteen years ago I was camped with some Crees and talking to the old warriors while they smoked beside the fire at sunset. A war party returns of young men with feathers on their heads, they are happy and bring a captive—a young Blackfoot woman—white deerskin tunic, long black hair, and she is weeping many tears. Her captor is a young brave, tall and strong. I see her sorrow, and say I will buy her, whereat they laugh as you laugh, my frien', thinking the same thing. But I do buy her—I give my horse, my shirt, leggings, tea, tobacco. It was too much for the young brave to resist. I say to her, now you obey me. *Alors* I take her to the good Sisters at St. Albert. This girl had seen me in the camps of her people the Blackfoot."

"Which she'd certainly remember—yes—and the rest of it?"

"That winter I built a chapel of fifty buffalo skins—it is fine, it is wonderful, the biggest chapel in all the west—at the time of *Noël* it is full of Cree warriors in paint and feathers. Also I have an altar of willow poles, and these wild men adore the infant Christ as did the shepherds of Palestine."

"Christians already?" commented Van Horne.

"For a little while, which is better than none at all. That was a great occasion."

"What about the girl, Father?"

"Ah, yes, that girl: in the spring I go back to St. Albert, and the Sisters have named her Marguerite; so I say in Blackfoot, 'Marguerite, are you lonely?' and it seems that she is very lonely. 'Very well, I take you home.' So we set out across the prairie, and after much searching see a big camp beside a coulée on the Saskatchewan. At that I pitch my tent, putting the girl inside with orders to keep silence till I speak to her, and raise my flag: it has a red cross, it is my Oblate banner and known from the mountains to the Red River. Seeing that flag, the Blackfoot lassoo their horses and ride towards me very fast, when I observe that some of them have faces with black paint and the hair cut short, which is a sign of mourning. 'Whom do you mourn?' I ask; and they say that months ago a party of my frien's—you see they were all my frien's though enemies among themselves—have attacked a Blackfoot camp, killing some and carrying away a young woman whom never again would they see. Now the moment arrives, so loudly I call 'Marguerite, Marguerite,' and this girl running out of the tent throws herself into the arms of her family. That, my frien', is the only other woman in my life."

His host was nodding and smiling, when from a nearby rock cut came a ringing tattoo on the mushroomed head of drill steel, and six sweating Swedes began to

chant in unison, keeping time with the descent of ringing hammers. It was the song of a thousand rock cuts from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Drill, ye tarriers, drill!
Drill, ye tarriers, drill!
For it's work all day
With no sugar in your tay,
When ye work beyant on the big railway,
So drill, ye tarriers, drill:
Our foreman's wife she bakes the bread,
She bakes it strong an' she bakes it well,
But she bakes it hard as the knubs of hell,
So drill, ye tarriers, drill.

Van Horne, exhaling smoke like a newly-stoked furnace, made a gesture of approval.

"That's the music for me, Father: it means work, progress, a few less shots to be fired, a salute to civilization. Steel, dynamite, brute strength, stupidity, brains, guts, risk, anxiety, money, oats, beans, and bacon, that's what it takes to build a railway, and we're using 'em all. You really feel you'd like to get back to the far west?"

"I would like it, yes, but it shall be as *le bon Dieu* decides."

"Well, we'll take a hand in it when I go east, and between us all something ought to happen. I'll let you——" He was interrupted by an alert-looking young man who entered and laid a yellow sheet on the table.

"Just in from the end of steel, sir."

Glancing at it, Van Horne frowned slightly.

"Father, you'll have to excuse me: I'm off: wanted near Regina."

"But yes, of course." Lacombe rose at once. "You cannot know how I 'ave enjoyed this talk, of which I myself 'ave done so much. For that you will perhaps forgive me, and it may be we shall meet again. I thank you, my frien': I shall remember."

He stepped out and down on to the track and looked up at Van Horne on the rear platform: the eyes of the man of steel met those of the shepherd of the west; they smiled. A short blast from the engine, and the car moved towards the new bridge. Van Horne waved a hand, and the Oblate, after once waving back, stood very still watching the receding figure as might a wistful boy who has spent a wonderful hour with his chosen hero.

IN the board-room of a large office building whose windows overlooked the *Place d'Armes* in Montreal, were three men. Outside, from the cobbled square, rose a continual clatter of calèches, single horse Victorias with their French-Canadian drivers perched high in front, the rumble of drays on their way to the river, and the grinding progress of horse-drawn streetcars. Not far off the bells of Notre Dame were vocal in the twin towers of that great cathedral, and from the harbour came the whistle of ocean steamers clearing for Lake St. Peter, Quebec and Liverpool. The turn of year had reached October, when days are crisply bright and nights cold, and Mount Royal, reddening with early frost, was ablaze with the crimson pageantry of butternut and maple.

On one wall of the board-room hung a great map made of sections of blue paper neatly pasted together and tacked to a wooden frame: it was eight feet long, about three feet high, representing the northern portion of the United States including Chicago, Spokane and Seattle, also the southerly half of Canada from coast to coast.

In the room stood a large table littered with blue-prints and papers, at which two of the men were talking, one sitting in a reversed chair with his arms folded across its back: a big man, heavily built, with a massive leonine head, short black beard and resounding voice.

"Van, how much track are we laying a day?"

The black-bearded man lit a large, black cigar and smoked furiously.

"About two miles: we reached Pile o' Bones river in August: not quite up to what I wanted, but good going."

"Why not call it Regina? That's the official name."

"Because I like Pile o' Bones better: more descriptive, and the prairie's white with 'em: buffalo bones, y'know. We'll use 'em some day."

"Use them?"

"Bring 'em east to sell for fertilizer; they're full of potash, good stuff! Steve, I'll bet that'll be the first freight we carry."

The other man laughed a little. "Perhaps you're right: where's the end of steel now?"

"Say seventy-five miles west of that; next week I'm done with track-laying for this year, but in a twelve-month we'll be in sight of the Rockies."

"Not at two miles a day."

Van Horne, emitting a jet of smoke, shook his head. "I'll double that."

“How?”

“Don’t know yet: but I will. We’ll have to lay track by machinery, not brute strength—I’ve heard of something.”

Stephen nodded; he was getting used to this giant’s ways and drew confidence from them.

“You hear that, Mr. Smith?”

The third man turned. “Aye, I did, and sincerely hope that the statement will not prove to have been exaggerated.”

Thus dismissing the matter, and while Van Horne winked at Stephen, he applied himself again to the map. He, too, had a beard, thick and untrimmed; hairy clumps of brows surmounted a pair of cold and uncommunicative grey eyes ‘as rocks o’er rivers hang’; he was very correctly dressed in square-cut frock coat, dark trousers, and a black bow tie: the face was devoid of colour, save for the slight shading found in the skin of those who in youth have been much exposed to the weather, and his large bony hands were carefully tended. He was a stickler for etiquette, and his most intimate associates—even Stephen, to whom he was cousin—always addressed him as “Mr. Smith”.

The map seemed to hold him: presently he put out a broad forefinger and began to trace a fine white line that ran across it from a point marked Callender, in the Province of Ontario, continuing north-west, skirting the north shore of Lake Superior till it joined a double line and ran from a lake port called Prince’s Arthur’s Landing almost due north to Winnipeg. This north shore section was not a full line but dotted. From Winnipeg the tenuous thread stretched due west and it too was dotted soon after passing a place called Regina. Thence the dots persisted over dark blue empty space where only a few wandering streams were indicated till they reached four ranges of mountains labelled respectively, Rocky, Selkirk, Gold, and Coast. Writhing through these like a tortured snake, the last few inches became solid again where they paralleled the Fraser River and ended at Fort Emory.

South of the International Boundary, the Grand Trunk Railway was shown entering the United States from the Province of Ontario and ending at Chicago, while from Chicago one could see Hill’s line striking boldly north across the boundary and entering Winnipeg.

“Not regretting your bargain of a few years ago, Mr. Smith?” This from Van Horne, whose dark eyes were twinkling.

“No, I consider that on the whole it was fair and satisfactory to all parties concerned.”

He did not turn when he said this, and continued—maps had always held him—

to study that vast western territory over which thirteen years previously he had been Chief Commissioner for the Hudson's Bay Company. For two centuries the more than imperial sway of the great trading company had lasted, to end when the shrewd vision of Donald Smith perceived difficulties and embarrassment ahead. His sixth sense had warned him that the Company's future was insecure and their Canadian kingdom too vast to be held much longer: there was growing local opposition, free traders swarmed into the west, Indians and Metis half-breeds were restless and insubordinate. Thus, because a certainty seemed worth a dozen possibilities, he persuaded his Governors in England to sell their extraordinary but now harassing rights to the Canadian Government, and Smith, the greatest trader of them all, drove his bargain with Macdonald, Premier of Canada. He was thankful to sell for £300,000 in cash, fifty thousand acres surrounding those far-flung posts, and one-twentieth of all fertile land that might be developed by any future railway through this flowering wilderness of buffalo and prairie grass. Those were the terms, and those, masking his thankfulness, and in spite of an awkward hitch caused by one Louis Riel, he exacted. No, he did not regret that bargain.

Thus ended an historic monopoly, for until it was wiped out no other trader than the Company might legally do business in that immense western area: all lay in its hands, the means of life and death, the price of fur and feather, arms, provisions, clothing. It had been a great autocracy, in its prime perhaps the greatest in any country, and Donald Smith still remained its Canadian head. Queer to look back at the sequence of events that had brought him where he was to-day; queer to look across at his cousin and reflect that if he himself had not spent those days counting muskrat skins in Lachine, only ten miles from where he stood, he would not have been here now sharing in the greatest railway adventure the world has known.

"Jim Hill will be coming in about half an hour," said Van Horne glancing at the clock, "but there's another man you ought to see first: you've heard of him."

"And who might that be?"

"Rogers, the fellow Jim lent us; he turned up yesterday."

"I shall be glad to meet him. In the matter of that report of his there is something I propose to ask."

"Well, size him up for yourself."

A bell tinkled: the door opened, closing with a sharp slam, and Donald Smith regarded with interest an individual concerning whom he had heard much of late. Rogers' skin had the colour of old leather; regardless of fit he was wearing a rough ready-made suit he had bought in Spokane, and, standing there with the weightless poise of the woodsman, jaws working at top speed, he stared with frank curiosity at

the two men whom he had never seen before. He evidenced no particular recognition of their importance or authority, but regarded them exactly as he would any other human beings; his eyes swerved to the map, then back to Smith's rugged features. Smith extended his hand, felt a grip like that of a steel claw, winced slightly. Stephen, with amusement in his eyes, made the same discovery and saw diversion in prospect.

"Sit down. Cigar?" Van Horne pushed over one of his potent black cylinders.

"Don't mind if I do." Rogers bit off the end, spat it out, and struck a match on the seat of his trousers quite unabashed by Mr. Smith's frozen stare. He took a chair, stretched his legs and waited complacently until the oracle spoke.

"It was a great relief to get that wire of yours from Spokane, major, and we're glad to see you here."

"That's all right, sir, that's all right: a pleasure to send it."

"It came at a time when Ottawa was giving us a little trouble by insisting on a line within a given distance of the boundary."

Rogers, nodding, winked at Van Horne who was drawing a caricature of Smith on the blue-print.

"Well, from Van's message I gathered you were up against it, and took a chance. Glad to be of use: I've known engineers who weren't."

Van Horne's expression betrayed nothing, but at the word "chance" Mr. Smith fingered the edge of his beard.

"Major Rogers," he spoke with deliberation, "not having engineering knowledge myself, there is something I do not understand in this matter, and would like to be enlightened."

"That's what I'm here for, gents."

"Then I am led to believe—pray correct me if I am wrong—that when you sent that first telegram, the one from Spokane, you had explored the pass from the west and were satisfied as to its practicability so far as you had gone?"

"You bet I was!"

"But you had not established its feasibility on the eastern side?"

Rogers shook his head. "No, sir, I hadn't, and if you'd been there yourself you'd have known why."

"I was otherwise engaged," said Mr. Smith stiffly, "but what I desire to know is how, not having been over the entire ground, you could report that the east side was also feasible?"

"Well, now, that's a fair enough question, and as a matter of fact if you're bent in pressing me down to it, I didn't actually know a darn thing about it, but I felt it, and

my experience as an engineer told me the rest. What I did know was that you fellows were in a fix, and since then I've proved the east side too. Hell's bells, what are you kicking about? What do you suppose an engineer is for anyway?"

This, delivered with complete and casual assurance, produced its effect: Van Horne went into an explosion of laughter, Stephen was wreathed in smiles, while Smith for an instant hesitated between dignity and surrender, till over his dour features crept a fractional softening, faint and fleeting as a gleam of wintry sunlight that tints for a moment some stony hillside to a warmer hue.

"Y'know, Mr. Smith," said his cousin comfortably, "the major's not the only one who's taking chances in this affair. Tell us more about it, Rogers."

Facing the big map, the engineer began to talk: now on his own ground he talked well: what he said carried a conviction of which he was entirely unaware, and one seemed to see him at his work.

"I've made no real survey, mind you," he concluded, "not even a triangulation yet, but my altitudes are all safe, and we've distance enough to make the grade: that won't be two per cent anywhere, which is a lot better than the maximum on the Northern Pacific. It's going to cost a pile of money—that's your business, not mine; also it's cheaper than going away round the Big Bend. Plenty of room in the pass to marshal trains, but you'll need a lot of snow-sheds. This pile of rock—it's a hell of a big one—I've called Syndicate Mountain, after you three, because it's got triple peaks, and," he added with a sidelong glance at Smith, "it's cold on top."

"There's no syndicate now, major, but a board of directors," said a dry voice.

"Then call it what you like: I don't give a damn. It'll be there for a long time to come: it's permanent."

"You had, I am led to believe, a somewhat trying trip?" Smith, bracing himself against profanity, inclined his head gravely.

"My nephew, Albert, who came with me, decided it was no garden party. The Indians weren't so bad—for Indians—though they ate too much, but going was tough and the devil's club straight out of hell as you'd expect. Here's about where little Alec, one of the Shuswaps, fell into an ice crack and pretty nearly stayed there: the ice—I mean the glacier—Alec got wedged in about forty feet down—we pulled him up with spliced tumplines—is about five hundred feet thick. Up near the top of Syndicate there's a ledge about the size of this table, though not so smooth, where we stayed all night, but you couldn't sit down for long or you'd freeze your backside—say, do you always keep a room as hot as this?—and from there we could see right into the Upper Columbia valley. After my first wire I went round through Northern Idaho, up the Moyie to Wild Horse, then up the Kootenay, and down the

Columbia to the mouth of the Kicking Horse where I met Aylmer—that was nearly opposite this eastern end of the pass—the part you’re kicking about—and when I’d checked his elevation, I knew it was all right. You see there was distance enough to make the grade, that’s the important point.”

“And approximately, major, how far did you travel on this circuit you mention to get from one end of the pass to the other?”

“Not so far, perhaps five hundred miles; I don’t look at it that way, it’s not the distance but the time it takes: you raft a couple of hundred, walk some, and ride the rest.”

Smith nodded, being himself no stranger to journeys of this kind, and regarded their visitor with growing approval. Rogers, having chewed his cigar to bitter shreds, declined another and now reverted to his plug.

“I suggest, gentlemen, that in view of the—er—unusual circumstances connected with its discovery, we name this pass after Major Rogers—that is, of course, with his consent. Major, what do you say?”

“That’s all right, and—well—thanks.”

“You will go down in history, major.”

“I nearly went down with an avalanche into the Illecillewaet a while ago,” grinned Rogers entirely unimpressed. “How long am I wanted here? I’d like to get back.”

“To-morrow, if you’re so restless,” grunted Van Horne, eyes twinkling. “But first I’ve a complaint in about you.”

“Like hell you have! Who from?”

“I’m told that you feed your men badly and drive ’em too hard.”

“Jesus! Van, what are you talking about? You ought to know me by this time. The west is full of fellows who drop in with all they own tied up in a bandanna handkerchief: they do a day’s work, then get boots, blankets, clothes, and God knows what till it takes a pack train to move ’em: but any man who can’t travel as fast as I do gets fired.”

Donald Smith, recovering from the shock, was forced to smile behind his beard, for something about this blasphemous and very capable stranger was now appealing to him strongly. He knew that type, though hitherto in his experience they had been restrained to the point of awkwardness in the presence of high authority. Rogers’ eyes were roving about, moving boldly from man to man, for here he was in the very heart and brain of the all-red line, and these the presiding gods whom thousands of men obeyed. Smith knew nothing about railway construction, nor did Stephen, which made their presence the more suggestive: they represented other forces without which railways could not be built. But Van understood all that was involved.

“Any more questions—er—gents?”

“I think,” said Smith, “that you have informed us fully of what we desired to know.”

“Can I ask one, though it’s not my business? It bothers me.”

“Certainly.”

“Then why do you want Jim Hill in your crowd? You think I take chances—well, they’re nothing to what you’re running. I know Jim, but now I’m working for you, not him.”

“Major Rogers,” replied Smith distantly, “you surprise me.”

“Maybe I do, but it’s nothing to the jolt that’s coming pretty soon.”

“Perhaps Rogers will explain just what he means?” put in Stephen suavely. “He must have some reason for it.”

“You bet I’ve a reason,” he stepped across to the map, laying a finger on the dotted line north of Lake Superior. “That’s what I’m driving at—that’s where you reckon to go through?”

“All settled,” said Van Horne, “what about it—any objection?”

“Keeping the whole darn road in Canada, eh?”

“That, major, is our fixed intention,” announced Mr. Smith.

“Well, Jim won’t like it; he wants all the prairie traffic he can lay hands on for his Winnipeg-Chicago line to turn over there to Hickson and the Grand Trunk: he’ll have worked it all out with Hickson before this. I don’t know anything about freight rates—not my country—but I do know Jim, and he’s not taking backwater from any Canadian road, and if you put through that north shore line——”

“Major Rogers,” interposed Smith with dignity, “you may leave it to us to choose our own associates and decide our own policy. I have known Mr. Hill for years. After Mr. Stephen and Mr. Macintyre formed the original syndicate—which later transferred its rights and obligations to the present company—Mr. Hill and I joined them. I had had satisfactory, I may say very satisfactory, business dealings with him previously. An American subject now, but none the worse for that, and no man in Canada has had his railway experience. I tell you this hoping to put the facts clearly in your mind. The Prime Minister knew them, and approved.”

“Well, sir, it’s your funeral not mine; I reckon you’re thinking about that St. Paul and Pacific deal, and Jim was certainly on the spot with his skinning knife that time, but it’s enough to break an engineer’s heart to see what often happens to a road after he’s done with it. That’s Jim all over! Call it experience if you like, but what’s clear to me is that you’re likely to have the experience and Jim the darned railway when it comes to a showdown. He’ll rip you up the belly the first chance he gets,”

continued Rogers, now secretly wondering whether he was going too far, “also he was figuring on building into southern British Columbia, but that new pass you’re so suspicious about will choke him off there, so——”

“Mr. Hill has just arrived, sir,” said a voice at the door.

Rogers subsided with an audible gasp, and the subject of his exordium came in, a tall man with a long graying beard, angular frame, thin, rather mobile face, and restless eyes. He wore square-toed boots and was carelessly dressed: nodding to the three, he seemed faintly surprised at the sight of Rogers. Then a sharp glance at the map.

“Well, gentlemen? How are you, major?”

Smith inclined his grizzled head: there was a pause, and perceptible tension in the room: Hill gave a dry cough.

“Major, I hear you’ve been busy in the Selkirks: how do they compare with the Cascades?”

“A big country, Mr. Hill, and the Cascades are only foothills: it’s a much rougher country, too, but I’ve got a fine pass.”

“We’ve christened it after the discoverer,” said Smith with dignity.

Hill gave a nod: he was much interested in that pass, but not how it might be christened; Van Horne and Stephen exchanged a look while Rogers kept shooting quick little glances at the four, one after the other, eyes screwed up, hoping that they might get down to business before he felt forced to go. He wanted to hear what they had to say, and was curious about the general situation because to him it had the makings of trouble. He knew Hill better than they did, knew that he resented opposition, had a temper, and was masterful, and it would be worth something to see him up against that granite-faced Scot with a silky voice, precise manner and fixed air of authority.

A few moments passed in talk that revealed nothing till the situation became strained, and Smith, indicating the engineer, made a gesture seen only by Van Horne, who swung round in his chair.

“Know anything about fossils, major?”

“Hell, no; how could I? Seen ’em in a rock cut now and then, that’s all.”

“Play billiards?”

“Never had time, I work for my living.”

“Chess?”

“Now, look here, Van, what are you driving at? My God, can you see me sitting down to play chess?”

“Poker?” grinned Van Horne.

"That's more human if it's a straight game, but you never can tell."

"Then come round to my house to-night."

"Careful, major, or he'll skin you," laughed Stephen.

"He can't get more than I've got, which isn't much; also I'm on his own payroll. What time will the trouble begin, Van?"

"About ten o'clock."

"I'll be there: so long, gentlemen."

He got up, looked about in a curiously deliberate and comprehensive fashion as though trying to make some kind of forecast as to what was about to happen, then went off. Hill took another hard stare at the map, and the atmosphere of the four sharpened insensibly; now these men had become serious; they were measuring their thoughts, and each keenly aware of the weight of circumstance.

"Anything new these last few weeks?" Hill presently asked of Van Horne with an assumed touch of carelessness that was far from what he felt. "I've been too busy to get up to Canada."

"Probably nothing you don't know already: the end of steel passed Pile o' Bones, and we've talked over that north shore question with Ottawa; Stephen saw Tupper about it not long ago."

"Ye-es?"

"What few surveys we've made—they're only traverses and triangulations—show heavy work, heavier than anything we've struck yet: along the lakeside there's two hundred miles of solid rock."

"Well, we always knew that."

"Stephen put the whole thing to Tupper—of course, we can't submit any real estimates yet—and Tupper says it's up to us. The matter of cost evidently isn't the main point."

"What is the point?" said Hill dryly.

"The Prime Minister maintains that every foot of this line must be on Canadian soil as originally planned, or his Government won't support us."

Hill's face hardened perceptibly. "What about building from Canada to the Soo, meeting me there and giving me a chance to pick up some freight?"

"There is at the moment no intention of considering such a proposal," wedged in the cool tone of Donald Smith. "It is not necessary, we have not the money, and it would divert us from our main objective. We will undertake the Lake Superior section as soon as the line is well into the prairie and we can earn something by carrying wheat to the head of the Great Lakes, thence eastward by water in the open season. It is possible that later we might build from Canada to meet you in

Michigan, but that depends on circumstances which do not yet arise. This, Mr. Hill, is our final intention.”

“You count on holding all that prairie traffic for the C.P.R.?”

“We’ll need every pound of it, and we’re starting with bones,” grunted Van Horne.

“You haven’t seven months’ open navigation in those lakes, and when they freeze up, where are you? You’ll have a prairie road with its nose in the air and its tail in a block of ice 400 miles long. What’s the sense when you can use my road from Winnipeg all the year round?”

“*Your* road, Mr. Hill! That’s exactly the point. Sir John won’t hear of it, and we do not intend to broach the matter again,” said the greybearded Scot.

“Which is queer talk from a big shareholder in that same road.” Hill was bridleing visibly.

Smith, now folding his gnarled white hands, looked peacefully unprovoked, a strange man, feared by many and loved by none, and with a guarded remoteness difficult of penetration. He had been through the mill, and arrived where he stood by iron purpose and an orgiastic appetite for work. When still a youth with downy chin he was shipped by Simpson, whom he later succeeded as the head of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Canada, from the muskrat storehouse in Lachine to the chilling mouth of Saguenay, and soon after that Simpson, an autocrat of bloodless disposition with no love for the imperturbable youngster, shunted him still farther down the Gulf to Mingan, north of Anticosti. Returning thence without leave because he was threatened with snowblindness, and arriving unexpectedly in Montreal to be doctored, Simpson sent him off to Labrador in a sort of commercial penal servitude.

This rigorous if unfair discipline, coupled with the stark nature of life on that rockbound, inhospitable coast, had much to do with the making of the man. At Rigolet on Hamilton Inlet he possessed his soul in patience, traded with Eskimo and Montagnais, started the first canning of salmon, grew potatoes and melons under glass, saving his money till in six years he was chief trader in the district. Then nothing could hold him back. Now he lived in Montreal, a prince among merchants, very wise and baffling, with a courtliness of manner and speech that was perhaps a carefully cultivated reversal of the colour of the old wild life and punishment taken without a whimper. He could believe a thing without feeling it. Behind this screen of suavity his undeviating mind pursued its ordered course; and as the explosions in the cylinder of an engine are not perceptible in the smooth rotations of its flywheel, so the unquestionable fire that must have glowed in this man could not be distinguished behind the suave momentum of his later existence. And he had always loved a

contest.

Opposite to him sat Hill, builder and buccaneer of railways, and it must have been that here and now these two were aware of the approaching cleavage: Hill also loved a contest—was inured to them, and for him a lengthening line of new steel rails was the fairest thing on earth. But they must be his own rails.

What had persuaded him to join the original syndicate two years previously was his association with Smith in a group that bought from Dutch bondholders a derelict railway that died ere it reached Winnipeg from the south and the United States. This scoop shortly meant millions. Outside criticism about the transaction was caustic, but the millions definite. Then when the thing lay safely in strong hands, a wizard touch was applied by Hill, the line extended to Winnipeg, and those rusty rails became a gold mine.

The far-away Dutchmen could not grasp the promise of the future, and it was no concern of Farley, the American Receiver, to enlighten them: also the grasshoppers—Hill always smiled when he thought of them—had helped a lot, it being credibly reported in Amsterdam that the Canadian north-west was being overrun by these winged pests, but the curious fact remained that in the very week when the bargain was struck, every grasshopper vanished, and a year later Hill's trains were pulling into Winnipeg. That single transaction made five millionaires at one stroke, but, reflected Hill, looking across at Smith who was now part owner of the all-red line, such things didn't happen twice in a lifetime. Also did this man expect to ride two horses at once? In his former associates he now saw rivals, and why had he sent Van Horne and Rogers to work for these men?

"If I run my roads into the western country, Canada won't hold it any longer than she would a streak of lightning," said he, truculently.

"Mr. Hill apparently overlooks the fact that our charter protects us against invading lines from the south," murmured Smith, grey eyes examining the ceiling.

"Folks in the west won't stand that for long—too many Americans in there already; they're going in fast via Winnipeg and over my road too: I'll Americanize the west before you know it."

Stephen and Van Horne held silence, content to let the argument take its course, backing Smith against all comers: he was watching Hill with a growing discomfort of which he evidenced no sign whatever, and only became the more polite. It was true that he had a lot of money in Hill's road, but more in the C.P.R., and now his balanced mind turned to the future: it was awkward, but only one thing remained to be done, and he had a sort of satisfaction in the clash he anticipated. Rogers had been right after all.

“Mr. Hill, with your permission I will speak quite plainly: you have already been assured that the Government will consider nothing but an all-Canadian line whatever the cost; it is a national matter, and we have eight years in which to finish it.”

“You’ve got more time than money,” snapped Hill, “and how much is your road going to cost?”

“That we cannot tell, but we do know that Sir John will not stop half-way. His hands are on the plough. If he wavers the Conservative Party will be defeated, and if this line does not go through as at present planned, British Columbia will undoubtedly withdraw from Confederation and secede to the United States, who will then control the entire Pacific coast from Mexico to Behring Sea. That is unthinkable. There is more involved in the original contract we signed in London and in which you became a silent partner than any of us fully realized at the time, but we intend to see it through. That is our position.”

“What does the Bank of Montreal say?” asked Hill roughly, “how long will they back you, and if this road goes to smash, doesn’t the Bank smash too?”

“You will excuse me,” put in Stephen with curtness, “if I do not discuss Bank matters here.”

Hill pushed his chin into his long beard: he had gone farther than he had intended; admittedly he was up against it, against a determined Government and men with a purpose, but if they’d talked like this to begin with he’d never have joined the syndicate, and it was odd to one of his piratical nature that they should be so unmoved by possible profit, so anchored to a vision. Two Scots Canadians, one American Dutchman! He glanced at them under lowered lids, while the chimes of Notre Dame struck the hour: Van Horne’s pencil was making little jabs at the blotter, Stephen smoking, staring through smoke at the big blue-print, Donald Smith examining with apparent interest his own broad, well-tended finger nails, and all waiting for their American associate to speak. The vision seemed to have altered Van Horne’s nationality.

“You’ve become a pretty good Canadian, Van.”

“Yes,” he rumbled, “I’m that now: it will do for me.”

There was a certain finality about this, and Hill, who had no intention of showing his hand yet, thought it better to leave. “Well,” he said, “I’ll think it over; got to go south this evening, but I’ll be in Montreal next week and come in.” Then, pausing at the door, the suppressed anger of the man broke out in a flame. “Van, if you build that Lake Superior section I’ll get even with you if I go to hell for it and shovel coal.”

He stalked out, leaving in his wake a pool of silence that remained unruffled till Van Horne gave one of his plutonic laughs.

“Mad as a wet hen, eh? I’ll bet he’s gone to talk to the Grand Trunk.”

“That,” agreed Mr. Smith, “presents itself to me as a reasonable assumption, and brings up another matter we should discuss. Gentlemen, I am a little disturbed about our future finances; and you, Mr. Van Horne, spend money very fast.”

“It costs more a mile to spend it slowly, and we’ll be near the mountains next year.”

“But with the mountains in front and the unconquered north shore behind, how much money are we going to need in the coming twelve months?”

“Better get Shaughnessy in,” suggested Stephen.

Van Horne’s purchasing agent and strong executive appeared from the next room: he had broad brows, a roundish face and pointed chin, a goatee and incipient jowl: abrupt and explosive in manner, his blue-grey eyes were formidable to his subordinates until they learn how kind a heart and what high integrity lay behind them: he held a cigar between finger and thumb of the left hand, with the other thumb hooked into his waistcoat arm-hole, and gave an instant impression of competence.

“Tom,” said Van Horne, “Mr. Smith has brought up the matter of financing the next twelve months.”

“How much road are you going to build?”

“All I can and more.”

“Yes, I know, but how much?”

“Well, not less than 600 miles; we’ve done 450 this year.”

“Which cost us two and a half million a month. Is any of that 600 on the north shore?”

“Yes.”

“What’ll that cost a mile?”

“God knows, but ten to twenty times the prairie work.”

“Then call it all forty thousand dollars a mile on the average—say twenty-five to thirty millions.”

Stephen whistled: he was a shrewd man, bold of action, recent President of the Bank of Montreal, across whose counters flowed the commercial life-blood of Canada, and of which his cousin was a director. Their combined weight and high standing had swung the Bank to the support of the new company, but only they themselves were seized of the magnitude of the affair.

Used to dealing in big figures, he found in this railway business an all-absorbing fascination; it picked him up and possessed him, it fired his enthusiasm. He talked of it by the hour to his friends and brought them into the fold; he dreamed of steel rails; the virus entered his veins, and he saw settlements become villages, villages expand

to towns, and towns take on the similitude of coming cities. Beside him slaved Van Horne, the driving force, drunk with the lust of the born builder, and at Van Horne's elbow Shaughnessy, quick like a steel trap, long-sighted, master of detail, herding his supply trains from the south to keep moving those twin lines of steel that were now midway across the continent. Such was the triumvirate, and behind them a grizzle-headed Scot of formidable mien.

"Twenty-five millions is a lot of money," repeated Stephen.

Van Horne, realizing that some of the north shore line would cost ten times forty thousand a mile, looked grave: of course, they knew all this all the time, but now that the time approached when the thing must be faced it grew the more disturbing. Macdonald's Government had found twenty-five millions, in addition to which another thirty had already been spent. Instinctively he glanced at Donald Smith: in such moments as these it was only natural.

"Mr. Smith, I wish that you and Sir John had made it up."

"That," said the elder man, flushing very faintly, "that, sir, will come in due time when he realizes that we are necessary to each other, but it has not come yet."

"I have heard, not officially but indirectly," ruminated Stephen, "that if you were willing to contest the next available seat as Sir John's supporter, he would not be averse, and it might make the Government more friendly."

"Scotch lamb as a burnt offering on the Conservative altar, eh?" sniggered Van Horne. His restless pencil made a lifelike sketch with the Premier as High Priest, and an ancient ram with a beard very much resembling Smith's and throat extended to the knife: this he pushed over to Stephen who thrust it into his pocket, smiling. "Couldn't you get some more cash out of your Dutch friends, Mr. Smith?"

That gentleman was now exceedingly angry, but it showed only by the slightest colour in his lined cheeks: most of his money was in the Hudson's Bay Company; he rode two difficult horses at once, and secretly ached to be back in the House of Commons, but that was his personal affair, and he resented anything that in the slightest degree impinged on privacy. To-day, however, with his habitual custom of remaining silent on that which touched him most nearly, he only looked the more remote.

"We'll have to finish this road in less than eight years or go bankrupt," broke in Stephen, "also I'd give something to be sure just where Hill stands."

"Climbing the fence," scoffed Van Horne, "you'll know soon."

They considered this possibly dangerous combination of Hill and the Grand Trunk. Now that rival rails were actually pushing westward, the Grand Trunk, owned in England and operated at leisurely long distance in Canada, was hostile: their

directors had never understood Canada and the Canadians, nor did it seem that that mattered, but suddenly alarmed at the prospect of competition, they were damning the new enterprise in the money markets of the world: Canada was their pitch and theirs only, and it was not without their knowledge that Labouchere's diatribe had enlivened the pages of *Truth*. The three in the boardroom at *Place d'Armes* were aware of all this, but still more firmly they clung to the vision of the all-red line.

"If Hill tries to break us he'll probably smash himself," went on Stephen quietly, "and I doubt if he's such a fool."

"At the same time, gentlemen,"—here Mr. Smith felt for the end of his beard in reflective fashion—"it is an eventuality, that, speaking very privately, we are bound to consider, and should he go so far as to sell his shares—let me see—they are not in his own name, I believe—at least, they were not. Mr. Shaughnessy perhaps could tell us?"

"No, sir, they are not."

"I had thought as much—and should he sell them would it not remove a weak joint in our armour? I am second to none in acknowledging Mr. Hill's past support, but the matter now wears another complexion. Also, it appears that our position at Ottawa might actually be strengthened. Sir John, so far as I know, pray correct me if I am wrong, never intimated that he objected to a Canadian-born but Americanized citizen being with us at the outset, and like ourselves he expected Mr. Hill to be useful, but I can quite imagine that for political reasons the present situation does not appeal to him. No, gentlemen, I cannot conceive that Mr. Hill is any longer a real asset to our company, and his natural area is the development of the Great Northern, a road that cannot view our progress with any satisfaction whatever."

"I agree," nodded Stephen; "did you ever read the debate in Congress dealing with the construction of that line just—yes—ten years ago?"

"I heard of it, but recall no details."

"You were up in Manitoba, but it struck me so much that I made a note of part of it, because Macdonald had just promised that Canada would build an all-red line from coast to coast. I've got it here." He took a sheet from his pocket and read, smiling: "'This road will seal the destinies of the British Dominions west of the 91st meridian. They will become so Americanized in interests and feelings that they will in fact be severed from the new Dominion, and their annexation but a question of time.' That was the blessing Congress gave the Great Northern."

"And very interesting too," murmured Mr. Smith, "I often find cause for diversion in historical prophecies when read in the light of subsequent developments, and I think it may be said that we are doing our best to negate the expectations of

that particular Congress. Thank you for enlightening me, Mr. Van Horne. Have you anything to bring up, anything, for instance, that would make Mr. Hill's apparent intentions more difficult of fulfilment?"

"I have, and we can't dodge it much longer, but it means a lot of money."

"Let us forget the money aspect."

"I want a fleet of our own lake steamers," grinned the big man, now pacing the room again, "that'll fix him for all time."

"Really! Now that strikes me as an exceedingly attractive departure—yes—yes—I think I know what you are about to say."

"We've talked it over carefully," put in Stephen, "and I think he is quite right: next year the line from Winnipeg to the Great Lakes will be open—by the way, the Government has asked us to finish it for them—and——"

"Fed up with muskogs," chuckled Van Horne, "and I don't blame them either: go on, Steve."

"Then we'll haul grain to Prince Arthur's Landing if—it's a big if—we can get it down through Lake Huron in our own ships. Look here,"—he went to the wall map, putting a finger on a spot called Owen Sound—"we can buy the road running there from Toronto; also, as you know, we've got an option on the Ontario and Quebec from here to Toronto, which means——"

"Exactly," interrupted his cousin with a benignant inclination of massive head, "pray do not trouble to explain further; it means that from the heart of the prairie country we can then ourselves deliver grain to ocean-going vessels in this harbour of Montreal. Gentlemen, that is excellent; it appeals to me very much, and Sir Hugh Allan will also be delighted."

"Then we get the boats!" Van Horne was smiling broadly.

"I will strongly support such a course—but what boats? They would naturally have to be constructed for you."

"I haven't come to that yet."

"Permit me to suggest that you order Clyde-built boats of Scots steel with the best of Scots boilers, and spare no expense in securing the best. From salt water they would, of course, have to pass through the canal system to reach the Lakes: yes—I like the idea—and do not cut your estimates too close: nothing gentlemen, can be built too well for our service. A poor ship is worse than no ship at all as I always warned the Governors of my Company in London, and the best workmanship and material is, of course, Scots. Now is there anything else to be considered?"

"It's just occurred to me," said Stephen in a queer tone that was a little choky but oddly impressive, "that if that works—and it's got to work—is there any reason

why later on we shouldn't carry our own salt water trade both east and west?"

Van Horne, halting abruptly in his stride, gazed fixedly at the speaker: Smith's cold eyes had opened wider; he too was gazing, while Shaughnessy sat as though galvanized, quite rigid, with pencil poised in mid-air. Not one of them said a word, but their minds expanded to the wider vision. The flag of the Line flying round the world! That held them. They saw phantom ships, flying phantom red ensigns, steaming down from the horizon into fairy ports, and now almost furtively they looked at each other, silenced by the power of that vision, searching each other as though to ask whether indeed they were big enough men to put it into being. Was the Prime Minister of Canada strong enough to stay with them? In that moment the walls of the board-room faded away: they became voyagers into an ever-widening and beckoning world.

"Well," exploded Van Horne with the violence of an over-charged boiler, "why not: by God, why not?"

"Gentlemen," nodded Mr. Smith, "I, too, am not a little attracted to the idea: it has its points, many points, and in my opinion Sir John's views would be entirely favourable; but I would not broach the matter to Sir Hugh Allan or the Grand Trunk, and in the meantime our energies will be fully occupied. There is nothing else to be attended to?"

"Haven't we earmarked enough money for one day?" Stephen's voice was high-pitched and a shade nervous.

"Possibly that is the case, and if you'd care to drive round to Dorchester Street, I should appreciate your company. Good morning, gentlemen."

He marched out very erect, Stephen beside him: Shaughnessy, after one sharp look at his chief, retired to his own office, whereupon Van Horne, lighting a fresh cigar, resumed his vigorous patrol with eyes bright and jaws set.

Scanning the big blue-print, he sent for an atlas, and focussed on the Pacific Ocean. Then back to the print. Port Emory! He stared dubiously at Port Emory, Onderdonk's starting-point. It didn't strike him as being a great national terminal; it would involve providing an ocean harbour where the Fraser vomitted its turbid flood between low alluvial banks, and he wanted a real harbour, a tidal one with good anchorage and deep water close to the shore. That carried him to a Pacific inlet round the corner from Port Emory with a narrow entrance that expanded nobly to a four mile wide bay; mountains were indicated to the north. He fastened on this. Probably no dredging would be necessary there.

Now his broad fingers travelled eastward, slowing down as it crossed the Selkirks, while he smiled, thinking of Rogers: now on through the Rockies, along the

Bow River to the prairie and over as far as Pile o' Bones. No trouble about that section; nothing to hold up the all-red line.

He began to nod slowly, slowly, till with an abrupt gesture he wheeled, returned to his great table, and plunged into work like a man inspired.

PART II

ON a chilly evening in the early winter of 1882 Macdonald stood at an open fire. The room, large and partly walled with books, had a comfortable air: big windows overlooked the Ottawa River, giving a panoramic view of the not far distant Laurentian mountains, now white with their first sprinkling of snow. There was a long central table, no desk, and two doors, one opening to the gardens, the other to the house of which this very livable study with its atmosphere of intimacy formed a wing. No telephone sounded its imperative summons where the Premier of Canada did much of his work free from interruption.

He rubbed his long, flexible hands and turned to a man sitting on the other side of the hearth.

"Who is coming to-night, J.H.?"

"Tupper, anyway, not Schreiber, who, I think, is in Montreal; you said it would not be official."

"Yes, it is often the easiest way to clear the air."

Pope nodded confirmingly. Of all Macdonald's confidants he stood perhaps the nearest and knew him best; so in understanding anticipation of what lay in his chief's mind he sat in silence, studying the familiar face.

"How are matters going with our all-red line, John Henry?"

"Smoothly, I think: I saw Schreiber yesterday, just back from the West, and he seems quite happy. They've laid a lot of track this summer."

"So I understand, but, y'know, I can never think of the Canadian Pacific without falling foul of the Grand Trunk. What persuades those people they can sit in a board-room in London and run a Canadian railway—why must they brand my Government as robbers—why in God's name can't they see there's room for two roads?"

"They'll learn that before long, Sir John."

"They may, but they won't admit it. I'm all for British institutions, but not this long-range British management."

"Takes one back to '73, doesn't it?" murmured Pope.

"It does, and to Donald Smith: I can see him now, the old Covenanter, undertaking to purge the Conservative Party. I don't believe I've ever really hated any living man, but what I felt for him that day was worse than hate: he gave me a stab in the back on moral grounds—think of that, moral grounds."

Pope, nodding, recalled the drama of '73. Macdonald in office, and the great gamble of the all-red line decided upon by himself and Charles Tupper, a three thousand mile steel band to consolidate British North America under one flag,

withholding British Columbia and its twelve thousand inhabitants from the outstretched arms of the United States. He recalled the negotiations concerning a charter to Hugh Allan of Montreal, who already owned a fleet of steamers plying to Liverpool: the empty exchequer of the Conservative Party: the bleeding and re-bleeding of Allan to replenish party funds till finally he protested that his veins were being tapped too freely: the exposure by nefarious means of what was going on: the pouncing on this by the Opposition led by Alexander Mackenzie and Edward Blake: the castigation of the Conservatives in the House: Macdonald's appeal to Donald Smith, member for Selkirk in Manitoba and his supporter, as being the one man with weight enough to swing the balance: Smith's appearance in the House: the polished tones; the considered speech seemingly in favour of the Government and Macdonald's cohorts smiling with satisfaction, till at the very end came the unexpected stab whereat the Government benches gaped in horrified amazement, while the long beard of Donald wagged its disapproval in a fashion that forced Macdonald's resignation and sent the Conservative Party into the wilderness of opposition for five long years.

It was now an old story, not a pretty one, a bit of history known as the Pacific Scandal: it undermined friendships and dug a gulf between two Scots who were at the time the strongest men in the country.

"He had me on the grill that time," admitted Macdonald reflectively, "and I protested to heaven against his existence, yet in the back of my head I had to admire the way he did it."

"I wonder how he feels about it now: he's up to the neck in that new line of ours."

"H'm, that would be hard to say: I question whether he feels anything very much, and certainly wouldn't waste time questioning the past, particularly his own past. Too shrewd a politician for that, J.H."

"You two will get together again, sir, I'm sure of it."

Macdonald, gay survivor of a hundred political duels, nodded, smiled and turned his thoughts to the all-red line: it still occupied the forefront of his very active brain; and backed by a hypnotized and worshipping party, piping his tune to a melodious note, and with Tupper helping to lead a willing flock, he had plunged into the most stupendous railway gamble yet conceived of man. That dream could not die, and he applied to it a flexible mind. Too diversely occupied himself to be a great driving force in one direction, he had the skill and dexterity to set in motion and control in others the forces that he desired to enlist. He was an adept at picking men.

"Talking about Donald," he ruminated, taking visible pleasure in the analysis of

his own thoughts, "he's mighty useful just where he is and he knows it. He's clever, damned clever, and I know no one just like him. I can't imagine a tear of compassion losing itself in those whiskers, and if he has any real feelings they are pride and ambition. Also, if he's made up his mind, one might as well argue with a chip of granite. After all, J.H., it's the Scots who made this country."

"Thanks," said Pope satirically, "and none others had a hand in it?"

Macdonald laughed at him. "I thought that would reach you. The other day I had the Canadian half-breeds classified for me. It seems that the English-blooded lot don't amount to much, and are apt to be clumsy, slow, and not adaptable: the Irish are undependable: the French are better in the bush, quicker, good cooks, and amiable: but the Scots-blooded ones, J.H., are the pick of them all, dependable, good bushmen, good traders, and altogether the aristocrats of the west."

"Which is all very satisfactory for you, sir; but who told you?"

"A Dutchman from the prairie country," chuckled Macdonald. "Fond of horseracing, J.H.?"

"No, not very."

"I am: it's like an election—you know more about it the day after. Ah, here's our mainstay—or, perhaps better, our sheet anchor. How are you, Charles, you look more like an anchor than the other thing."

Tupper came in, his clothing a sartorial triumph with suavely-cut frock coat, white vest, snowy linen and glossy black tie.

"Charles," said Macdonald gaily, "you look like one of Solomon's wives: where do you get your clothes?"

Tupper smiled gravely. "In London, Sir John."

"Well, Ottawa is good enough for me, but, of course, I haven't got your figure. We've just been talking about Donald A.—or rather I have: John Henry didn't get a chance."

"You've a large subject, and nothing to worry about there: I've every reason to believe he'd like to get back into the fold, but he won't say so. That matter will take care of itself in due course."

"I agree with you." Macdonald regarded his chief supporter with affectionate interest: he banked on Tupper, who was a sort of comforting rock of dependence, a man of courage, with forceful ideas and no sharp angles, and as Minister of Railways carried much of the burden of his own creation. "Anything new from Montreal?"

"Not much, but I fancy they don't relish what's ahead of them on the north shore of Lake Superior; you'll remember what Macintyre said that day in London. A month or so ago, George Stephen hinted at a line from Callender to the Soo, then

round to Winnipeg by way of St. Paul, but I don't think he was altogether in earnest."

"I hope not, for his own sake! Let us look at that map."

Tupper unrolled a long blue-print that lay on the table, weighting down its corners with books, a duplicate of the print in the Montreal board-room: it showed the *terra incognita* north of Lake Superior like the base of an inverted triangle with its two sides converging southward to a point in the United States. To avoid that forbidding base—it was said to be of solid granite where no road of man might pass—one would go a long way round and through foreign territory.

Macdonald shook his head. "Charles, you agree that we can't have it, and won't, we've said so from the first. I fancy I know where the idea started."

"Hill?"

"Naturally—the Yankee member of the Board; but that road, every damned foot of it, stays in Canada no matter what the cost. I suppose you told Stephen?"

"I did, and very plainly."

"How did he take it?"

"Not in any way surprised: I fancy he was glad to have the thing straight from us."

"Didn't mention Hill, did he?"

"Not a word."

"It's curious, y'know, how things come round," said Macdonald, taking his stand again on the hearth rug. "There's Tyler over in England. Remember?"

"Yes, very distinctly," nodded Tupper, "you suggested that since he was head of the first railway in this country, he might reasonably build to the Pacific, and you promised to back him up; and he said—yes, I remember clearly—that he would consider it if we'd agree to what Hill wants to-day. It's the same old game, Sir John, and Hill, like Tyler, thinks we're too blind to see that he's trying to feed his own lines at our expense."

"Charles, do we look bigger fools than we are, or *vice versa*?"

"I'll leave that to Edward Blake to answer! He's now proclaiming that when our road is built it won't pay for axle grease."

"Van Horne is already hauling grain from Brandon to Winnipeg," said Pope, "and next year will take it down the lakes in his own ships. He intends to store it in elevators through the winter instead of sending round through St. Paul. Jim Hill won't like that."

Macdonald nodded. "Good—and Hugh Allan will get some of his own back by carting it to Liverpool, but it's summer traffic, not all the year round, which is what

we're aiming at. How do you feel on that point?"

"We've got a long way to go yet: the Grand Trunk is doing its best in London to wreck the whole project, and the Hudson's Bay Company is backing them up, though Donald A. is on the other side here. The Hudson's Bay Governors think we'll stimulate opposition, and spoil their fur trade."

"*Pro pelle cutem*," grinned the Premier. "Donald skinned me not long ago, and hung my hide out to dry for five long years; gentlemen, I felt chilly. Charles, what does all this suggest to you?"

"A good many things."

"Yes, but, first, isn't Jim Hill in the wrong place on that Board, after all? It's a weak point, and I'm not sure that we shouldn't raise it; perhaps I was too easy-going in London. Also he's got a lot of Canadian Pacific stock."

"Which, as it happens, is not in his own name," said Tupper, "but would a man like that cut his own throat?"

"It might pay him to lose a little blood if he could pick up more elsewhere. What's he doing now?"

"No one knows that but Jim Hill."

"Then why not suggest that he leave the Board? We're quite justified."

"I think not, Charles; people call me 'Old To-morrow'—you know the Blackfoot word for that—*Ape-naquis*, because I believe in the rectifying quality of time: well, I always have and will: and it's a common mistake not to give time a chance to function in its normal course. Hill, admittedly, is not now in the right place for us, but time will rectify that."

"Van Horne tells me it's quite possible the steel will reach the Rockies next year," said Pope suddenly.

"I hope so."

"Also I gather that Hill isn't over happy about that Selkirk Pass—he lent Rogers to Van Horne, and Rogers solved the biggest riddle in the west—so as it stands there's no room for a rival road between us and the boundary."

Macdonald, smiling, pitched his mind back, back to the seventies, when year after year he had sent parties to locate a line from the prairie foothills to the Pacific and close enough to the boundary to preclude men like Hill from building in between; when shaggy-bearded engineers plunged into the abyss of mountains, re-appearing in early winter with crammed notebooks telling of new ranges, rivers, lakes and peaks. By the Yellowhead Pass the line was feasible, but south of that the Selkirks were unconquerable: Palliser, the Englishman, said "no": Hector was dubious, and only Moberly, the Canadian, who had stared at the Selkirks from the banks of the

Columbia, ventured the opinion that at one point beside a snowy, heaven-soaring, three-cornered peak there was what looked like a gap. Macdonald had fastened on that when in Batt's Hotel he laid down his terms to the syndicate that shortly became the company. Find that pass they must.

As to Hill, perhaps the greatest railway builder in the world—Hill might not have it both ways.

The Lake Superior section. A granite wall rising vertically from an inland sea of the coldest water in the world: two hundred miles of these cliffs and behind them a starkly empty wilderness, known hardly to wandering Indians, with no trails, a *terra incognita* through which raced icy rivers from the north: a hard country of ill repute, but to keep the line all-red it must pass that way, and the merchant princes from Montreal had nodded gravely as they heard the terms in Dover Street while British hansoms jogged by outside.

Macdonald, noting, as he so often did, the calm resolution in Tupper's face, felt strengthened.

"Charles," he said, "if we're right in this matter, and on my soul I believe we are, the rest will take care of itself. As to Donald Smith, my feelings are admittedly mixed, but, thank God, I'm not vindictive. Agreed that Hill may try to force the Company into bankruptcy. Well, that means the Conservative party crashes too, and Canada slips back some twenty years. Now, against that I put Donald and George Stephen: if there's one thing they'd loathe, it's any association with bankruptcy; Donald would sooner be skinned alive, and the Bank of Montreal shareholders would certainly skin him. You may argue there's too much American money in the road, but up to a point short of control—and we can take care of that—I say the more the better. That money goes into Canadian soil and stays there. When the United States broke away from England, all the money they had was English: now it's American, and that will be repeated here. We're four million living next to forty million, and we've got to take their money." He broke off, smiling. "Why doesn't someone else say something?"

Tupper made a little gesture and shook his head, wondering how it might be possible to reconcile his chief with Donald Smith: without doubt these two strong men were constantly aware of each other, and it could not be otherwise. Smith claimed to have purged the Conservative Party in '73, but in this year of '82 Macdonald had hit back and brought about his defeat in Selkirk, his old constituency.

"Y'know," broke in the chief again, "I back Donald against Hill any day. He sold us the north-west and a peck of trouble for £300,000 and God knows how much

good land, and I respect him for that. I'm told that when he was running a trading-post in Labrador—as far away as old George Simpson could send him—he grew melons under glass—think of that, Charles, melons! And I don't know of another man who would have thought of a melon in that damned wilderness, let alone grow one. Some of my supporters are too sensitive to welcome him back to the fold just now, but he'll come, he'll come: his ambition is to sit once more on my right hand—Charles—and you know what a Scot will swallow to realize an ambition. I've done some swallowing myself.”

“Of course, he was never very friendly with Blake,” ruminated Tupper.

“Ah, the high-principled but virulent Edward, and my political hair shirt,” smiled the Premier. “No, they're temperamentally different, and frankly, quite apart from the Pacific affair, I never cared for Blake: he was for abandoning a definite agreement with British Columbia, to which this country is committed: he's no sense of humour, Charles; he's too mournful, though no doubt he's a better Christian than I am. Able—yes, a good speaker—m'm—perhaps—but rants too much to my taste, and timorous, too timorous for Canada. What's the Sioux name for Pile o' Bones, J.H.?”

“Wascana, isn't it?”

“Yes, Wascana, and lately Regina: Van Horne told me last year he was hauling buffalo bones from Wascana—with all respect to Her Majesty I believe we ought to stick to those primitive names—to grind up into fertilizer. It made me think of the bones of the Liberal party with Blake as one of the important vertebræ.”

“He's dead against us for all time.”

“No—not for all time—he'll come round when the last spike is driven, but to-day he makes the mistake of being vindictive, which doesn't strengthen a man with his own followers.”

“He would have liked to be in Mackenzie's place during those five years we were in the wilderness,” put in Tupper.

“Well, he couldn't have done worse, and is leading the beloved opposition now, but recently the premiership has been a Scots monopoly out here, and, by God, when he saw that the House was going to confirm that Dover Street bargain of ours, didn't he trot out a little Toronto syndicate of his own with not a railway man in it, and offer to build the road for less money? Why didn't that occur to him in the first place? No—no—Ontario reclines in the arms of the Grand Trunk, while our road is a Montreal-Ottawa job.”

“Mackenzie did the best he could,” said Pope thoughtfully, “but wasn't sure of his own party so started one bit of road here, another there, perhaps a few hundred miles in all, with their tails in the air, and I never really understood where he expected

to finish up. Now Van Horne has to string those bits together. As for Blake, he was really meant for the bar, not politics.”

Macdonald nodded, his smile deepening the lines that sloped towards the corners of his wide mouth. “Charles,” he asked abruptly, “how would you like to be High Commissioner where your clothes come from?”

“Eh?”

“It suggests itself to me. Alexander Galt is getting restless—I learned that months ago—but just then a change was inadvisable. Now, all things considered, I think you’re the man for us. We need more of a fighter than Galt to stand up to those Lombard Street buccaneers. Think it over.”

This coming out of the blue had a silencing effect, and Tupper gave no answer: it was surprising, quite unexpected, but in some ways not unwelcome. Privately he regarded himself as Macdonald’s natural successor in the leadership of the Conservative party, a position there was none seriously to dispute, but how long would one have to wait? Macdonald looked exceedingly well, and any thought of retirement was, obviously, far from his mind. Also it stood without doubt that, should the opposition of the Grand Trunk persist to the point of cutting off financial support from Lombard Street, the all-red line would shortly be in perilous case.

Macdonald’s mind had apparently moved on elsewhere, and he also was silent. In active public life he had made but the one grave mistake, did not now contemplate any more, and his brain, always agile, perceived the criss-cross of human currents that would pass unnoticed by most men. These he loved to untangle, to divert them towards desirable channels and use them to his purpose: he loved to grip the spokes of the wheel in his canny fingers, and was a great Britisher.

Presently he began to speak with undisguised feeling.

“I count on you two more than any others to strengthen me. With me you know what is at stake, and we must use all men and all agencies, for this road won’t be built by saints and archangels. At one time, as you both remember, I thought the Government might build it, but the political dangers were too great. We have critics and enemies enough as it is. The Company of Gentlemen Adventurers whose wings are being clipped: Jim Hill with his Yankee schemes: Tyler hitting us below the belt in London: Donald on the fence—though I fancy he feels the spikes and won’t stay there long: and, by the way, Charles, I stipulate that the next time he runs for parliament it will be as my personal supporter: our Irish Canadian opponent in Toronto. Then there’s Cartright, who frowned on Federation and would make a first-rate American citizen: Alec Mackenzie, a good fellow, hard worker and straight man, but never had the grip of a Premier and prefers canals to railways; and—and

another I've just thought of, J. H., who's that?"

"There are so many," murmured Pope. "Do you refer to a classical and literary personage?"

"In austere seclusion under the elms of the Grange! Goldwin Smith is bitter, gentlemen, bitter as acid, and pining for annexation by the United States—as though Canada wasn't good enough for any man who's fit to live in it: a disappointed man whose brain has turned in to eat away his own judgment. He writes good English, but doesn't understand Canadian. Not long ago he told me that the tide of Imperialism is ebbing fast, and the political bond with Great Britain must be severed. Well, all these we've got against us."

He paused with a faintly invitational note in his vibrant voice, glancing at them as though asking what their thoughts were in this matter, but they knew him too well to speak, he being caught up in one of the fine searching surveys to which he turned as though to exercise a mind skilled in argument. A practised tactician, and no altruist, he did what he believed to be for the good of Canada, things that he admitted were of doubtful morality. His intelligence perceived the strength and weakness of men. In a bilingual country, he had made friendship between French and English. On the platform, with his oriental nose, eyes of fire, and a lonesome curl on his forehead, with his penetration, jaunty manner and the oft-changing expression scarred by strange lines, there were none to surpass him: he loved a fight and glowed in contest, and to-night his manner held something that appeared to welcome whatever trial might threaten, however perilous nationally or politically.

"Well," he went on, "that against us, that group of little Canucks, jealous, fearful, digging pits, dismal prophets of doom and disaster, and on the other side that dream of ours, Charles, about two steel bands between two oceans. We've got Stephen, one of the best, an optimist if ever there was one: the Bank is in it up to the neck: Van Horne who, from all I hear, is several men rolled into one: there's Donald, and I'm counting a lot on Donald in spite of our personal coolness: Shaughnessy, who strikes me as the right man in the right place though I've only seen him once:—these men are with us, and it isn't so much a railway we're dealing with as the spirit of a young nation. It's make or break; we can't draw back, and by God we won't."

He broke off, his enthusiasm becoming overlaid with his usual suavity, then smiled and gave his head a characteristic toss.

"To conclude this evening, or rather this monologue, I'm sorry Disraeli isn't alive. Years ago I spent a wonderful day with him at Hughenden, you'll remember that, Charles, and we discussed the all-red line. He was whole-heartedly for it—thought it a sort of Suez Canal idea on dry land with British control. Now—well—you know

the rest, and Gladstone—well—I have no hopes there. To my mind he's a little Englander. I heard from Downing Street to-day, and while there's no opposition, he makes no suggestion of support," here Macdonald paused, smiling broadly. "Y'know when I was in England that first time, lots of people took me for Dizzy, but not a soul took him for me. Now, why was that? Also, John Henry, why do you suppose God Almighty put the Selkirks just where they are?"

Pope, glancing at the clock, disclaimed all knowledge of the intentions of the Almighty.

"Just to see if we Canucks could build a railroad through them. Well, good night, good night."

Outside in the gardens of Earnscliffe, two chilled drivers who had been stamping in new-fallen snow, roused themselves from torpor; there was the sound of sleigh bells and horses' feet in muffled thuds—then a dying jingle, silence. Macdonald stood for a moment deep in thought, stared at the great map, examined it with a curious expression, till, drawing the heavy curtain at the westerly window, he looked down at the Ottawa river. It flowed at his feet, its far edge already ringed with a skin of thin ice, beyond it a great whiteness of cleared land dotted with barns and steep-roofed French farmhouses. Behind this a blue-black belt lying like a shadow under the frosty stars, a belt of woodland, and farther still the whitened crowns of the Laurentians.

It was a vast view, perhaps forbidding to unaccustomed eyes, something without dimensions, suggesting oceans of land, continents of land on the other side. The river came from the north and west through dark forests of spruce and pine, hemlock and cedar, gathering volume, swollen by tributary cataracts, hurling itself over hissing rapids till here, a broad and placid stream, it slid majestically past the capital city of Canada to its marriage with the greater St. Lawrence at Montreal. Macdonald surveyed it silently. From the west and north it came, and there would be determined the gigantic issue to which he had brought the young country that trusted him so greatly. He had given hostages to fortune.

"Not easy," he murmured, "not easy."

ON a prairie rise above a bend in the Bow River, three mounted Indians, dressed in tanned skins with feathers in their hair, bridles loose on their horses' necks, stared eastward. The wind stirred the feathers and horses' tails, but the bronze faces were as though cast in metal and they did not speak. Behind them a white line of jagged peaks marked the tumbled range of the Rockies.

Far to the east something broke the level skyline so familiar to those dark unwinking eyes, a blur, tiny specks that moved and seemed to approach. For days they had been watching thus from Jumping Buffalo Hill, since there had come runners with news from the rising sun that white men, many white men, were journeying this way, tearing up the ground as they travelled, laying an iron trail over which marched the thing that ate stones, breathed fire, and spread terror in fur and feather across the plains. It was said, also, that this thing was headed for their own land, the land that had been set apart for those who once owned the whole of this grassy wilderness, and were now confined to a corner of the foothills past which the Bow River took its course from its birthplace in the mountains to the west.

As they watched there came borne on the wind a sound unlike any that had reached these wild ears before, whereat one of them raised his hand and they tore headlong across the prairie, plunging through sudden coulees, striding over long grassy rollers as a ship surmounts the ocean swells, till in the space of an hour they came to the river bank where a semicircle of conical teepees were ranged on sloping ground at a little elevation above the swiftly running stream. In front of the largest they slid to earth, and, entering, squatted at the feet of an elderly man, who, robed as a chief, sat smoking a soapstone pipe whose stem was the wing bone of the blue crane.

Crowfoot of the Blackfeet was then a man between sixty and seventy, his seamed face reflecting the wisdom and experience of the wilderness. He was sage and commanding. In many a sanguinary battle with Crees, Piegans and Assiniboines his valour and leadership were proven, while of recent years, musing by the fire and smoking his pipe, he had had visions of the coming of the white man and the approaching change in the story of his people. There was no fear in him, but not a little uncertainty; the old wild freedom was at an end, their world was shifting, another kind of world made itself felt, and in the evening of his life, still a pagan, still a sun worshipper, he greatly desired that the end should come without beholding further bloodshed. Now, looking into the angry eyes of the scouts, he heard the confirmation of his own fears.

“This thing,” they said, “is about to cross our land; on the earth trail already prepared the iron horse will make its thunder amongst our teepees and the place that was promised us will be ours no longer. Does the white man own everything under the skies?”

Crowfoot was troubled. The triangular teepee door had been folded back, and outside, seated on the grass, he could see a dozen other fighting men listening intently for what answer he would make. He knew their temper in this business. Over crooked knees lay their blankets, and underneath rested the short guns that used to spit death amongst the buffalo: but the buffalo that once trampled the plains had long since vanished, and now the hunters sat month after month in the sun longing for wild days that would never dawn again.

“There will for us be no more hunting,” went on the scouts, “and this thing that runs on its iron road will frighten all the game that remains. There are many other places it can go to, but the white man who has always taken everything and given little now desires what we have left.”

They ceased, waiting for his word, and a murmur ran through the crouching group at his teepee door.

Crowfoot made a gesture for silence: his manner conveyed dignity and power: he was an aristocrat, his ancient lineage expressed itself in the dark fire of his eye, the strong lines of his face, the proud carriage of his aquiline head. Furthermore, he was secretly assured that the coming of this thing was written in the stars—so said the Medicine Man the week previously when Poundmaker, his own adopted son, had ridden across from the east with the same news. It was strange about those white men. They had come first—perhaps only two or three at the very first—so his father’s father had told him—and gone on, and just when the prairie nomads thought that was the last of them, others had appeared, fearing no one, and again others, all prying about though seemingly doing nothing, making a writing in books when night came, not interested in trade or fur, but asking many questions about the country through interpreters, pulling a thin steel chain through the grass and sometimes looking straight at the sun through a tube with glass in it. This would be at midday when the sun shone hot and scorched the eyeballs like fire. It was great magic; and in his sad, old heart he knew that the strangers, of whom there seemed no end, were too wise and tricky and strong to be defeated.

“It is a matter for much thought,” said he, “to-morrow I will speak.”

The group melted away, sullenly submissive for the moment; but all that day the hunters in twos and threes lassoed their ponies and rode off under the hot August sun, halting at some prairie ridge to listen and stare fixedly at the strange thing now

but two miles away: it stood high in the air like two dead trees, tall, gaunt, and moved as they stared.

The tracklayers, who day after day all that summer had been nailing their double ribbon of steel to the flower-strewn prairie, were infused with the ardour of their toil: now they were something more than men, more than human units who worked for a day's pay, and when the sun went down night after night they wiped the salt sweat from their eyes and gazed back at twin converging strips swimming into the eastern horizon, those hundreds of tons of steel rails that would carry a thundering burden in days to come.

In a sort of frenzy they had laboured, following the narrow earthen embankment of rich and crumbling soil, while at their very heels clanked a train of flat cars pushed by the first locomotive that ever traversed this empty and undulating ocean of grass. On the first of them, the pioneer of all flats, stood a tall gaunt triangular contrivance, a combination of winch, derrick and windlass, with drums and double cables and steel grips that clawed back and ever farther back at the rails loaded on successive flats, seized them, dragged them forward, lifted them clear, laid them on the waiting ties where insistent men centred and spaced them: immediately there commenced the clanking music of spiking hammers driven by thews and backs and springing muscles of these invaders of the west. The spikes, plunging deep, gripped, held—another thirty feet of Canada's metal girdle was in place; and as the last hammer stroke went home in the instant came a grunt, a cough from the pushing engine, an eruption of smoke, an invisible driver leaning on a greasy elbow crooked his oily finger over the throttle, and the train moved forward another ten yards over the road it had laid but a moment before. This contrivance, clanking back at night to the nearest depot siding to replenish its load, carried in its own belly that on which it travelled, spewing it out, evacuating its own bowels under advancing wheels, invincible, animated by Promethean force, inspired by the unfaltering spirit of man, still farther banishing with every yard of rail the emptiness of the untrodden west. Now in the triumphal march there rose sharply against the setting sun a fairy-like confusion of snowy peaks; but always on the horizon flitted the tiny figures of Sioux, Blackfeet, Piegans and Crees, watching with long-distance hostile eyes this invasion of their ancient heritage.

Then came the morning when the track would invade Blackfoot ground, and as the skeleton derrick gripped and lifted the first pair of rails, in silence rose from the prairie grass the fighting men of Crowfoot, grim faces streaked with paint and short guns nestling in their armpits.

Ten car lengths back the driver leaned from his cab window and looked forward; the spiking gang, bare to the waist, rested muscular hands on the hafts of hammer handles, a pair of rails not yet clear of the front flat hung suspended, and in an instant the whole complex mechanism ceased to function. Rivers it had crossed, swamps where the track floated on a blanket of roots above unfathomed depths of slime, forests it had traversed, blackened wastes where bush fires had laid their hand of death, through granite hills it had burrowed triumphantly, and here under the rising sun on the warm breast of the prairie, with flowers spangling the waving grass, these men of a new world met those of the old, met the hard stare of flashing alien eyes, and the wedge point of the all-red line, urged forward by brains and money and courage of invisible armies, encountered a semicircle of blanketed pagans ready to die ere it progressed another foot.

From Brandon, more than six hundred miles to the east, they had laid the iron trail since spring smiled across the prairie, laid it with laughter and curses and a sort of unhuman frenzy that searched the body for its ultimate endurance, then demanded more. Caught up in a mounting lust for mileage, these strong-backed Crusaders, protagonists of the new doctrine of power and steel, set one day against the last: with ever-increasing ardour they mocked at weariness and greeted each rising sun determined that night should fall on yesterday's record smashed. Time and again they smashed it. Behind them in Montreal was Shaughnessy, alert, far-seeing, living at the end of a wire, spending millions and flinging westward rails from England, spikes from Pennsylvania, spruce ties from forests east of Winnipeg, lumber from Minnesota, supplies, food, doctors, cooks, carpenters, blacksmiths, engineers. There was no break in this flood; that which was wanted appeared in the appointed place at the appointed hour; and, animating all, there would descend from his car at the end of steel the burly figure of Van Horne with his black cigar, clothed in god-like authority, bluff, commanding, explosive, dominant, the electrical nucleus of the whole gigantic effort, the man of almost mythical powers, whose nod meant more than words, whose driving force found its emblem in every swinging hammer.

That the triumphant march should now be halted by a few painted redskins seemed ridiculous, and the foreman, laughing, lifted his hand. As he did so, the short-barrelled guns came level.

"Min-ots-chis! You shall place nothing here!"

It was curt, definite, final. These copper-faced men were of far more ancient lineage than the newcomers: in their tawny breasts the blood coursed proudly; stark memories were theirs of death and tribal feuds when the sudden war-whoop rang shrilly through many a coulée, when the dripping scalp was lifted high and screams of

a tortured enemy roused a bloodlust that drank deep, and even now was scarcely quenched. For how many wandering centuries had not death shared their pointed teepees, so why should they fear him now? And with all their wild souls they hated the thing that had come to eat up the land that, they were assured, had been set aside for them for ever.

The sun climbed up, but for the first time in that blazing summer the all-red line stood still.

Now the news of this business was brought to Crowfoot as he sat in his lodge pondering over many things, and his face darkened as he listened. He knew his fighting men as no white could know them, knew also that the prairie police were not far away in Calgary, and perceived that here was the making of great trouble.

Then, turning his mind in many directions, a great wisdom came to him.

Père Lacombe, clothed in cassock with the gold cross on his breast, sat reading the Word of God in the shack that served for his mission house in the days when the new settlement town of Calgary was born. Fifty-six years now since in the *paroisse* of St. Suplice he had first seen the light, and the greying hair and seamed lines of his noble face told the story of a life of labour for the love of man.

At times he would raise his bronzed head and glance out of a small window at a scene that seemed to change even as he watched. A few years previously it had been empty space, part of the Hudson's Bay Company great game preserve, but now the prairie was dotted with shacks like his own, some scattered at random like grain, others roughly in line, and between these were suggestions of streets with roads beginning to be discernible, rutted deep in the friable earth. Calgary was a wooden town beside the Bow River that here flowed deep between high clay banks, a boom town, one of those swiftly determined habitations that sprang up as though overnight, straddling haphazard across the anticipated route of the all-red line.

It pulsed with life, and into it and through it like bubbles spilled before an advancing wave were crowding the forerunners of an army of settlers, traders, speculators, mercantile scouts, Jew peddlers, mixed and conflicting nationalities—the whole polyglot tide one part of which is always mobile and restless, but that deposits from its moving mass nevertheless certain stable and permanent elements that abide, make their mark and become incorporated, much as the moving glacier leaves in its wake scarred boulders and tumbled moraines to show where once it passed. Until a few months ago, Calgary was but an outpost for the Mounted Police, a rendezvous for ranchers, but to-day from his window the black-robed *voyageur* saw, as he had seen in Winnipeg not long before, the birthplace of a city.

The human stream was widening, deepening, transforming this wilderness where

of late marched the buffalo herds. In high-wheeled, canvas-topped Red River carts they came, spreading as the rising tide spreads, heralding the iron horse now not far away: north, west, and south they trickled, the red eyes of their camp fires of buffalo bones pricking into the night, north into the Red Deer and Medicine country, west over the suave slopes of the hills, southward into the flat lands that lie between the Bow and the Belly, avid for the riches of a virgin soil, seizing tenure and squatting where they chose, while in Calgary itself the gamble in land ran high, and fantastic prices were paid as soon as asked. There was no end to this tide, and Lacombe felt thankful that his friends the Blackfeet a little to the east, Sarcees and Stonies to the west, were safely on Government reserves that no speculator could filch from them.

About to turn again to the well-thumbed Bible, he saw galloping towards him a young Blackfoot hunter on a fast horse.

One hour later the Oblate was urging a light cart over the prairie, lashing his team to top speed while behind him jolted two hundredweight each of tea, sugar, and tobacco, hastily commandeered from the Hudson's Bay stores. Beside him cantered the hunter. Knowing the manner of man with whom he had to deal, Lacombe prayed that he might arrive before blood be shed, and laid the rolling miles behind him: past Carcase Hill and the Drifting Sand Hills where the Bow flows through thickly wooded bottoms, sparing nor lash nor beast he drove like the wind till, topping a rise, he drew a breath of thankfulness when Crowfoot perceiving him from a distance, lifted his right hand. The track-layers were sullenly restive, but across the line still stood as they had stood since sunrise, the fighting men with ready weapons.

A hurried word there, a petition to Van Horne's men for a little more patience and that they remain where they were, then the weary Oblate turned to Crowfoot:

"You did well to send for me: now call the tribe that we may hold council together."

At this the word went forth, and with these two in the midst, the fighting men gathered under the hot August sun, squatting silent on the grass, while behind them squaws and children stood at the teepees, waiting that which should befall. Every male adult Blackfoot was in that motionless circle, beady eyes unwinking, brown fingers gripping what lay under the blankets over their knees: close by rose the gaunt arms of the track-laying machine, loaded flats and panting engine, and the lounging whites watched, half curious, half insolent. No record would be made that day—they knew this much—but it was beyond their understanding that the tall bareheaded priest in the stained cassock stood between them and bloodshed.

Now Crowfoot lifted his six feet of aged manhood and spoke to his people:

"It is well that you have waited to hear one whose tongue is not crooked, and

here is *Arsous-kitsi-rarpi*, the Man of Good Heart, of whom you know, to tell you more of this affair. He is our friend, and will give us truth. It is now twenty-five summers since first the news of him came to us in the year of the great sickness, and soon afterwards he himself followed the word, and came himself. That was in the days when there was war between us and the Crees, and when he arrived he told us that on the way he had passed hanging from trees and without hands or feet the bodies of our warriors who were killed by the Crees.

“In the time of the great sickness he cared for us, also doing the same for the Crees and Piegans and Bloods, for it is true that where the sun shines this Man of Good Heart has no enemies, and of his own sickness when it came he thought not at all.

“With us he has hunted the buffalo, nor was there any fear in him when he journeyed north with our people led by Natous. It was that winter in the night when the Assiniboinés and Crees fell upon us not knowing that this Man of Good Heart was with us, and in the middle of the fight, he, having no gun, came forth and walked between them and us, calling out that the fighting should cease. Then he himself being struck by a bullet fell down, whereat our braves called to the Assiniboinés what they had done in wounding their Blackrobe, and hearing this the fighting did cease.

“I have said that he is friend to all the prairie dwellers, and Sweet Grass, Chief of the Crees, will tell you the same thing. He was a small man of no stature, shamed by reason of his smallness and taunted by his people, whereupon he rode south and alone to the Blackfoot country, returning presently with the scalp of a Blackfoot councillor and forty ponies, and a bunch of sweet grass dipped in Blackfoot blood, whereby the name was given; but not many moons after that when he had talk with the Man of Good Heart, the sign of the strange God was made on his forehead, and then came peace between us and the Crees.

“Listen, therefore, to what the Blackrobe shall say, for his heart is open to us all. I have spoken.”

A murmur ran round the squatting circle, while every eye turned to Lacombe, and because he knew them he had already arranged certain things with the squaws who now came forward with sugar, tobacco and kettles of tea. In this fashion he first ‘opened his mouth’ with such gifts as experience had taught him were most acceptable, and not until a hundred pipes were lit did he begin to speak.

“Many years have passed over me since first I came from the east to labour amongst you, and there is much that I could say, but many words are a weariness, and now I would tell you of the white men who are laying the iron road. They have come from the great lakes of sweet water, and the road comes with them, and far in

the east I was with them two summers ago, healing their sickness and burying their dead as I have buried yours. They are not enemies of the Blackfeet, and behind them are following more white men like flocks of the grey goose that cannot be numbered. As a river that flows toward the setting sun they will come, nor is there anything that will stop them. As for this land of yours, it is necessary that some very little of it be used for the iron road, but I, *Arsous-kitsi-rarpi*, speak with a straight tongue and promise that other land will be given in its place, and before many moons you yourselves will be travelling on this road very swiftly, for it will serve you as well as the whites. The truth I now tell you, and if there is in your hearts anything that before this I have said that is false, this is the time to call it to mind. I myself will write to the Chief of all white Chiefs in the east that you shall be given more land than is now taken. But first let the iron road proceed in peace. I have spoken.”

With this he seated himself beside Crowfoot, and a deep-throated murmur ran round the ring of fighting men. The tea was warm and sweet in their bellies, the white man’s tobacco rose as incense, the tall Blackrobe whose words they heard was one who had always given everything, asking nothing, and they knew that truth lay under his tongue. Then while one might hold his breath there was silence till the oldest warrior rose to his feet, and, masking his short gun with a bright yellow blanket, walked majestically to his teepee.

So came the end of the last stand the Indian was destined to make against the coming of the white man’s road. In ten minutes Lacombe and Crowfoot sat alone on the grass. The Oblate waved his arm to the track-layers; there came a whine from the gaunt machine, a pair of rails lifted, dropped and were swiftly centred, the spikers’ hammers swung up, and there began the sharp ringing clamour of steel on iron.

The all-red line had come to life again, and thrust on toward the Rockies.

ONE hundred and fifty miles west of Blackfoot crossing Big John stood watching a jump drill in a side cut on Big Hill. This piece of hexagonal steel was twenty feet long with a chisel-shaped point, and attached by rope at its upper end to a spring pole so that when jerked sharply downward the chisel struck savagely at the bottom of a hole now some ten feet deep. The diameter of the hole was perhaps an inch and a half, and at each plunging stroke the spring pole snatched back the steel for its next blow. Periodically a little water was poured in, and the hole cleaned of sludge much as one cleans the barrel of a rifle. This contrivance, evolved in a primitive fashion, was a labour saver, and used as often as the depth of the required hole made it desirable.

John nodded approvingly, and moved on to the next gang, but his gaze roved as he went, for from this point the eye could travel an immense distance. To the east where the right-of-way had been recently cut, and felled timber still smouldered, the air was hazy in the direction of the Great Divide, where the all-red line straddled the height of land between prairie country and the Columbia, the Kicking Horse Pass marking the division between rivers tributary to the Arctic Ocean on one side and the Pacific on the other. It was the backbone of the Rockies.

Northward across blue gulfs of air lay ranges that built a gateway to the Yoho Valley, cloud-capped sentinels on guard, unmapped and unexplored; while below, far, far below in a wide sandy bottom to which the line must now descend, lay the Kicking Horse River after its plunge from the Great Divide.

Looking into this abyss, it appeared incredible that the rails could ever reach those level stretches, and so it came that the descent of Big Hill afforded an extraordinary picture, for thither the engineers had staked the route. There could be no straight track laid, but a succession of looping curves clinging to giddy slopes, each foot of them achieving a fraction of descent, doubling back on each other, twisting, writhing in serpentine convolutions with switchbacks where no curve was possible, clawing for safe foothold, poised over depths where the Kicking Horse laughed in silver foam and ranks of tall spruce trees stood up like lilliputian saplings.

John had reached the Rockies in the course of a long pilgrimage, following the steel as far as Onderdonk had laid it, then up the Fraser to Lytton, and so along the right-of-way to Kamloops, thence following Rogers over the Eagle Pass to the Columbia. Here he waited until he was rafted across by some Indians, and tackled Rogers' Pass where there was no road but a blazed trail through the inferno of the upper Illecillewaet. It was absurd to think that a railway could ever pass here, but

there were the blazes: standing beside one he could see the next perhaps a hundred feet ahead, a white scar on a dark brown bole—a fresh wound from the hand of man, and they beckoned him on with hypnotic power. ‘Follow us,’ they said, and John followed, until in the eastern distance he caught the boom and rattle of blasting where Big Hill looked down on the Kicking Horse Valley.

It seemed that he was pursuing the outline of a monstrous, endless, deathless snake. At points the right-of-way had not been cleared, and here he walked through thick bush, and the snake seemed to have died, but topping the next rise he could trace it by scars on the mountain flanks and smoke in timbered areas, dismembered sections that stretched far out of sight. It persisted, it struggled, it could not die, and by insensible degrees his mind began to conceive a vague picture of some power behind it all, so that presently he would have been shocked had it really come to an end.

As he travelled, he slept in camps where night found him, hearing talk of men who till now had been almost mythical, of Van Horne and Rogers and Holt, the big contractor on Big Hill, and Dan Mann, another contractor who could pick up any stranger he met and hold him at arm’s length, feet off the ground. There was talk too by other men speeding westward ahead of the steel, looking for work in rock and earth, or to take out ties and timber. There was whisky along the line, but, strangely, he found no taste for it, nor did he hanker for cards, being too interested otherwise. When his money ran out he worked for a few weeks, then took to the right of-way again as though something was calling him. No one knew or cared anything about Yale in this part of the world: it seemed a long way off, and to John only two figures stood out at all sharply from the past—the figures of two women. And he had sent no letter to Graveyard.

He assumed, and rightly, that Graveyard had the money ready, but against this, and with a novel urge of self-respect, he weighed the fact that his patch of gravel on Sawmill Bar was worth practically nothing, and claims were going begging on the Lower Fraser. Then why—the puzzle had been in his head since he left Yale—why should Molly want to get rid of him? Viewed at long range, and still retaining that strangely mixed impression she created at the very last, he entertained a lurking resentment: he was obliged, but he objected; now he knew that the right thing had been done, but squirmed at the fact that it was under pressure from a woman. She could keep her money.

So different the other woman—the respectable one. Now he felt as though he had been sick, and wandered, and in lucid moments had a glimpse of the only thing of its kind in his part of the world, real in its own way, but certainly not for him. This

other woman had secrets not to be shared by those like himself, she would move about and live with her own sort, not his; she had pluck; she called him yellow, and, as he at last began to see, by God! he had been yellow.

The truth was, though he could not apprehend it, he had journeyed out of his old useless rut into a new sphere of influence. Divorced from all he had hitherto known and seen, he now yielded insensibly to that primitive pressure of the wilderness which turns the mind of man in upon itself in search of something suspected to be there but not yet disclosed, and he was about to evidence the fact that while man makes things, it is equally certain that things may make men. Not yet was he made: there remained still too much of the old casual self for that, but he had a sense of release, an instinct not before uncovered, and the stirrings of that self-awareness which is the precursor of action. Big John was of the raw material from which the all-red line was destined to fashion many into complete manhood: no small affair of trade and profit could do this, for it took nothing less than the stand-up battle between humanity and the untamed forces of nature.

So what with this, and the curious effect of following the snake that could not die, and encountering so many who knew and had seen so much more than himself, he acquired a sort of humility, out of which grew the desire to have something to do with what must be certainly the biggest thing in the world. People on the coast had been dubious and satirical as to the line ever being finished. One knew better now.

It was in such a spirit, chastened, curious, with the germ of ambition exuding its first sprout, that he stood one day on a shoulder of Big Hill, and heard a deep voice at his elbow. Turning, he saw a man broader, heavier, though not so tall as himself, with a black beard and slumbrous dark eyes; he had a vast chest and heavy arms.

"Looking for a job, young fellow?"

Big John, perceiving a note of authority, gave a nod.

"Where do you come from?"

"Yale."

"That end, eh? Tough going?"

"Some of it."

"Name?"

"John Hickey."

"Swing a hammer?"

"Yes, I can swing a hammer."

"Two dollars a day and board: two fifty and board yourself."

"That's all right," said John.

"Go over to the clerk and get a hammer: tell him I said so."

“Who said so?”

“Dan Mann.”

“Where’s your camp?”

“Half a mile east, keep going.”

John nodded and kept going till the right-of-way widened, and he came upon a group of log buildings, some with canvas roofs, the temporary habitations of five hundred men: there was Mann’s office, the storehouse, the cook camp with its log annexe for supplies and fresh beef. Through the middle ran the tote road, a one-way semblance of a road, westward before noon and eastward only till midnight, a sort of trail twisting between great boulders, full of pot-holes and loose rock over which straining horses tugged their creaking loads. Here every few yards one saw the wrecks of Bain wagons reduced to fragments after a few hours of useful work and still glistening with bright red factory paint. Dotted about were small shacks of ‘blanket stiffs’ or labourers who boarded and lodged themselves; while radiating from the cook camp, the focal centre, were crooked paths leading to shebeens of whisky peddlers who kept a little way back, nestling in the big timber.

The sleeping camps were marquees with hewn log floors and four-foot log walls, a box stove in the centre, and in the canvas roof a tin plate where the pipe ran through and was guyed with wire to adjoining trees. Ropes on which clothes were hung to dry ran from side to side: log bunks with mattresses stuffed with straw rose in tiers against the walls, the atmosphere was charged with sweat and strong tobacco.

This construction camp, Dan Mann’s headquarters, lay a few miles to the west of Holt City on the head waters of the Bow River, where the steel had now arrived and to which cattle were brought by rail for killing. Holt City was important, being where the money came to from the east: here men assembled to meet the pay car, and incidentally found that on which to spend their earnings: three hotels, a dance hall with concomitant variations, saloons, poker, faro, three card monte, with vendors of home-manufactured liquors housed in log-roofed shacks at convenient though secluded points. There was a police station, a local gaol, a post-office, a small hospital and, most notably, the end of a two thousand mile copper wire whose other terminus was in Montreal.

Big John swung a hammer for a month, when Dan, whose eye had been on him from the start, put a sudden question.

“Ever handle a gang, Hickey?”

“No.”

“Want to?”

John slid his horny fingers along the hammer haft and grinned. "Yes, I guess so. Where?"

Mann pointed to a naked ridge of rock across which ran a line of stakes, each standing in its little pyramid of stones.

"That next cut: it's about thirty feet in the middle and there's two thousand yards of it; sidehill work so you can't go far wrong. Five dollars a day and board. I'll give you twenty Swedes: they're all right. Start on Monday."

He swung off, dark, dominant, his big shoulders a shade forward, while John stood looking after him with an odd sensation: he liked working for Mann, because of Mann it was said that he could do anything he called on anyone else for, and do it better. There were stories about his strength and courage. He had begun life with an axe in his hands, earning his first money by cutting ties in the tamarac swamps of southern Manitoba: that winter the camp had run out of grub, and Mann waded all night through deep snow with two hundred-weight of flour and a side of pork on his broad back. Thence by sheer physical strength, pertinacity, the inability to recognize defeat and a notable understanding of handling men difficult to handle, he had risen steadily till now, under Holt, the chief contractor in the Rockies, his prestige and reputation for fair dealing stood high. He believed that big hearts and spirits were apt to be found in big bodies, and had taken to John Hickey from the first.

John felt faintly surprised, but in no way excited: this sort of thing was happening all round him; it seemed natural now, so he went on with his striking, delivering long rythmical blows that carried all the power of arms, back and belly till the man holding the steel straightened a crooked thumb, which meant that the hole needed cleaning.

"Not much more of this for you, eh?" said he, working the swab up and down with a wet sucking noise.

"No, I guess not."

"There's one thing about it, though."

"What's that?"

"Ever been with Dan before you came here?"

"No."

"Well, he's hell on a foreman drinking: you drink and get caught at it, and he'll fire you quick as lightning: he's like that. Poker, too. Got to choose your company a bit now, though it's none of my business."

"That'll be all right," said John. "I've quit for good."

"You're getting it straight, anyway, he was laying out another foreman last month, and you should ha' heard him." He paused, jerking out his swabstick, spattering the rocks with grey-white sludge, "But you make good with Dan an' you'll make good

all round. All right—she's clean."

John, faintly amused, began striking again. Cards and women! He hadn't played cards or spoken to a woman for eight months, and didn't want to—except one who he thought might now be interested, having told him that he'd never give orders till he learned to take them. She was right there. A hundred and twenty-five dollars a month! Four months of that, and he'd ask Dan Mann for a sub-contract, also write to Molly and tell her to keep her money and the claim as well; then she would certainly tell Mary, and Mary might feel like writing. At this, for the second time in his life, he had a twinge of loneliness.

At the end of the week he put forty dollars in his pocket and tramped the tote road to Holt City, and it was while he watched doomed steers being driven out of box-cars that had brought them up from Calgary that he caught a cool and remembered voice in conversation close by.

"Yes, sir, the store is clean out of staples."

"Which don't sound to me like Holt's way of doing business," said another man huskily.

"It's a fact all the same: there's no poker chips, loaded dice or cards to be had in camp: kind of short-sighted, I call it."

John, turning with a laugh, put out his hand.

"Hullo, Kelly, what brought you here?"

Kelly the Rake looked round with mild surprise: he was dressed exactly as in Yale, with the same care, the same slightly sacerdotal effect, and appeared as mournful as ever. Beside him stood a large man of sloping shoulders and nondescript attire.

"Hullo, John! By the Great Horned Spoon, what brought you here? Steve—darned if I know your other name—meet Mr. Hickey of Yale."

"Howdy?" said the stranger in a strangled and peculiar tone.

"Just to set you right pronto," explained The Rake, "he's called Whispering Steve round here; sort of lost his voice whacking bulls up hill."

"Pleased to meet you," replied John nodding.

"How did you strike Holt City, anyway?" inquired the gambler, already noting a slight difference in the manner of this former acquaintance; it was interesting, and to-day young Hickey didn't look like a man with his hand out for a loan.

"I walked."

"Is—that—so! Well, you always got about kind of easy."

“And you?”

“Not hankering for that kind of exercise, I went down to Sacramento, then Spokane, then up the Kootenay to the Flats and down the Columbia in a scow, I made expenses on the way. How’s things on the Fraser?”

“I haven’t been there for nearly a year: when did you leave?”

“Three months ago; ’twas getting sort of quiet with Onderdonk’s pay office moved away up to Lytton: Yale isn’t what she was, not in any sense. I hadn’t noticed you round for quite a while, but—well you never can tell, so I didn’t ask questions. Working round here?”

“I’ve a job as foreman on Big Hill.”

The Rake’s eyes rounded, he gave his sleek thigh a resounding slap.

“Well, well! I’m certainly glad to hear that, but kind of surprised, too. You see,” he continued turning to Whispering Steve, who seemed entirely unimpressed, “Mr. Hickey wasn’t interested in anything but gold down in Yale: he had one of the best claims on the river, and I reckoned he’d sit right alongside it for the rest of his life. Yes, sir, time and time again I’ve seen him take a pan himself and go straight down and wash out gold so you could see it. You’ve a fine job?”

“It’s all right: I’ll make good.”

The Rake, taking a large red handkerchief from his inside breast pocket, brushed away a cloud of flies.

“I’ve an idea we’ve both finished with Yale for a while.”

“How was your business?” inquired John casually.

“Fair, and hardly that: the place sort of lost spirit when the end of steel got well up river, then some quiet-looking folks moved in to start farming, and when a fellow shows up with a plough, I don’t get any chance to speak of. He simply ain’t attracted.”

“Any gravel washing going on?” John’s tones were a shade wistful.

“Not what you’d notice except for the Chinks, and I don’t play fan-tan; it’s outside my line.”

“*Skuzzy* still afloat?”

“Sure, and saving Onderdonk a pile of money: I’ll tell you about her some day, Steve; John, there’s another friend of yours in Holt City.”

“Who’s that?”

“Bulldog: he kind of limps a little, and Doc Hanington down at Yale told him he’d go on limping till he passed in his checks. Mr. Hickey”—here he made a gesture of polite explanation—“had a little disagreement with Bulldog which ain’t precisely forgotten.”

"Is—that—so!" The voice was a deep throaty whisper of surprising penetration, the hollow echo of stentorian tones now lost for ever, and the speaker regarded John with closer attention. "There ain't any scrapping you'd notice round here, and practically no shooting—that's the police."

"Mounties," contributed The Rake, "they're all right, too, but sort of up a tree as regards the liquor trade. Way over in Ottawa they allow there's none to be sold in the railway belt, that's ten miles on each side the track, while down in Victoria they hand you a permit and say go right to it and we'll see you through. Kind of interesting, ain't it? Know anyone round here?"

"No."

"Have a drink?"

"Thanks," said John, flushing a little, "but I've quit on that."

The Rake, to do him full justice, did not quiver an eyelid.

"Well, I was never partial to it myself, it didn't help business; but there's a good line of sarsaparilla in Holt City and I sort of favour that. Come on, Steve, it's my shout, and I'd like you to get better acquainted with Mr. Hickey."

They strolled eastward over the newly-graded embankment. Nearby, a siding was being built in earth, and scrapers were at work, great open steel scoops with sharp, flat mouths drawn by two horses: behind projected long, stout handles so that the mouth could be tilted and bite into the soil, when, full to the muzzle, they were dragged up and tipped on the grade. It was cheap work, but very little of it availed in that rocky region, and the teamsters were largely Irish.

In rock work one saw Scandinavians, big flaxen-haired men with pale blue eyes and a golden down on their arms: and darker-complexioned Finns, short, with black eyes and Mongolian cast of face: close by swarmed Italians, recruited in Naples or drawn from the Northern Pacific now about completed: these worked in droves under the management of their elected padrones, herding together to the exclusion of other nationalities. Everywhere one observed this racial selection and caught from each group the chatter of its own particular tongue.

From east and west sounded the thud of blasting, while in tall spruce groves on either side the right of way there was a continuous flash of axes, and timber came toppling for ties and trestle work. A little farther back, but still close enough to be easily reached with a lantern after dark, liquor was being brewed from a minimum of essential oils and a maximum of water. Coming along the embankment, a policeman in bright scarlet tunic, on a glossy horse with creaking leather and jingle of steel, made a spot of colour against the background of greenery, and John regarded him with interest.

"Sent up here from the prairie country," explained The Rake, pleased to be cicerone to a newcomer, "but, hell! they haven't much to do: can't confiscate the liquor unless it's sold over a bar, and who needs a bar? I'm kind of sorry for 'em. Nice fellows, and sort of tony with those spurs and red jackets: they give Holt City some class."

John, contrasting this with the remembered figure of Jack Kirkup, nodded agreement, and was presently piloted into the Holt City Hotel where with considerable formality he was introduced to the twin proprietors. These persons of distinction were exceedingly alike.

"John, shake with Coldwater Jimmy an' Hotwater George: gents, Mr. Hickey of Yale, and just arrived."

John grasped the extended hands, trying not to look mystified, whereat his guide gave a mournful smile.

"Might as well explain, it's on account of a difference of opinion how whisky should be drunk: it's the best way to tell them apart. What's yours, Steve?"

"I'm taking the usual," croaked his friend.

"Mr. Hickey?"

"I'll—I'll—sarsaparilla, I guess."

"Same here, Jimmy."

Coldwater, after a look of profound compassion, vanished, and shortly produced the required beverages: sarsaparilla, into which one squirted charged water, was a dun-coloured syrup with a sharp earthy taste, and The Rake, sipping it in an abstracted fashion, studied his guest with rising curiosity. What did it all mean?

John, agate-blue eyes roving, began to feel that he was sharing in a larger life: those rails along the banks of the Bow a hundred feet from where he sat had come across the prairie from England, but the ones he left on the Fraser were waterborne round the Horn, and this gave him a vague conception of some outside force to which distance meant nothing, a force that thrust out long, powerful arms brandishing steel rails, attacking this formidable problem from two ends that were slowly and irresistibly approaching each other, so that if one remained in the junction spot, wherever that came, one would inevitably be caught between two steel snouts advancing from opposite sides of the continent.

Also he was acquiring ideas of a world more complicated yet more organized than any he had known before. The Ross private car, for instance. He had only seen one other in his life, Onderdonk's, when it brought the Governor-General and his Princess from Port Emory to Yale, where they were given two nuggets by old Ned Stout's two daughters, Maggie and Nellie, of seven and nine, amid general applause.

Then the car went on through Big Tunnel to the end of steel twenty miles farther upriver and waited to bring the Governor back after he drove over the Cariboo Road by stage. But this car in which Ross travelled came two thousand miles from Montreal, so the talk one heard about Donk's section ending in the air was all nonsense. He felt like going back to Yale and telling them. Yet it was hard to imagine a train ever rolling down that hell hole on the east branch of the Illecillewaet, through devil's club and fallen timber and across the track of thundering avalanches.

"How long will your job last, John?"

"Maybe a month, maybe more."

"And then?"

"I'm after a sub-contract."

The Rake signified his approval, and at this point Whispering Steve, perceiving no further hospitality in prospect, excused himself.

"Well, so long, gents: see you later."

"Sort of hard on Steve, ain't it?" confided his host, "with his vocabulary all busted to hell, he ain't got no more control over mules: them vocal chords of his just laid down and quit. Say, John it ain't my business, but Bulldog is sort of laying for you."

"I guess I can take care of myself, Kelly."

"Maybe you can, but talking confidential, I'd keep your eye peeled. He's a bad hombre, a tin-horn gambler. I told him in Yale he hadn't no right to skin a fellow like you that's got no card sense in his system, let alone the fact that there were plenty of others ready and more suitable, but anyway a couple of his ribs as well as a shin bone got all splintered, and perhaps that's hard to forget: he sort of leaks air when he takes a long breath. More sarsaparilla?"

"Thanks, I guess not."

"Tastes something like a visit to the old folks at home, and you've got to get broke in to it, eh? At the same time, and getting back to Bulldog, we ain't exactly cutting each other's throats in Holt City. You knew us on the coast, so maybe there's no need to explain, but if you see us sitting in the same game as partners, well, business is business right here in the Rockies, and there's no call to look surprised. I thought I'd better put you wise right away. Fact is," he concluded affably, "me and him reckoned we might as well act friendly while there's anything to be picked up, so we're a sort of syndicate in private, and none too thick in public, but that's just business, and I don't fancy him any more for it. Understand?"

"Sure, Kelly, that's all right."

The Rake sent him a shrewd, kindly glance. Just one big kid, he thought, but he

liked John, and with characteristic generosity perceived in this young giant the making of a more valuable man than himself. He would never have any card sense, or much humour, but now seemed to have lifted himself by his own suspenders out of a bog, which in itself was interesting, and there was something about his large simplicity that the gambler found attractive. The Rake, being entirely satisfied with his own professional activities and the human variations they provided, did not in any way compare John with himself; they were too different for that, but without the least touch of jealousy he considered John worth saving, and wanted him to move on and up.

“Orphan both ways, aren’t you?” he asked thoughtfully.

John, faintly surprised, admitted this. “My father was killed in the Cariboo when I was a kid, and I can’t remember my mother: she lit out for Mexico with a Dane.”

“Too darned bad,” murmured The Rake. “Now, you look here! It seems you’ve started something worth following, so I’d let the cards alone: certainly it’s none of my business, but you’re one of the kind that’s born to be skinned every time you sit in, so——” He broke off on an apologetic note and looked a little abashed. “You get me?”

John gave a laugh, but the other man was some fifteen years the elder, and a person of experience.

“That’s all right, Kelly, that’s all right, and I’ve been skinned enough: I’ve quit for good.”

“Well, stick to that an’ some day you’ll be riding round in a private car like Holt’s: you see if you don’t. Working for Dan Mann, you said?”

“Yes.”

“Stick to him and you’ll wear diamonds: he’s a driver, they tell me, but square, and he’ll see you through.” He paused, and just then John heard a woman laugh in the next room, a rich laugh, deep chested and full, a contagious laugh with colour in it. He pricked up his ears, for not since he left Yale had he spoken to a woman. He looked curiously at his friend.

“That’s Nell Regan, Irish Nell, she kind of housekeeps and runs this joint for Jimmy and George. Sit right where you are.”

He went out, and presently the woman came in alone, smiling as though at something she had just heard, and at sight of her John felt a little thrill. She was about middle height, with dark, blue-black Irish eyes, heavy lidded, a bright natural colour in her cheeks, dark hair with the same blue-black tinge and a round neck, very strong and white. She looked full of urgent life. Her arms, quite bare, tapered from sturdy shoulders to small, square wrists and well-shaped hands: she had a healthy

freckled skin, tilted nose, and wore a tight-fitting bodice. She was, perhaps, thirty-five. Taking the chair beside John, she sent him one swift glance.

"Hullo," she said, "you look lonely."

John, realizing of a sudden that he was lonely, laughed at her. "Maybe I am. Have a drink?"

"No, I'm off it now, but you can make me a cigarette."

He nodded, and she watched him closely, responding to the queer attraction he roused in so many of her sex, an instinct partly maternal, but one that awakened the body as well: women were prone to feel about him first that they would like to have a son in his mould, but since he was some other woman's son—well. . . . He sat looking at her sideways, voiceless for a moment, hunting for something to say, still aware of the thrill and reacting to it.

"Stranger in Holt City, Kelly tells me?"

"Yes, I'm just here."

"Come from the west, don't you?"

"Did Kelly tell you that?"

"No, he didn't."

"How do you know?" He was wondering just what Kelly had said.

"Anyone could tell," she answered hastily: "they're different there. I'm from St. Paul."

That sounded metropolitan, and John was impressed. "What are you doing here?" He knew, but wanted her to say it.

"Helping Coldwater an' Hotwater round the hotel: you need a woman for that."

"Like it?"

"Might be worse: where are you working?"

"Foreman in a rock-cut ten miles west of here on Big Hill, at a hundred and twenty-five a month," said he with satisfaction.

She seemed unimpressed and kept watching him through a little cloud of smoke in a way he found puzzling, while between them spread an atmosphere that both silently recognized and accepted, though neither was quite ready to make the next move.

"They call me Irish Nell," she jerked out, "and the rest don't matter."

"I'm John Hickey."

"You live on the job?"

"Yes, I'm supposed to."

"Well, it's better than Holt City when you've got a job. Much liquor up there?"

"There's enough, but I don't touch it."

"Since when?" she asked frankly.

"About a year ago."

Setting her heel on the cigarette, she laughed at him.

"I've sworn off, too, but just for a while; I can't keep it up like this—maybe a week or so—but no year. Life's too short round here, and there's not much else in a place like this. Your folks live in Yale?"

"I haven't any folks," said he.

"Well, I guess I'm the same: that is I've got some in St. Paul, but don't see them any more. I'm not kicking; it's too late for that, but it's queer about one's folks: when you're with them a while you get tired of 'em, but after you've cleared out for good, they seem—well—different and not so bad after all, and that makes you kind of sorry and lonely. But what's the use?"

John agreed that he, too, got damned lonely, and felt increasingly thankful for having discovered another human being who suffered from the same complaint; thus he penetrated a little farther into the vague space that lay between them, while she advanced from the other side so that presently they met and touched. It was good, he thought, to have made this mutual admission, and all the time he was aware of her nearness and darkly bright eyes that caught his own and held them for a moment then were calmly diverted, not hastily, but as though they had collected something more to think about: so he made no movement at all, but sat there with a perceptible lump in his throat, twisting his empty glass and wondering what to say next.

There was a commotion in the next room, and someone called "Nell! Nell!"

"I guess we might meet again," said she slowly.

"I guess we ought to. When?"

"The tote road is pretty bad, so you'd better wait till next Sunday—not to-morrow—next Sunday."

Eight days! It seemed a long way off: too long.

"I don't mind the road: any evening'll do for me."

"I'm—I'm busy to-morrow; the pay car'll be along any time. No—that Sunday, you come then in the afternoon: I'll be free till supper, and—and maybe later."

"Where'll I find you?"

"I'll walk up the road about three o'clock—I'll start from here at three."

"It's tough going for a woman," said he.

"Depends on the woman, don't it?"

She said this at the door with an odd backward glance that he could not read; not the ordinary invitational glance, but much deeper, with something behind it as though there were in her mind things about him that for the present she meant to

keep to herself. Then a quick nod that sent a rippling wave through her hair, and a smile.

“I guess you’re all right, John Hickey. So long.”

There she left him, and knowing better than to follow, he sat brooding, frowning a smooth brow, yielding to a sensation not new, yet different in a sense from any he had known before. Here, he decided, was the most natural woman he had ever met: she didn’t paw a man or climb on his knee or ask for a drink or play the old game at all. She had a lot to give—it was strange that he could be so sure of this so quickly—but it seemed that she had not been too free with herself, or become cheap, which in his present mood meant a lot.

Women, he now decided, might be put into three classes, with Mary Moody at the top, the kind that were too far out of reach to worry about: in the middle, women like this one, a woman for a he-man, and the kind one would like for keeps: and at the bottom those like Molly Kelly who were cheap and in that particular business for what they could get out of it.

He was turning this over, rather pleased with it, and feeling that one must have travelled before reaching such a point of understanding, when he encountered in front of the hotel a dark, square-headed man with heavy chin, thick-set shoulders, and a slight limp. His heart missed a beat.

“Hullo, Kelly,” he said a shade uncertainly.

“Go to hell,” grunted Bulldog, his face clouding, “you go plum to hell an’ stay there.”

John laughed in his face and passed on: he had no fear of the man, and now felt for him a sort of contempt. Fingering the five-dollar bills in his pocket he reflected that he had been to Holt City and not spent a cent, which gave him an added sense of satisfaction, and he made the resolve to save—save—save—till he had enough to take a good contract without that five hundred from Molly Kelly. He would never touch it.

Just then the Company’s pay car was heralded by an echoing bellow from farther down the Bow River, so he waited till it rolled in from Montreal, pulled by the biggest engine he had ever seen in his life: it must have weighed sixty tons and actually burned coal. With it also came two more carloads of cattle.

This arrival infused new life into Holt City, and John watched pay clerk after pay clerk from various camps, including his own, climb into the car, shut the door and come out with leather satchels stuffed with bills. Most of them at once rode away accompanied by another man with a rifle slung over his shoulders, and it gave him new impressions of new powers far out of sight who had only to decide to build a

railway and then, somehow, created the money to build it with. He had not dreamed that money could be so easily got.

He tramped back over the rocky tote road, his mind bulging with vague ambitions.

IN Montreal, George Stephen was also thinking about money while he walked in sober mood from the Bank to the Canadian Pacific offices; one of the best-known figures in the city, with broad, sloping shoulders, high brow and handsome intelligent face, his passage along St. James Street was noted by many, and he nodded abstractedly to innumerable acquaintances. Disconcerting rumours were abroad.

His mind dwelt uncomfortably on a meeting held that morning at the Bank, when for the first time open dissatisfaction was expressed at the increasing degree to which that institution had gradually become involved in the affairs of the Canadian Pacific Railway: there was ventilated a feeling, if not of actual distrust, at any rate of apprehension: and Stephen, a man of high principles and unassailable integrity, was now forced to ask himself whether, being closely allied with that bank, he had gone too far in using its resources to further the project that lay nearest to his heart. He knew that he was universally trusted, that the merchants of the first city of the Dominion had learned to rely on his judgment; he was a rich man with countless friends; but to-day, two and a half years after Van Horne had broken ground just west of Winnipeg, the weight of a vast burden was pressing hard, and it needed something more than one's first fine enthusiasm to carry on.

The all-red line was in financial trouble!

Of late he had felt this coming and had already discussed it with Donald Smith, but that indomitable Scot took the matter very calmly—too calmly, thought his cousin—and made no suggestion. Now, and for the first time, ugly rumours began to spread.

In the board-room Stephen found Van Horne and Shaughnessy, talking hard, Shaughnessy looking anxious. A moment later Smith came in. The air was biting that morning, with a touch of wind from the north-west, and his usually colourless cheeks had faint patches of pink: he rubbed his hands with a brisk air of physical well-being, took off his gloves and thick Melton overcoat, stood the gold-headed stick in the corner, deposited his beaver hat on the top of that, and took a chair.

"Good morning, gentlemen: there is in the atmosphere to-day something that reminds me of the east coast of Labrador: it usually preceded a heavy frost."

Van Horne shot a sly glance at Stephen, and nodded.

"Well, sir, it seems to agree with you."

"It does, indeed it does." He began to massage his bony, white fingers. "Also I find that in such barometrical conditions the taking of moderate exercise is a distinct benefit to the circulation, especially at my age. It stimulates the action of the kidneys,

and helps to counteract any tendency to corpulency.”

“I get you,” chuckled Van Horne, “but the Lord meant me to be corpulent, and I don’t question the intentions of the Almighty. Anyway, I can do my work, belly and all.”

“You can, Mr. Van Horne, indeed you can, and none other as well as yourself.” At this he paused; then, in exactly the same tone: “Also it is my earnest hope that that work will not be inconvenienced by any monetary stringency, however temporary. Such a contingency is, I take it, what we have met to discuss?”

Stephen nodded. “You weren’t at the Bank meeting.”

“No, I was engaged in the consideration of the finances of the University of McGill.”

“We’re worrying about our own,” interjected Van Horne bluntly, “go on, Steve, it’s more in your line than mine.”

“Before anything else,” began Stephen, “I had an unexpected bit of news from New York this morning. Jim Hill has sold out his Canadian Pacific shares: what he got for them I don’t know.”

This, given with the least lift in his voice, produced its effect. Donald Smith tightened his lips, Shaughnessy gave an exclamation, while Van Horne let out an oath, and instantly the minds of the three leaped to the same conclusion. Hill had declared open war on the all-red line! It was a grave thought, the more grave at this hour when the future had clouded with difficulties. They all knew Hill for a man with the doggedness of a hound and the relentless instinct that so often accompanies unbridled ambition.

There was a little silence till came the suave tones of Donald Smith.

“Really! Mr. Stephen, really! How very interesting! And yet, if one considers the point dispassionately, should we after all be surprised? I think I am correct in reminding you that about one year ago Mr. Hill represented in my view the weak joint in our armour, and its removal might not be altogether regrettable.”

“Yes, you did,” agreed his cousin, “I remember. Well, it’s removed all right, so we can assume he’s thicker than ever with the Grand Trunk. Also I’ve had a London cable saying that Tyler is trying to upset our purchase of the Ontario and Quebec road on the ground that it’s inimical to the established rights of his line. We’re anything but welcome in Ontario. Still less do they like our getting that road from Toronto to Owen Sound.”

“Which was nevertheless an excellent move, Mr. Stephen; we could not have our freshwater fleet at the mercy of an independent railway. And those Clyde-built ships of yours, Mr. Van Horne, how are they doing?”

“Full to the muzzle every trip: one way and another we’ll earn about five million gross this year.”

“The net figure, if it were available, would interest me more.”

Van Horne, grinning, turned to Shaughnessy. “Got something there, haven’t you, Tom?”

“Yes, but it’s impossible to say—exactly: construction and operation too mixed up as yet, but call it one million net. That’s nothing considering the present position: it’s cash we need, ready cash.”

“I have been considering the matter,” said Smith with a slow horizontal movement of the hand as though putting something aside, “and have come to the conclusion that there is a way out. Our capital is now one hundred million, and of this we have sold just exactly how much, Mr. Shaughnessy?”

“Sixty-five million, sir.”

“And this realized us in actual cash?”

“Only thirty-one million.”

“And the market price to-day in London for our shares is——?”

“A shade under forty,” replied Shaughnessy lugubriously.

“As low as that! Well, well! It is probable that Mr. Hill’s transactions have had the usual effect.”

“Yes, sir, obviously, and our present commitments will require all the cash we have in hand.”

“Which is——?”

“Between nine and ten million: when we meet those commitments we’re broke.”

Smith took this to himself, pondered for a moment, and nodded slowly.

“It is equally obvious that under existing conditions we cannot sell any more shares without knocking the market to pieces.”

“In addition to which,” put in Van Horne through a jet of smoke, “we cannot go on paying those damned dividends—of course we never earned any—on what we have sold. That’s killing us. God knows what it’s cost, and it hasn’t worked as we expected.”

“Ah! dividends!” Smith uttered the word as though he loved it. “Yet I question whether we could have placed any shares at all without undertaking some secured return. That is an interesting point. I have, however, been doing a little exploring, and the likelihood presents itself, to me at any rate, that if a guarantee of those dividends—which the public now evidently suspects are beyond our power to continue to pay—could be procured from some, shall we say, higher authority, the market would regard our shares in a much more favourable light. In such a case, the issue of the

remaining thirty-five million should meet with a good reception. I trust that I have made myself clear? The market does not approve our paying dividends out of capital."

"Higher authority!" ejaculated Van Horne, "what higher authority is going to guarantee that? Where's our lever? We're doing some business, but nothing to speak of yet: it's a peanut-stand business. We've carted fifty thousand settlers into the west, but can't really tap the west except in summer till the north-shore section is open. That's another eighteen months. Meantime there's no sense in hauling more wheat than we carry in our own boats. I don't want to make traffic for Jim Hill. Dividends! I wish to God I saw some in sight!"

Smith indulged in the faintest perceptible smile.

"With that aspiration, Mr. Van Horne, I am in full accord: also I agree with the general implication of your remarks, but I had carefully considered the whole question before making my suggestion. My idea is that the Government should provide the guarantee."

This proposal, announced in almost dulcet tones, produced an effect: it was bewildering! Stephen, frowning to himself, gave his head an energetic shake; Shaughnessy's eyes grew round, while Van Horne stalked up and down the room gazing sideways at the bearded Scot, and doubting his own ears.

"Did you say the Government?" he jerked out. "The Government?"

"That, Mr. Van Horne, is what I intended to convey. We have reached a stage where some decision is called for, and, as Mr. Shaughnessy states, our commitments involve a very large sum. I propose, therefore, that we lodge with the Government a sufficient amount in cash, together with securities on the lines we have acquired by purchase, to induce Mr. Macdonald's Cabinet to guarantee dividends on our issued capital at three per cent a year for, say, ten years. This would in actuality convert them into Government securities, on which basis they should be worth par."

Shaughnessy made a queer noise in his throat, seized a pencil and figured rapidly. Then he looked dazed.

"Those dividends would require nineteen million dollars, and where is it coming from?"

"One-half from our treasury," said Smith placidly.

"Good God, sir, you'd empty our pockets."

"I am aware of that, but for the time being only. This company's guarantee is not good enough for the public: our credit has been undermined by our opponents who aim at nothing short of our ruin: we cannot offer further shares without flooding a market already hostile, and if we made any such attempt the present price would

shortly be thirty or less. But if we use what cash we have to secure Government support, the price should rise quickly, our next issue meet with a satisfactory reception, and the position of our shareholders be much improved. I trust, gentlemen, that I make myself clear?"

He had—shining clear, and they regarded him with a sort of stupefaction, trying to read behind that marble face, and realizing that now in the calmest and coolest of voices he advocated a bigger gamble than any yet dreamed of; that he was bent on betting—they could call it nothing else—that by risking the total cash resources of the company to secure bait from Macdonald, his political enemy, he could sell three times that amount in shares to those who were to-day unwilling to buy. The thing sounded wild, far-fetched, and mad. Shaughnessy was scowling at the thought of an empty treasury, visualizing battalions of hungry creditors, to pacify whom would be his invidious duty. Van Horne could see ten thousand hairy-breasted men scattered over the west without pay, a vast human engine of reprisal and destruction; while Stephen, who knew this old man better than any of them, fell to wondering if his shrewd, long-sighted instinct had, under the strain, at last deserted him. But there was no sign of tension in that granite countenance, and Mr. Smith was polishing his nails. Now the silence of the room had a stinging quality.

"Well, gentlemen, it is obvious that something must be done before the storm breaks, and I have no doubt that Mr. Hill is at this moment studying the financial sky with close attention; so if you have any alternative to suggest I will be very glad to hear it."

It seemed there was none. The Bank of Montreal, as Stephen and Smith very well knew, could not with safety be used any further, and since the desperate measure now put forward was Smith's programme, on him also would lie the major burden if it failed. He must know that himself: he *did* know it, but it caused not the deepening of a single wrinkle on that strongly sculptured face, and he sat there, hard grey eyes roving to the big blue-print, in a reflective mood that conveyed no hint of nervousness or doubt.

Of the three, Van Horne felt the most moved: he was a fighter; he loved a contest; he loved poker; he admired a good bluff on a lean hand. Action! Action! Action! that was his rule of life, and, staring at the grizzling Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, he admitted that never yet had he discovered a man who more completely lived up to his own motto. Next he decided that he would like to teach Donald Smith to play poker, but instinct warned him that this would prove expensive; so he plumped down again on his chair, weighing it back till it creaked under his big, strong body, and his eyes began to glitter. What a partner! he thought.

What a partner! Finally, he glanced at Stephen and caught a slight nod.

"Well, sir, assuming that's our line, what's the next move?"

"I think I can read what's in your minds," replied Smith, reaching for his coat, "and it appears that like our friend Major Rogers we must take a—h'm—diabolical chance. I propose that as soon as Mr. Stephen has discussed the matter with our solicitors, he shall go to Ottawa, interview the Government and report to us here as soon as possible. It is not advisable that I should accompany him. As to the Grand Trunk, we have long since learned what we must expect from that quarter, and their opposition is, of course, sharpened by our operations in Ontario and on the Great Lakes. With regard to Sir John's attitude towards our proposal, I am inclined to think that we are displaying a spice of originality which will appeal to his undoubted sense of humour, and we must remember that he is committed to our project no less than ourselves. Any serious interruption would affect him politically; so, using a phraseology I remember to have been employed by a man once in my service, it may be said that we have him where the hair is short. The allusion is inconsistent with delicacy, but it will serve. Furthermore, those fifty thousand settlers in the west who cannot be abandoned suggest a factor to which, if I understand him at all, he will not prove indifferent. I do not, therefore, anticipate that Mr. Stephen will fail. Good morning, gentlemen."

With this he got into his coat, declining assistance, picked up his tall beaver, took his cane in a firm, bony clutch, and, holding himself very straight, left the board-room.

"Whew!" ejaculated Van Horne, "there's a born scrapper! What do you make of it, Steve?"

"It might work," he said cautiously, "there are points about it that didn't occur at first: it must have been in his head for some time, and no other man I know would have had nerve enough to advise it; also I think he's got Macdonald's measure, just as Mac has his. Those two are in someways very much alike: they can't stay divided much longer, and what appeals to the one may very well reach the other. Smith wouldn't have said what he did unless he was certain it would go through, but it's a pity that Charles Tupper won't be here to back us up."

"Where's he going?"

"To be High Commissioner in London."

Van Horne frowned at this, for Tupper from the very first had been a mainstay of the all-red line in Ottawa. As Minister of Railways he took pride in fathering the magnificent conception that was so largely his own, and politically he held the Maritime Provinces. Soon after Onderdonk broke ground on the Fraser, Tupper

went out through the United States to satisfy himself that all was well, and since then had never faltered. He was valuable to the all-red line because he was stable.

Macdonald, on the other hand, was constantly turning this way and that to meet political emergencies, and in this year of '83 had been unseated for bribery by his agent, promptly to be returned by the adjoining constituency, at which he smiled, though with rather a bad taste in his mouth. He was in truth a sort of shrewd, undefeatable Jack in the Box, a political conjuror and contortionist, with a blind eye to much that took place amongst his own supporters, though quick to pounce upon similar practices by the opposition. But he possessed a strong sense of imperialism, and for excellent reasons he held Tupper, the Cumberland war-horse, most highly.

"I only heard about Tupper privately," continued Stephen, "and he's going to London for the same reason that Sandford Fleming resigned as Chief Engineer for the Government. The old Pictou railway affair again. Fleming was dissatisfied with the contractor's work in Pictou, the contractor threw up the job, and Fleming, who was in charge for the Department, offered to complete it to specifications at the same price. Tupper, as Minister of Railways, agreed; he wanted to see the thing done, so Fleming went ahead, and made money. Then the story got afloat that Tupper on the quiet was in with him and shared the profits. It's a well crusted affair by this time, but the opposition will try to use it. I don't believe it, because Tupper is a straight man: anyway Macdonald, having the Pacific scandal at the back of his head, is feeling uneasy. That's why Schreiber is in Ottawa to-day in place of Flemming, and Tupper is booked for England, though I think he'll retain the post of Minister of Railways and put John Henry Pope in as deputy, which would be all right for us. But we'll miss Tupper." He paused, turning to Shaughnessy.

"How do you feel about this guarantee idea?"

Shaughnessy was non-committal, but if the flow of those monthly millions through his own capable hands ceased, the springs of action would die at their source. Money—money—money! There was the life-blood.

"It's off my ground," he answered cautiously, "but I can't pay accounts with blank cheques. I'm not responsible for anything but my own work: that's understood."

"Sink or swim together, Tom," said Van Horne cheerfully, slapping him on the back. "We're all in the same boat."

"Well,"—Stephen took a long breath—"I'm off to talk to Abbott; Tom, you'd better come too."

They went out, leaving Van Horne in a strange mood. The line! The line! He had just returned from one of his swift westward rushes, brown, buoyant, bursting with

energy and enthusiasm. Now he fumed at the thought of any interruption to the triumphal march of those twin steel ribbons.

Late that year his private car had rolled up to the gateway of the Rockies: passing through Calgary, he had talked to Père Lacombe and heard the Oblate's smiling account of the affair at Blackfoot Crossing: he traversed the Great Lakes in a new 2,000 ton Clyde-built steel steamer with the Line's red ensign at the peak: he had tramped the granite wilderness of the north shore of Lake Superior, inspecting vast timber trestles leaping from hill to hill, thereby saving prodigious embankments which could only be raised with solid rock blasted from quarries at unthinkable expense. He saw his own dynamite factories along the line, and freight steamers discharging material at the very foot of the forbidding palisade, against which the road clung in mid-air between the cold, green water and the summit of overhanging cliffs. Two hundred miles of engineering impossibilities that section had been called, but the line was ploughing through, here a foot, there a yard, with thousands of men sweating for half the year in slimy swamps, exposed for the other half to Arctic winds that breathed down from Lake Nipigon and the Hudson's Bay.

Next year he meant to settle that terminal matter on the Pacific, come east over Onderdonk's work, walk across Rogers Pass to see how things went there, and meet the westward-driving wedge of steel, wherever that might be. The gap was closing, closing steadily, but how many millions more would be needed before the rails that travelled round the Horn touched those that were carried up the St. Lawrence? He could not answer that.

A month passed. Now winter came down from the north with the first frosts, and with them Stephen and Abbott, the Company's solicitor: they disembarked, smiling, from a Grand Trunk train at Lagauchetiere Street station.

Buchanan, General Manager of the Bank, came to the board-room to hear the story at first hand, also Macintyre, another director and member of the original syndicate. With them arrived Donald Smith. It was a cheerful group: Van Horne sent round his cigars, the aroma of Havana diffused a sense of peace and security: a fine morning, and all well with the all-red line. Smith sat nodding to himself, but not smoking: he never smoked; for a young man counting muskrat skins at Lachine it was too expensive; since then he had avoided tobacco. But he enjoyed the fumes.

They all looked at Stephen.

"Well," said he, "it proved easier than we expected: Sir John was rather amused, and seemed to fancy the boldness of the thing. Mr. Smith, I told him it was your

idea, and he said that he had assumed as much. Also Pope told me that Sir John had just had a letter from Lord Lorne in England saying that he hoped the Government would continue to support us, and that helped.”

“The exact terms?” inquired his cousin blandly.

“Just about nine million in cash—that is about what we expected—and the balance in bonds of our purchased lines. Sorry we had to raid the treasury, Tom,” he added, turning to Shaughnessy, “but there was nothing else for it.”

Buchanan nodded—he was feeling much easier about the Bank, but Macintyre of a sudden was secretly depressed: he had a large holding in this company with the empty vaults, and now began to question the prospect of quick replenishment. In his view the market was too jumpy.

“Well,” interjected Van Horne, “hadn’t we better get busy and unload some stock?”

“That,” said Mr. Smith, “is the programme. I think we will now find the public quite friendly.”

“I’m wondering what the Great Northern crowd will make of it,” hazarded Stephen, “the last move in the world Jim Hill ever expected. What do you reckon those shares should bring? I’d say anywhere between 80 and 85 with the Government——”

A telephone bell on top of a wooden box at his elbow rang sharply, and he picked up the receiver; it had a bell-shaped mouth that covered his ear. “Yes, this is Mr. Stephen—yes—what’s that? . . . How long ago? . . . Thanks.” He turned to the other, frowning. “A wire from New York to my office, saying the market is nervous and our stuff hangs about 60.”

Mr. Smith elevated his brows. “Sixty! That is very peculiar: I had fully expected that the Ottawa news—it was made public yesterday, was it not?—would have meant much more. You have no other information?”

“No.”

“There will be some shortly: we had better wait.”

Van Horne, rolling his cigar between his lips, felt vaguely uncomfortable, and a sense of disturbance invaded the room: it seemed that invisible forces were at work, forces they had under-estimated or perhaps knew not of, and a small cloud drifted over the face of the sun. Thirty-five million shares to be disposed of in a nervous market! That consciousness now weighed on them, and was Macdonald’s guarantee good enough? Macintyre, catching the eye of Buchanan, made a grimace, turning down the corners of his mouth, while Buchanan, that day a greatly divided man, pitched his thoughts on the Bank over whose counters millions had been loaned on

Canadian Pacific shares. Smith's expression betrayed nothing, though he reflected that he possessed more Hudson's Bay shares than any other holder, and if that Company plus the Grand Trunk plus Hill did wreck the C.P.R. he would not be a loser both ways. But with a congenital distaste for any kind of a loss he put that contingency aside.

Now a young man entered and laid a yellow slip in front of his chief.

"Just in from New York, sir."

Van Horne looked at it, flushed deeply, looked again, then, in a voice that sounded oddly distant, he read: "Northern Pacific declared bankrupt and in hands of receiver. Market in panic. Will wire later."

The bursting of this bomb produced a silence that could be felt. They were big men round the table, great merchants, traders, bankers, with their fingers on the pulse of the financial world, but the cataclysm had come too swiftly to be predetermined. Gazing voiceless at each other, their thoughts sped in a hundred directions where the reverberations of such a crash must find an echo: failures, collapses, other receiverships, they visualized these and bent lower under the burden of a huge undertaking with an empty treasury, a gigantic enterprise whose full weight and impetus now, for perhaps the very first time, they fully realized. Their minds turned to those millions so lately laid in the hands of the Government at Ottawa, and there slowly began a low round of subdued talk in which each addressed his neighbour, hoping for some illumination. But there was none.

A few moments later, another New York wire. The market crumbling, panic spreading fast, and all round the world men were flinging on the market shares of Canadian and American railways, whether or not a Government guarantee went with the scrip: with the rest suffered the Grand Trunk: Hill's pyramid had collapsed, burying him and others in its ruins: he had gone too fast, too hard, and became vulnerable. The landslide continued.

Presently Van Horne folded the telegram, glancing about, turning his big domed head like a wounded lion till his eyes met those of the Speyside Scot, where, for some strange reason, they halted, till Smith, emerging from under the penthouse of his shaggy brows, gave a little preliminary cough. Four of his countrymen on the board, he reflected, and this great bull of an American Dutchman. That ought to take some beating!

"This is most unfortunate, gentlemen, extremely so, and, of course, our plans must be modified. Sir John will certainly not contemplate returning our deposit: we have parted with our cash and available securities: what then have we left?"

"Nothing that's any good now," said Macintyre hotly. "In my view the only thing

is to try and carry on under a voluntary receivership: we can't——”

“No!” roared Van Horne, “by God, *no*! We’d have riots in the west: we’d never get over it; five thousand men to-day on the north shore and as many in the Rockies. They’d raise hell.”

“I also disagree with that proposal,” said Smith calmly. “No company with twenty-five million acres of excellent land can be considered bankrupt.”

Everyone but himself had forgotten about the land, and this, enunciated with perfect composure, had a welcome and calming effect, while the speaker, contemplating his ivory finger nails, waited placidly. Land! It was conceivable that the public might be persuaded to buy land certificates though it jibbed at railways: the land could not run away, and already it had been proved that there grew the finest hard wheat in the world. At even a dollar an acre it represented, they believed, enough to finish the all-red line, and so gradually there spread over the troubled waters the film of Scots oil till finally the thing was thrashed out and decided. There would be an issue of land grant bonds.

On the way back to the Bank, Stephen hooked his arm into that of Buchanan.

“It’s a blue look-out, W.J.,” said he, “I’ve had the scare of my life this morning.”

“So have I.”

“Speaking for the Bank, we’ll have to draw in our horns, but with things pulling both ways, it’s a hard course to steer.”

“The Bank must come first,” said Buchanan briefly.

“I know that, but t’would be hard to disentangle the two now. Three years ago we couldn’t anticipate that the three biggest things in the country would be so interlocked that they’ll stand or fall as one.”

“What makes three?”

“Our road, Macdonald’s Government, and the Bank! Put ’em all together and they spell Canada.”

Collingwood Schreiber, Chief Engineer for the Government, and John Henry Pope sat in the Premier’s chamber in the East Block, watching Macdonald’s face. He had just finished speaking and now leaned back, swinging his *pince nez* on a black, silk ribbon. There was a wry expression on his usually cheerful countenance.

“Well, Schreiber, you see my side—what’s to be done?”

“I’m no politician, Sir John.”

“I’ve been one for forty years, and haven’t finished yet, but I begin to think that steel rails and politics make a difficult combination.”

“Well, sir, as matters stand I can’t picture a stoppage.”

“But you’re satisfied they can do it if the money were to be found?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“These land certificates were Donald Smith’s suggestion, weren’t they?”

“I believe so.”

“I thought as much: how many did they unload?”

“About ten million: the market wouldn’t swallow any more.”

“Hmph! or my guarantee either. What’s the total they have spent to date?”

“Van Horne says ninety-five million, of which the Government found fifty-five.”

“Making all told four times that original cash grant, eh? And now they want another—how much?”

“Stephen says twenty-two million.”

“Did Donald come to Ottawa also?”

“No, sir.”

“The sly old fox!” murmured Macdonald with a fleeting smile, “he’s waiting, just waiting, but so can I. We’ll see before long. But we *can’t* find any more money: the House won’t stomach it. Edward Blake—he knows the fix we’re in—is licking his evangelical chops for a taste of Scots blood.”

“Sir,” said Pope, summoning his courage, “we’ve got to do something. Can we contemplate the C.P.R. going the same way as the Northern Pacific?”

“Not a pretty picture,” frowned Macdonald, “not pretty at all. Schreiber, how many miles have those fellows built to date?”

“About 1,500; but actually owned and operated they’ve some 3,000. It’s a record for less than three years’ work.”

“H’m, a good deal more than my Government would have achieved in the same time: I’ll give them credit for that.”

“Sir John,” said Pope earnestly, “I hope you’ll now consent to see Stephen: he’s been waiting for days and everything hangs on the immediate future. Things don’t look too well in the west, but Van Horne is sending in train-loads of farmers, horses, implements, material for houses, everything ready for breaking ground and planting in the spring. It’s a great act of faith.”

“I know it, I quite agree, but I’m in a tighter corner than those fellows realize.”

He frowned a little, crumpling his arched brows, thinking of the days in ’67 when he accomplished the federation of eastern Canadian provinces and linked them with the Inter-colonial Railway from salt water at Halifax. The French voters in Quebec approved of that, but had not yet forgiven him for abolishing their fine, old, crusted Seigneurial rights: nor had they approved of his policy of protection, yet he counted

on them to kill Goldwin Smith's idea of political unity with the United States if it ever came up. He had in truth no ambitions divorced from his country, but after nearly half a century of public life now sometimes felt weary of its knots and tangles and only found real comfort when on the other side of the carpet he discerned the bright pattern woven by his own vision gradually approaching its completed design.

"Getting back to Stephen," he continued, "I don't want to see him: I like him too much, and hate saying 'no' to a man of his sort. Why is it the nicest people who always want the most impossible things?"

"After what took place in Dover Street, do you think you can decline?" objected Pope stoutly.

"Ah! Dover Street! That seems an age ago: perhaps we were all a bit hypnotized. Schreiber, can't you say something to help us? You've been over the North Shore lately, what about that part of it?"

"Van Horne has the job by the throat, Sir John: the rest is only a matter of money."

"Only! Did you say only? Gentlemen, I'm caught with my pants down. No, certainly we don't want the Northern Pacific business duplicated in Canada, and I remember something I said about Mr. James Hill to Tupper a year or so ago. I wish to God Tupper was here now."

"There's your man," interjected Pope, "why not send for him?"

Macdonald looked up sharply. "That's a comforting idea, J.H. I'll think of it."

"And you'll see Stephen meantime?" Pope seized the favourable moment.

"I will, on the understanding that you see him first and tell him privately and beforehand that the Government can do nothing more at present anyway. Get that into his head: don't let him grasp at a straw, and don't hurt him more than you can help."

"I'll try, sir—when?"

"Here, to-morrow at eleven o'clock—no—make it noon in the Senate Chamber; I must first wait on Lord Lansdowne and persuade him that that Irish-American sheet in Toronto carries no weight. You saw yesterday's issue?"

"No."

"Well, they announce that a bloodless British landlord from the sorrowful Isle is out of place as Governor-General of Canada. Damn those Fenians!"

Stephen was now desperate: day after day with Abbott he had haunted the Parliament Buildings till their long corridors became a Gehenna, testing the political wind, buttonholing friends, persuasive, pleading, urgent, exhausting every effort to

secure a personal interview with Macdonald; while this arduous period was punctuated by cypher telegrams from Montreal, and with every hour that passed the peril of the all-red line increased. But Macdonald remained invisible, going to earth like a wary fox: other men saw him, but not Stephen; he entered and left his chambers by a private door, and, driven by old Buckley, slipped away to Earncliffe where none might enter without being summoned.

He was in truth greatly occupied. Perhaps secretly he knew that his hand must ultimately be forced, but he gave no sign of it, and Cartright, not without followers, was advocating the political independence of Canada, which Macdonald shrewdly interpreted as a move toward later annexation by the United States. The western harvest that year had failed of expectations, the new settlers were alarmed, the opposition quick to avail themselves of useful ammunition, the Fenian element, backed by many Roman Catholics, resented the appointment of Lord Lansdowne to Rideau Hall, and Macdonald was fearful of antagonizing the Roman Church.

Thus, when on December the 1st Stephen finally gained audience, he met a man who was perforce looking in many directions at once.

"Well, Mr. Stephen," Sir John plunged to the point at once, "it appears we are both in difficulties: I am sorry, very sorry."

Stephen took a long breath: he was utterly weary, but still clung with high courage to his mission. He dared not fail.

"I fancy you know it all, sir, without my telling you."

"Yes, you may assume that, but I am forced to say that I can do nothing more. It is not from lack of willingness."

"We have had a very narrow squeak with the Bank, Sir John: Brown, Hamilton, and others—they seem determined to smash us: it is due to Grand Trunk influence."

"H'm, I suppose so. Mr. Stephen, were you in my place you could only say what I do."

Stephen shook his head. "I have trouble enough where I am, and if the C.P.R. goes down, the Bank goes with it. Were it to be known in Montreal that I said this, you can imagine the result—panic."

"Is the Bank as heavily involved as that?"

"Sir John, I was its President, Buchanan was General Manager: we are both directors of the C.P.R., and the C.P.R. to-day owes the Bank seven and a half millions. That is our present and perilous position. My friends, my business associates, practically all Montreal merchants of any substance, and thousands of small investors have taken my word for it that the C.P.R. is sound, but to-day the line exists on credit and goodwill. Destroy that and we sink, but not alone."

"Yet in two and a half years my Government has found you not less than fifty-five millions, a large part of the revenue of this country, against an original promise of twenty-five millions."

"You have, sir, but who could realize at the outset what we faced?"

"Which was fortunate, or perhaps unfortunate." Sir John stroked his shaven chin, thinking how haggard the man looked. "Mr. Stephen, I fear I have nothing more to say."

"Very well, sir,"—he made a gesture of despair—"then, failing help from you, my directors have decided to put the road into the hands of a receiver."

"Did Mr. Smith agree to that?" asked Macdonald, with a sharp glance.

"He does agree. Van Horne has ten thousand men in the west who must be paid and got back: that is the first step. If we cannot pay them—well! On the other hand and with your support we undertake to complete the road in five years instead of ten."

An icy blast, sweeping down the Ottawa, rattled the big windows, and Macdonald gave a light shiver: he felt the weight of those men, pictured them thrown out of work and a hard winter in sight.

"Mr. Stephen, I think you undertake the impossible: anyway the House will not stand for a further grant."

"Then the House will be responsible for national ruin: it is not your fault or ours that Lombard Street will listen only to vilifications from the Grand Trunk which are the more savage because it was our intention to prove—because we firmly believe it—that a Canadian railway can best be built and run by Canadians. If your Government is satisfied to play second fiddle, Sir John, I too have nothing further to say: I am answered. But believe, always believe that we have done our best. If James Hill occurs to you—well—we would not have had him in our syndicate without your approval."

The Premier winced a little, and then said with an odd expression:

"Where is Mr. Smith at the moment?"

"In Montreal, sir."

"He is—ah—well, I hope?"

Stephen sent him a swift glance. "Yes, Sir John, quite well, apart from what you can imagine . . ." He hesitated. "In that connexion there is something I have long desired to say: may I take the liberty?"

"You may say about Donald what you please," the mobile lips took on a curve of amusement. "The things I've said about him would surprise you."

"Then I doubt whether to-day there would have been any C.P.R. without him: he

does not appear to the public like the rest of us, but—well—you will understand why.”

“I’ve heard rumours,” admitted the Premier, smiling, “fairly loud ones, but still rumours, and——”

Here he broke off, studying Stephen’s strained face and equally exploring his own mind: he needed Donald Smith back in the fold, needed him badly: Donald would never be a political mainspring but he provided an excellent barometer: he’d never expect to be Premier—too old now for that—but some day he’d make an excellent High Commissioner, and it would be comforting to have counsel whispered into one’s ear by the same suave voice that just ten years ago sent cold chills down one’s spine. Also, Donald should pull a good Conservative vote.

“Mr. Stephen,” said he reflectively, “I have and with reason the greatest respect for your cousin’s capacity: he is a very remarkable man. In ’73 I thought him something other than that, but ten years are ten years, and I believe in the healing efficacy of time.”

“Then you would not be averse from meeting him?” Stephen doubted his own ears.

“On the contrary it might be an excellent thing if he were not averse from entertaining a proposition which I have in mind.”

“What, sir?”

“That he should contest the next Montreal seat as my personal supporter,” said Macdonald smoothly.

There—it was all out, and Stephen glimpsed the end of an enmity that Canada in these days of stress could ill afford: also was this an oblique way of hinting that were the breach healed, Macdonald might come to the rescue of the C.P.R.? A new light began to flicker on the great problem, and the anxious man across the desk dwelt hopefully on the thought of these two canny Scots, the strongest men in Canada, again in double harness. Weighing the thing as closely as his tense brain would allow, he measured his cousin who, however well one might know him, always suggested that there remained much more yet to be explored, a proud man, a man of ambition, who took success and disappointment with the same unyielding front, an enigma to his friends, inscrutable to his enemies. What, he asked himself, did Donald Smith really want out of life? But no one knew that.

“Might I intimate something of the kind, Sir John?”

“My dear fellow, don’t intimate anything: put it straight at him; if anyone understands straight talk, he does. On my side, I’ll welcome it. Tell him that. On his side, the best way of welcoming is to do as I propose and come back to the House

not as an Independent—that kind of member is like a flea in your shirt—you can’t pin him down. Stephen, I believe we’re both a bit tired of being independent of each other.”

“I’ll tell him, Sir John.”

“Now as to the C.P.R., please understand that I can promise nothing, but will cable for Tupper, your very good friend—Pope suggested that—he should arrive in a fortnight: he’ll want to have your books examined, and be partly guided by what Schreiber says. If on the strength of this he advises me to take the risk—I wonder if you realize what that means—we will put it to the House, and the thing will turn on what happens there. I cannot say more.”

“The C.P.R. cannot survive till the House meets,” replied Stephen dully; “we are on the brink of disaster: as we stand we are now insolvent.”

The Premier shook his head with decision.

“I am sorry, but that is for you and your associates to determine: I hope you will find a way out. If you go down, my Government goes with you—I know that—so your success means as much to me as to you. Mr. Stephen, I have to step very warily: I can’t be too certain of my supporters. Y’know,” he added with a smile, “we Tories never claimed to monopolize all the political virtues: even Blake and Goldwin Smith have their points.” He rose to conclude the interview. “You talk to Donald, and let me know privately how he takes it, because I hate to see good material unused. Tell him that, too. I’ll arrange that you have a chat with Tupper as soon as he gets here. Good morning.”

Stephen, virtually ruined, went back to Montreal empty-handed yet faintly hopeful, only to feel the noose tightening round his neck. Van Horne was helplessly blasphemous, and Shaughnessy, who had pleaded, promised, and prophesied in order to keep creditors at bay, now desperate. At the Bank, where the book value of C.P.R. shares had attenuated, the atmosphere became virulent. With Buchanan, Stephen felt that confidence in themselves had been destroyed: used to thinking in millions, they could not now lay hands on thousands: the line was insolvent, the Selkirks not yet spanned, the North Shore still unconquered.

In this issue came a demand from the Grand Trunk, now feeling competition in Ontario, that the C.P.R. be made to surrender lines it had acquired, at which, curiously enough, there began to filter into the public mind the first idea that there was something, a quality of vitality, in what they called the C.P.R. spirit; that perhaps the Grand Trunk was less of a national benefactor than it proclaimed itself, and long-distance management open to objections that did not apply to a home-built, home-run system. At any rate, men thought, the new line was putting up such a fight as had

never been seen before, and cabled attacks from Lombard Street began to lose something of their sting.

Thus from the seed sown in jealous enmity sprouted the first indications of an unexpected reaction, and in these days of stress the C.P.R. made new and unseen friends amongst fair-minded men who tired of such assaults and desired to see fair play. The all-red line had, it seemed, fostered a new sense of independence and nationalism, and Canadians commenced to regard it as no small part of their great heritage. Frank Smith, Minister without portfolio, who brought to Macdonald the Roman Catholic vote of Ontario on a senatorial platter, bombarded his chief with demands for action: Macdonald himself began to realize that he could vacillate no longer; and when Charles Tupper, large and confident, a bulldog for tenacity, hurried across the Atlantic to save his own offspring from the lions, he found the House unexpectedly amenable. Canadians, he decided, were actually growing proud of their all-red line.

On February the 9th, in that year of '84, Macdonald and Donald Smith were reconciled in a private room of a Montreal Club, burying the hatchet under confluent waters of Clyde and Spey. From the Chairman to the newest page-boy all knew what was taking place behind that door, but no ear pressed against the keyhole, so none save themselves knew what words were exchanged: but history records that twenty-four hours later Macdonald's Government loaned to the C.P.R. thirty millions of dollars, of which seven and one-half obliterated the debt to the Bank. The ill-fated deposit was released, and life breathed again through the all-red line.

NIGHT was closing in over the Rockies when a small tired man in priestly garb rode slowly along the right of way on a large, white mule. On his left, vast tree-clad slopes climbed skyward to die at the timber line, above which rose a vista of ragged snowclad peaks: on his right a precipitous drop where a mountain torrent tore itself to shreds in a maze of boulders. In front of him the all-red line was as yet but a triangular slice roughly carved out of the hillside, much as foothold might be hacked from a face of ice.

The mule, stepping cleverly round naked roots, over pot-holes, splashing through a frozen film, proceeded at an even pace, the bridle slack on its neck, and Father Fay was content that it should be so: one might, he had learned, make suggestions to a mule, but nothing more. Behind him were slung two sacks containing his robes, the Holy Vessels, his night gear, a crucifix, a silver bell, a small altar cloth, a small brass censer and a few cakes of incense. These he carried rolled in such personal clothing as he deemed essential to decent appearance as a man of God. At the saddle bow a metal cannister swung by a leather strap: it was sealed with a screw top and gave out a comforting liquid gurgle. Crossing a ravine where piles of crackling brush made a gigantic bonfire, he pulled up to address a group of men whose skins were blackened with smoke.

"Did ye happen to notice a couple of Sisters along this way lately?"

"We did," said the foreman, touching his cap, "'twas a week and more ago."

"And did they get anything out of you?"

"They got seven dollars an' thirty cents, Father."

The little priest made a grimace. "How far might it be to Dan Mann's camp?" he asked in a rich Irish voice.

"Another five mile or so: you can't miss it."

Father Fay gave an audible sigh, and laid a brown hand on the cannister.

"'Tis a hard road, and dark before I get there. There'll be some of you good Papists, so come along on the Sunday to Mass, and I'll do what I can for ye. The Lord knows ye'll need it."

This amiable suggestion rousing no perceptible enthusiasm, he bent on them an eye in which strength and humour were happily blended. "I notice ye don't go leppin' out of your boots at that idea."

"'Tis a rough road for a weary man with no fine mule to carry him, Father," said the foreman apologetically, "but if you'll stay with us the night and say Mass, you're welcome."

Glancing up at a lowering sky, the little priest shook his head.

“’Tis myself that’s promised Dan to be there by nightfall; and there’s another thing too. Did none of ye ever hear that it’s more blessed to give than receive? The cold is in my bones. Here, boys,”—he loosened the cannister—“fill it up to the neck now, and bad cess to the hand that falters—steady—now—that’s enough—don’t spill the stuff. I’ll be expecting you Sunday.”

He rode on, smiling, pastor of a rough-necked flock scattered through the Rockies, a small, grey-eyed dispenser of solace and mercy, who loved all men and feared none. Were one to examine him on the history of the Roman Church a great void had been uncovered, but it was more than made good by his large humanity. Careless of his own well-being, he knew the way to the human heart, and his humour made him welcome in all places at all times.

Bobbing loosely in the saddle, he took a pull at the cannister, and heard not far ahead a faint cry of *Fire! Fire!* which stopped him till there sounded in quick succession three dull thuds, and obscurely he made out a fountain of splintered rock shooting up a quarter-mile away. He saw it gyrate, descend crashing into the surrounding bush, and rode on. Ten minutes later he halted beside a small knot of labourers who stood looking grimly down at a prostrate figure. With an exclamation of pity, Father Fay slid from his mule and knelt.

A big man was lying on his back with a great gash in his skull and a visible mess of whitish-grey brain: he still breathed faintly, his eyes closed, while his mates regarded each other without words.

“Boys, boys, but this is bad! Who is he?”

They could only say that on the monthly payroll he was entered as Curly Smith, and under that, when the clerk had written it, he made his mark with a cross.

“Curly,” whispered the priest softly, “all is well with you, my son: do you hear me—all is well.”

Perhaps he heard, for there was a little flutter of lids, followed by a long, shuddering breath—and silence. Father Fay crossed himself while the men felt for their caps, then the grave voice of compassion.

“Curly Smith *in nomine Deo absolvo te.*”

Curly lay still: there was no sound save distant thuds of blasting from farther up the line, it being now past six o’clock, and the powder men at work. Father Fay, closing the sightless eyes, got to his feet.

“And how did it happen?”

“He was behind a tree,” explained the foreman, “but the rock hit another one coming down, then him.”

"You'll be sending his stuff into Dan's office: I'll tell them when I get there." He gave a sigh of compassion which only deepened the feeling of helplessness that often surged over him, and set his eyes on a pine tree whose brown bole stood just clear of the right of way. It would always be there, with no axe to threaten it.

"I'll wait, my lads—there's no need for an inquest—and I'm thinking that under yon big stick would be as good a place as any; it'll be sandy there."

He sat down, warming himself by the fire, while the mates of Curly Smith fell to with pick and shovel: they did find sand, they worked fast, and in the space of an hour a man was alive, dead, and buried with the benediction of the Church over his maimed body. Then Father Fay, who had been praying for the soul of his parishioner, got up, stretched himself, and patted his mule.

"We're glad you came along," said the foreman.

"I spend most of my time doing just that; also I was thinking a mouthful of rum wouldn't be a bad thing to cheer one up—you can put it in here—easy, that's enough. Well, lads, I'll be seeing you on Sunday in the cook camp, and don't forget a dacent cross for Curly with his name on it."

"I'll make it myself, Father."

"And is that ye had a visit from some nuns a while past in big bonnets and black skirts and white cuffs?"

"We had, Father; they lifted fifteen dollars out of the crowd."

At this he gave an exclamation, instantly suppressed. "How far would it be now to Dan's camp?"

"Three rough miles and more."

He rode on, thinking, thinking. 'Twas a hard life for the boys with nothing much at the end of it if they came through, and, if they did not, a hewn cross beside the right of way that would presently be absorbed by the forest and utterly forgotten. He had seen so much of it, especially where there was rock work, and soon the trains would go thundering past these voiceless sentinels who had never seen the thing for which they wrought. That was tough, thought Father Fay, with a chirrup of encouragement to the weary mule, and nothing he could do except ride along in fair weather and foul, exhorting, joking, shriving, burying, scolding, and pleading. Then, switching his mind to the nuns from St. Paul, his expression changed.

Darker now, quite dark in the woods where small windows of log-walled, log-roofed shacks began to glow like yellow eyes of drowsy birds. Frost in the air, and a pale gleam lingering on mountain tops. In this half-light and at this hour the bush looked haunted and he could imagine strange creatures moving over the blue-black shadows under spruce and pine, so rather hurriedly he turned his thoughts to the

outside world, and a copy of the *Montreal Gazette* just arrived in Holt City the day he left. He had served his novitiate in Montreal.

It appeared, though it was over now, that the Company had had a bit of trouble about money, and that surprised him. There was no sign of it along the line: the pay car arrived as usual; no one looked worried or anxious: cattle came up from Calgary, supplies of blacksmith coal, dynamite, rails, fishplates, spikes, medicine, flour, chloroform, horse shoes and nails, harness, waggons—he could have gone on counting a long time what he had seen unloaded at Holt City, and never a whisper of trouble, so evidently it was all newspaper talk. He had heard of a man called Shaughnessy who bought all this, but the man himself remained mythical: Van Horne he had never seen, but hoped to: the ones he knew were Ross and Holt and Dan Mann, and some of the engineers and contractors, while the others, he assumed, had an easy time of it and always travelled in private cars.

Not far ahead he saw a cluster of lights, the weary mule quickened its pace, and Father Fay, dismounting stiffly, knocked at a door.

“Come in,” rumbled a deep voice.

Dan Mann was at a table opposite a clerk with a pile of papers between them: he got up at once, mountainous and welcoming.

“Glad to see you, Father; had your supper—no—well go over now and come back here: lots of room.”

The little priest led his mule round to the stables, rubbed him down by lantern light, hung a bag of oats over the eager nose, and repaired to the cook camp, where he seated himself at one end of an oil-cloth-covered table set for the next meal, a vista of spoons, knives, forks, and large, white-enamelled cups. Geraniums grew in tomato cans on the window-sills: the place was spotless, with a floor of yellow lumber that smelled of strong soap. In the bay at one end stood a gigantic cast-iron range on which sat a tin boiler three feet long and a foot wide. It held twenty gallons. One put in a pound of virulent green tea to begin with, adding more as required, so that soon there lay at the bottom a sodden mattress that needed but small replenishment. The tea came out of a brightly polished brass tap. Ultimately, if the cook were of a saving nature, this mass of leaves from which the last vestige of essence had been boiled thoroughly for weeks, would be dried in the sun and sold to passing Indians.

Father Fay champed steadily at stewed beef, potato and raisin pie, talking not at all after the first words of salutation, since out of meal hours all visitors, of whatever distinction, were disliked by all camp cooks. They lived by the clock and worked to the minute. Three times a day, the cookee, himself an embryonic cook, who seemed

to exist without sleep, appeared at the door and with a steel bar struck at a steel triangle hung by a piece of wire, on which musical summons the men shuffled in and fell to work with only a nudge or hoarse monosyllable to indicate what was out of reach. The cook's experienced eye saw them all at once. His kind were jealous of their reputation: it ran up and down the line, and on it hung that of the camp as a place to work in, so that they were much more important than the contractor himself. Men spotted a good cook, trailing after the one they preferred to 'eat behind', for in a life like this the call of the belly came loud and clear.

Father Fay, noting where he would later station the altar, and over which corner hang the confessional blanket, presently returned to the office and found Dan Mann at ease, resting his bulk in a chair made from a straw-stuffed barrel with a canvas seat. He was younger than Van Horne, but cast in much the same mould, with great physical strength and an indomitable spirit: he had 500 men at work on Big Hill, the toughest section in the Rockies, and liked it: the job suited his dominant nature, and, although he did not then know it, sowed in him a seed destined to bear Olympian fruit in later years.

"Well, Father, come to straighten us out, eh?"

"Perhaps—yes—if I can have a service to-morrow."

"Sure! Fix that with Billy."

"There was a man killed up the line just now," went on the priest soberly.

Dan shook his big head. "Another! that's bad—what hit him?"

"A stone took him on the way down: 'twas three miles from here."

"Well, Father, it can't be helped: this bit of road is dangerous all round, but the men like it better than earth work. Didn't get east this time, did you?"

"Not past Calgary: it is now a city with six thousand people and more coming in every day."

"Hear any talk there?"

"About what?"

"Anything in particular," said Dan warily, wondering if news of the financial crisis had leaked across the prairie. To himself it was no secret: money had come through for the payroll, but nothing more, come from the private pockets of Stephen and Donald Smith. Ross had this straight from Shaughnessy, and passed it on to Dan, his sub, with a warning to keep it under his hat, for if the truth got out there would be hell to pay all round. Other contractors also knew it, but all of them, feeling that they were working for honest men, only worked the harder, and now the pinch was over—for the moment. Dan knew, and none better, that the road was being built on faith: straight dealing gave it the blood of life: saints and sinners, simpletons and

desperados, one found them in cheerful groups along the right-of-way. Big contracts were closed by word of mouth. 'Twenty thousand yards of rock excavation at two dollars a yard? I'll take it.' Then the rock was moved and money paid without stroke of pen.

"'Twas mostly about the new settlers coming in," said Father Fay, "and I had a crack with Père Lacombe."

"Those Blackfeet of his gone back to Sunday school?"

"'Twas a neat bit of work he did that time: tell me now, did some visitors come along this way a while ago?"

"What visitors?"

"Two young women collecting."

"Yes, they were here, the clerk and I gave them our bunks: they did pretty well too."

"An' how much might they have got, Mr. Mann?"

"Dunno: perhaps a couple of hundred for some orphanage in St. Paul; they went on to the Columbia and I lent them my team that far: they were going up river to the Flats, then down the Kootenay, so I guess they're in the United States now. Full of sand they were, but I'm damned if I know how they kept so clean."

"You'd know them if you saw them again?"

"I'd know the one with blue eyes, but they were both good lookers. Dainty, too! The boys turned out their pockets all right. Father, it always seems queer to me that girls like that are willing to bury themselves alive for some charitable object."

"Charitable object, is it?"

"What else?"

"And you lent them your team?"

"Sure! Who wouldn't?"

"Mr. Mann," said the little priest chokily, "those Sisters of Mercy are two young women of easy virtue from Spokane that were a bit short of cash."

Dan gaped at him till his dark eyes began to glint and he went into a great roar, slapping his giant thighs: his body shook—he blinked—he roared again.

"No! Father, no!"

"'Tis the truth I'm telling you," went on the visitor, trying to keep his own face straight, "and 'twas in Calgary I heard of them, so I came along as fast as my mule would carry me. It's a murderin' shame to deceive those dacent boys in such a fashion."

"It's a thundering joke," spluttered Dan, "what are you going to do now?"

"Sorra a thing; 'twouldn't be wise, and too hard on the genuine Sisters. Mr.

Mann, we'll just have to let it go, so promise you won't say one word."

"Not till the steel reaches Big Hill, Father; it won't keep longer. Well, good night: you take that bunk in the corner."

He moved off, chuckling, into the next room, and presently the timbers of his bed frame creaked. Father Fay went out to the stables; there was no sound now save the muffled stamp of beasts and a soft far-distant note from the valley of the Kicking Horse; the sky clear; no moon, but stars hung bright in the frosty heaven. He stood for a moment regarding with thoughtful eyes this temporary axe-hewn habitation of men who would in a few months tramp on to take up their labours in Rogers' Pass, and when that was done, and having by sweat and toil and danger achieved their object, would be dispersed and reabsorbed by an unheeding world. They would have served their purpose, but who that came after would spare them a thought? It didn't seem quite fair.

Back in Dan's office again he sat with his breviary for half an hour, then got on his knees and prayed for these wandering sheep whom he loved with all his warm Irish heart.

Kelly the Rake, with due regard for the formalities of life, attended service, sitting at the end of a bench, by far the best-dressed man in the congregation: always he had been interested in the study of humanity, and on this occasion the cook camp was crowded.

On a front seat were Dan Mann, his book-keeper, and time clerk; near them Whispering Steve resplendent in yellow silk shirt and green tie; Irish Nell in a white blouse and puffed sleeves, with her rosy freckley cheeks and bright dark eyes, could be observed flanked by Cold and Hot Water, while Bulldog Kelly, wearing an unnaturally sanctimonious expression, was not far off. Near the door lifted the huge body of Big John, and in front of John a stranger towards whom The Rake's glance frequently turned, a man of middle height with square chin, square face, and square shoulders. He looked quietly capable. At the door the red tunic of a policeman, clean shaven and very erect, gave an official touch to the proceedings.

Father Fay, with the cookee, a French-Canadian from Trois Rivières, as acolyte, finished the service; a few of the faithful remained for confessional, eyes glued to a five point Hudsons Bay blanket hung across the corner where the water barrel stood, and The Rake, filing out with the crowd, found himself at the elbow of Coldwater James.

"Well, sir, the Father certainly put it right over this time: but I sort of expected

he'd mention them Sisters of Mercy. Say, who's the pilgrim in the blue suit?"

"George Baird from Helena, Montana; he's staying at our place."

"What's his line?"

"Grain alcohol and essential oil for making pure whisky," said Coldwater, lowering his voice, "a darn little of each and plenty of Columbia River water. You don't have to tell the police either."

"Knew him before he struck here?" inquired The Rake, watching Baird's back with peculiar attention.

"Sure I did; over in Spokane last year: he's a dead shot; he can hold four jacks and not turn a hair, and right now he's toting a wad of three thousand dollars collected from customers. I'm betting he'll take it out with him too."

"Three thousand dollars! Well, well!"

"Yes, sir, and knows how to freeze on to it. Don't waste your time, Kelly."

"Who's that other party—there—the dark-complexioned one?"

"Comes from Yale, I'm told: front name is Bulldog; the rest the same as yours; he's a Kelly too."

"Is—that—so! Say, Coldwater, the Rockies seem sort of popular with us Kellys, don't they?"

"It looks that way: like to meet him?"

"I'd hate to side-step a man of my own name."

"Hi—Bulldog! meet Mr. Kelly from—say, I don't know where in hell you come from."

"Sacramento," supplied The Rake, sending Bulldog a glance of entire simplicity.

"Meet Mr. Kelly from Sacramento: you two ought to get acquainted."

Bulldog nodded with no change of countenance, The Rake, grasping an outstretched palm, gave it an extra pressure with his little finger and his smile expressed a polite interest.

"Coldwater tells me you come from Yale: what sort of a burg is it?"

"Not what it used to be before the steel went past. Smoke?" Bulldog proffered a cigar with a bright red waistband.

"Why, thanks just the same, but I don't smoke. That was a great sermon we had just now, but I ain't quite persuaded about his idea of eternal damnation, that is, not as a permanent thing: it's kind of lopsided."

"No, sir," agreed Mr. Kelly, "I'm with you there; I thought he went just a mite too far, but maybe he knows."

"At the same time it don't do no man a bit of harm to get shook up once in a while, and darned if I don't feel better for it."

Mr. Kelly, lighting his cigar, agreed that there might be something in this, and inquired where his new acquaintance thought of going now.

"There's only one place, that's Holt City."

"Starting right off?"

"Yes, sir, I aim to."

"Well, my legs ain't quite as long as yours, but I guess I can keep up."

"Why, certainly, Mr. Kelly, come right along: I guess we'll find something to talk about. See you later, Coldwater."

Whispering Steve, holding two pair, king high, drew one for a full house, and made it. Thereupon he eyed the pool with lustful glance: it held forty dollars.

"I'm betting ten dollars," he tried to keep a note of confidence out of his voice.

The Rake for an answer threw in his hand, an action immediately followed by Mr. George Baird of Helena and the other Mr. Kelly, whereupon the winner gathered in his profits with an audible sigh, and not the slightest conception that for those three kings and two jacks he was indebted to the skilful touch of the man on his left.

They had been playing for an hour, and never before in his life had The Rake been forced to question his own art as he was now. Furthermore, he had become grievously disappointed in Bulldog, and began to wonder whether there might not be some shadowy understanding between him and the party from Helena: such situations were not entirely new, and the double cross had in his own experience an historical foundation.

As already arranged on the walk back to Holt City, the affair should have been simple enough. Mr. Baird would win for a while, would even be assisted in winning, while a brace of Kellys, though careful not to overdo it, evidenced from time to time such symptoms of inexperience and poor judgment as might best be calculated to encourage the stranger, till at the psychological moment his opponents displayed signs of desperation.

At this juncture Mr. Baird, having now accumulated considerable wealth, would receive a hand on which any reasonable man would bet his shirt, a formidable hand that might for instance contain as many as four smiling queens, while simultaneously the party from Yale found himself the recipient of four aces. In such an eventuality one might reasonably expect Mr. Baird to bet his shirt and winnings to date, whereat one would not only see him but raise him till the roll of three thousand dollars lay on the table.

Now The Rake took a gulp of sarsaparilla, and watched the man from Helena

out of the tail of his eye. Mr. Baird's manner was notably calm, his expression vouchsafed nothing, and it had remained like that since the game began. He accepted the invitation with the same poise, asking no questions, volunteering nothing concerning himself: thus it went for an hour during which he accumulated the six hundred dollars stacked neatly beside him: he did not talk except once when he put a bottle on the table, indicating that its contents were foreign to essential oils—not his own manufacture but the real genuine stuff—and expressed polite regret on learning that Mr. Kelly from Sacramento did not use spirits.

Shortly after this The Rake observed that the expression of Mr. Kelly from Yale was becoming flushed: his eyes developed a slight bulge: his proximity to the bottle—which the donor seemed to have forgotten—was proving too much for him, and the beefy face exhibited symptoms that roused a growing anxiety in his silent partner. Bulldog sober was none too bright, but Bulldog drunk was a problem. It appeared, therefore, that what must be done were best done at once, and The Rake blew his nose into a large silk handkerchief, thus indicating that when the deal came round to him the climactic moment would have arrived.

But here again was food for doubt: he could not be certain that Bulldog had remembered, nor did that party even lower the customary eyelid in acknowledgement, so the tension increased, sharpened by the fact that Mr. Baird raked in the next two pots on the strength of successive straight flushes dealt by himself and Whispering Steve.

This was embarrassing though not serious, but matters came to a point when The Rake, shuffling cards and testing their pinpricks with supersensitive finger-tips, observed that the chosen victim had pushed back his chair and was folding his money into a neat little packet.

"Well, friend, just one hand more and then we'll quit: you've certainly had the luck this time."

"Thanks," said Mr. Baird calmly, "but I have quit."

"Eh?"

"Matter of fact, gents," here he snapped a rubber band very neatly around the packet, "I just hate to take any more of your money."

Bulldog made a choking sound, but The Rake silenced him with a gesture while Whispering Steve, scenting trouble, sat up straight. Greatly flattered when asked to take a hand, he had made ninety dollars. A satisfactory evening!

"You're welcome to all you can take." Mr. Kelly of Sacramento regarded Mr. Baird with a provocative eye, but something—somehow—was shaking his confidence.

"And it's kind of customary," interjected Bulldog roughly, "to give a fellow a chance to get back at you, but maybe you don't play that kind of game over in Montana."

Mr. Baird, upending the bottle, replaced it with apparent regret.

"Well," he said dryly, "I gave you all kinds of chances, but you just sat back and wouldn't take them. No, sir, I bluffed you cold four times with a hand as empty as last year's bird's nest, so presently I'm allowing there's one of two reasons for it."

"Interesting!" murmured The Rake. "What reasons?"

"You either don't know a thing or else too much."

"Go right on, stranger."

"As for the kind of game we play in Montana, I guess perhaps you're right: it ain't like yours, no, not in any sense."

"By which?" suggested The Rake in colourless tones.

"By which I am suggesting it's a straight game: also I know a pair of tin-horn gamblers when——"

At this Bulldog, cursing fluently, reached for his hip pocket—but only reached because from Mr. Baird's palm came an unmistakeable metallic glint. It was the muzzle of a small six-shooter. Twirling the trigger-guard around his forefinger, its barrel described such glittering convolutions as to fascinate the gaze, but of this the owner seemed unconscious, and his hard voice, backed up by the cold grey eye, a square chin and extremely sophisticated expression, compelled attention.

"Tin-horn gamblers, gents, with the exception of you,"—here he indicated the breathless Steve—"and it's wasting my time to try and teach the old folks to suck eggs. I knew you both, knew you from the start; saw you in Yale two years ago, but you didn't see me. Bulldog, next time you're down in Helena let me know and we'll try to teach you something. As for you, Mr. Kelly of Sacramento, I'm kind of disappointed: I was hoping you'd call for sandwiches and eat another ace of spades. Well, so long, gents: see you later—maybe."

VAN HORNE and Schreiber sat on a boulder on the north shore of Lake Superior, while over them poured a noonday July sun, its rays refracting from innumerable facets of shattered, crystalline granite as though the cut were sprinkled with diamonds: here the solid rock gaped wide, and, furrowing its riven bulk, one could count the long drill holes that had torn it asunder.

The bright air burned fiercely as they mopped their streaming faces: Van Horne's shirt was open, displaying the black hair on his barrel-like chest, his coat hung over his arm and his loose breeches bagged at the knees: he carried a stick cut from a bush. Taking out a cigar, he regarded it dubiously, then shook his head.

"Too hot for that, which means it's damned hot. Schreiber, since you're inspecting for the Government, I suppose I ought to be more respectful."

Schreiber, glad of a moment's rest, only laughed. All that morning he had been striding along beside this puffing human traction engine that pursued its masterful course up the right of way, eyes everywhere, missing nothing, firing questions at foremen, contractors and engineers, glorying in the struggle with an adamantine country that provided nothing but toil in a battle of blood, brain and explosives against flinty stone.

Northward lay a wilderness with hardly a stick of timber bigger than tie size: a hundred feet below the boulder where Schreiber sat, the intense emerald green of Lake Superior licked the feet of vertical granite bluffs, its waters translucent under the sun, a thousand feet deep, the coldest water in the world. One could pitch a stone down into a tiny bay floored with pebbles of jasper and agate, their colours lustrous beneath the flashing transparent surface. Across the bay, the newly-located line hugged the perpendicular cliff, and here, as on the far-distant Fraser, suspended in mid-air by ropes from the summit, hung men, clinging like insects, drilling holes that when blasted would form a bench to carry the track. These busy midgets with their Lilliputian hammers and pigmy drills looked amusingly small, impudent and ineffective. Farther south over the inland sea the horizon was empty, a hard, blue edge against a hard, blue sky.

It had been thus for days past, and Schreiber, a sound engineer, was increasingly impressed by the endless army and its unceasing attack with steel, dynamite, and the muscles of men. He knew what it was costing—Van Horne left him in no doubt there—secretly admired the faith that inspired it, but wondered where the remaining and necessary millions were to come from. Time and again he put that recurrent question aside: Van Horne was building the road as and where he saw fit, building it well, and

Schreiber's job was to testify later to what he had seen.

Van Horne picked up a splinter of gneiss, pinched and threw it aside.

"Know anything about fossils—that is outside the Canadian Senate?"

"Not a thing."

"I used to, and this section would cost about half as much if there were any here. That takes one a long way back."

"When did you study geology?"

"It began when I was eleven, and found in a creek bed what I called a worm in a rock. That started me off, and three years later I was lent a book by a boy called Gus Hawk, and found a picture of my worm: it was called a crinoid, and I thought I had the geological world by the tail. Gus and I used to go prospecting every Sunday—I was working all week—and became so darn interested that the State geologist of Illinois heard about us, and gave Gus a copy of Hitchcock's book on fossils. Of course I was crazy to read it, but Gus, being a mean devil, wouldn't lend it, till finally I bought it with a lot of specimens I'd found and he hadn't. Well, about that time I earned the first quarter dollar that ever came my way—that is the first quarter I ever kept—you see, all I got for carrying telegraph messages I gave to my mother—and learned Morse while waiting for them at the office. Anyway, I was scared Gus would go back on his bargain, so I spent that quarter on foolscap, and every night copied a bit of that damned book by candlelight up in the attic. I couldn't do much at a time—it was too cold and my fingers got stiff, but, by God, Schreiber, I copied it all, every note and paragraph and drawing; I even copied the index. Which is how I got to know something about fossils."

"Good enough, but what's that to do with building railways?"

"Nothing at all. When I was fourteen, I annexed a job as operator in the office of the Superintendent of the Illinois Central at Joliet, and one day, to fill up the time, ran a wire to an iron plate in the yard. I could see it from my window. Every man who stepped on that plate got a shock, till it was my boss's turn: he spotted the wire, traced it to where I was sitting cold with fear, and fired me."

"He was right," grinned Schreiber. "What then?"

"Pulled down another job on a branch line of the Michigan Central, and one day I took over the wire the big debate between Lincoln and Douglas on the slavery question—that was in '58—no, '59, when I was fifteen, and after that I guess something got hold of me, for I went baldheaded after all kinds of information. I wanted a bellyful. You see, I'd moved on from crinoids to trilobites, brachiopoda and that sort of thing, and then one morning the General Superintendent came along in a nickelplated private car with a nigger in a white linen jacket. I thought that

Superintendent was just God, so started in on perspective drawing, timekeeping, railroad operation, repairs, bridges, how to drive an engine, training my memory by numbers on freight cars—oh, any amount of things. I couldn't get out of my head that General Superintendent, and though I now realize he was a one-horse railway man, he inspired me: I wanted a car and a nigger just like his, and pasted the idea in my hat. Well, when I was twenty-eight I'd made the grade, but all that's past history: better get along, hadn't we?"

Hoisting up his big body, they dived into a ravine, and here Schreiber halted to look round: he could see nothing but solid rock.

"Where are you getting the material to make this fill?"

"We're not filling it—now: wooden trestles first and fill with a ballast train from the nearest gravel pit later on: that'll save a lot, also take it off the man and put it on to the machine. It's the only way I can get this section through."

Schreiber nodded, and for the rest of the day they pushed westward, eating at camps along the line: fire still smouldered where the air was bitter to the taste; they traversed swamps on corduroy roads that floated, sagged and trembled above a gulf of bottomless slime; they looked down on lonely lakes where the black-headed, white-breasted loon waked echoes with his ribald laughter; they saw freight vessels moored in deep water close under the cliffs, while from their decks horses and bales of hay were snatched up by ropes two hundred perilous feet to the summit of those granite bluffs, and a dynamite factory where only a year ago the silent Ojibway had trapped the swift brown mink, and a colony of beaver, the original hydraulic engineers of the north, built their curving dam.

They plugged on. Van Horne ate as though stoking a furnace, which indeed he was, conquering the weight of his body with thrusting vigour. Schreiber had become rather silent, being impressed by this army of nine thousand men, the engineers and contractors with whom they spent the night where night found them: he could not imagine this thing losing momentum, had a sound idea of what it must be costing, and anticipated the time when the all-red line would turn again to Ottawa for aid. Van Horne, he concluded, did not think at all about money, being too drunk with the lust for construction. He joked, cursed, stuffed food, shot searching questions as from the barrel of a rifle, drank, played cards with his sleep-drugged subordinates into the small hours and rose ere sunrise, revelling in the prospect of another day.

They were eating lunch in the shade of a forge roofed with cedar bark where a French-Canadian blacksmith was sharpening drill steel, when Schreiber said:

"It's a very good thing for you that that last loan got through."

"We had a bad time," nodded Van Horne, "and George Stephen nearly went

crazy. The bank was so damned hostile—they were up to the neck in it—and he felt personally responsible for letting them in: I couldn't make out what Donald Smith really felt; I never have yet, but he had his tomahawk out for Jim Hill."

"Yes, I was sorry for Stephen, too: so was Sir John, he told me about their meeting. Of course Tupper turned the scales, backed up by Frank Smith: this road was his idea first of all, though people don't seem to know it: he made a great speech in the House in '79. But Sir John will get most of the credit, and I admire the way Tupper lets him have it. That Commissionership—he didn't want it really—too much for him to do here; and all round he was certainly the strongest man in the Cabinet. He isn't a political acrobat—has a different kind of brain—and while there's no jealousy in Sir John, I think he's aware of that. People trust Tupper: he doesn't depend on—well—mesmerism. If this road goes through—I mean financially—it's largely due to him."

"If!"

"What you had last winter won't finish it: from what I've seen already, you'll spend nearly twenty million on this north shore alone; then you've got the Selkirks. I'm not talking now as a Government official, but as one engineer to another, and you needn't worry about my report."

"I never worry about anything—too busy," grunted Van Horne, "but can you picture it not going through? Some things are too big to stop, and this is one of them. I'm a builder, Schreiber, it's in my blood; I'll build till I drop."

So they came past Red Rock where the Nipigon slides down through trout-haunted reaches from the Height of Land, past Steel River to Prince Arthur Landing, and there at the head of the Great Lakes Schreiber saw a big black-hulled, white-cabined, Clyde-built steamer with Scots boilers, disgorging settlers' families for the prairies, while out of dusty box-cars from Pile o' Bones the garnered harvest of the west poured its golden stream into a giant elevator. The grain slid through the cars' bottoms through a chute on to a travelling belt, thence to a bucket hoist that scooped it up and dumped it into the top of a large box-like building that held one million bushels.

Van Horne dipped a hand into the yellow stream; and the feeling of this hard, finely-polished river gave him a thrill: it seemed alive, as indeed it was.

"Schreiber," said he gravely, "that is the best wheat in the world, because it comes from farthest north: the farther north you go the better it is, I believe it would grow in the Arctic circle; it's hard wheat, and in England they'll use all they can get to mix with their softer stuff! You can see what that means to us with millions of acres out there waiting for the plough. That's why I'm rushing this road—to speed the

plough. This elevator's too small, we need one twice the size."

Schreiber saw, and he, too, was impressed, but could not rid himself of the scene of the last two weeks, and the heights of the Selkirks were still unclimbed. He admired Van Horne, he knew he was in the company of a great man, and felt anxious for him.

"Yes," he admitted, "if your company doesn't go broke first, that's what we're afraid of—it's no secret."

"Can Macdonald allow us to go broke?"

"I don't know—it's not my end of it—I'm no politician, but he's much more on his mind than this road. Your lot lays siege to him in Ottawa expecting that he'll drop everything else: well, he can't: affairs pull him both ways, it's his job to remember his party—always."

"The road was his idea, not ours," objected Van Horne stoutly, "and what's more, Stephen has promised it'll be finished next year, which is five years ahead of time: Macdonald and Tupper were both satisfied with that, so I can't see your Government going back on us now. If it does—well——"

He shook his big head: he was not acclimatized to money troubles; in years of railway experience across the border he had none of them, also he believed that if a thing was big enough and sound enough it was bound to go through. And he was exhilarated with Stephen's success at Ottawa a few months earlier, and felt drunk with the lust for construction. He pinched the hard grains that meant so much, and put every anxiety out of his head.

"Better come west with me and have a look at the Selkirks: they're not so bad as you may think: we'll pick up Rogers; he'll amuse you. I've seen Fleming's report, and we have his technical blessing."

"I'm sorry, but I must go back: I'm overdue in Nova Scotia."

"Then why not take that new steamer of ours?"

Schreiber nodded; they shook hands, and Van Horne turned westward up the Kaministiquia, sitting on the rear platform of his car, watching the river through which Wolesey's expedition had dragged their clumsy boats fourteen years previously with Redvers Buller in command of his freshwater brigade: then on over the great muskegs near Savanne, while the springing track yielded under the train's weight and rose behind it in a long gentle wave. The muskegs, he thought, still looked a bit hungry. So to St. Paul and out to the coast, travelling by Jim Hill's Great Northern. Jim had reached the coast first, admitted Van Horne, and nearly wrecked his road in the attempt to ruin his former associates, but that affair was over now, and one could smile at it.

By sea to Victoria and across to Port Moody. Here he spent some time surveying those shallow shores and restricted waters, then betook himself nearer the open sea and made up his mind at once. Gastown, they called that village, a collection of wooden shacks clustering round a small sawmill, but it fronted a noble harbour. From deep water close to shore the land rose gently to a plateau crowned with gigantic trees, the superb growth of a thousand years, their huge boles thirty feet in circumference standing mile after mile like the columns of some endless cathedral. Northward across the inlet towered twin peaks like sleeping lions. One reached the open sea through a channel of deep water, safe entrance to the inlet, and this spot, secluded yet approachable, spacious and impressive, seemed to Van Horne to fill all his needs, and here he visioned the terminus of the all-red line. It was as though nature had set her seal of approval on his efforts, so then and there he christened it Vancouver, in memory of the British mariner who first explored these coasts now nearly a hundred years ago. He liked that name, it sounded bold and strong.

Starting back towards Montreal, his spirits were high, but sobered a little when he inspected Onderdonk's work up the Fraser. It was Government work, and though he said nothing at the time, and greatly liked Donk, it fell short of his own standards of safety and permanence. The Government, to save money, had permitted things he himself would not have approved, and since this section was on completion to be incorporated in the all-red line, he realized that it would call for expenditure of further millions. The track was laid nearly to Lytton, and a train could be got over it, but that, he privately concluded, was all one could say.

Time pressed hard: only a year and a half now remained to redeem Stephen's promise, so at Lytton, where Donk's work would end, Van Horne committed himself to further millions and started construction eastwards.

Now through the Selkirks by pony train. A hard trip, but its difficulties enthused him the more, so gathering Rogers, whose unfailing if sardonic optimism well suited the occasion, in his turbulent wake, he climbed the gorge of the Illecillewaet over a villainous trail and came puffing to the Pass.

Staring at the heights overtopping this new gateway, he shot ribald remarks at Rogers concerning his first report, while he marked the courses of rockslides and avalanches, knowing full well that with such things the all-red line must shortly deal, then travelled down the valley of the Beaver on a horse that buckled under his weight. Thus by Golden up the Kicking Horse to Big Hill, eating, smoking, laughing, a technical Jupiter, his mind pitching ahead to the day when the last spike would be driven; and Schreiber's observations returning with discomforting frequency. Money! From what he had now seen it would require more than twenty-five million to

complete the road, and of how that might be found, he had no idea whatever. Stephen's job, anyway.

They were ascending the slopes of Big Hill when a young man stepped in front and lifted his arm.

"Wait, you fellows: we're going to shoot!"

Van Horne dismounted and lit his usual cigar: he was weatherbeaten and disreputable in attire: on the Beaver his trousers had given out and he now wore a pair from a contractor's store which, too small in girth, had been slit and laced, thus providing a home-made expansion joint that he asserted was both practical and comfortable. Grunting with relief, he seated himself and regarded the young man.

"What's your name?"

"Hickey—John Hickey."

"What's your job?"

"I'm bossing a rock-cut for Dan Mann."

"Where's Dan now?"

"Two miles east. What's your name, stranger?"

"Van Horne."

John gave a gasp. "Oh, hell!" he exclaimed. "I didn't——"

"That's all right," chuckled the stranger. "Pretty young to boss a cut, aren't you?"

"I'm twenty-six," said John, now red to the temples.

"You'll get over that. How much do you weigh?"

"Bout two fifteen—sir."

Van Horne scanned the big frame with satisfaction: he liked big men when they were well-built, and the proportions of this one pleased him. There was, too, something in the cold candour of the blue eyes that he found attractive, so very shrewdly he made a rapid estimate of this young giant's possibilities, and decided that here was the sort that in the right hands could be made of permanent use. It was a habit of his during construction to keep a sharp watch for those he would need after the tracklayers moved on, and he considered only the cream of thousands who came to play their transitory part.

John, aware of this scrutiny, pulled himself together: he had often heard Van Horne talked about, often wondered what sort of man this demi-god might be—they all did that—all through the mountains, but only a few of the contractors and engineers had ever seen him: now here he was in the flesh with his damp hair plastered down on the great dome-like head, shirt open, the same kind of shirt that John himself wore, socks sagging loosely over his ankles, beard untrimmed, with sunburned neck and gaping breeches, but for all of it emanating something instantly

recognizable, the peculiar air of force, mastery, and decision that was his chief characteristic. Then and there John resolved that here was the man he would like to work for—always.

“Hickey, when this job’s finished, what then?”

“I guess I’ll stick to the road.”

“Rogers, you might think about that.”

The other man, who was chewing hard, said nothing, but nodded, while John’s pulse gave another jump. Rogers! Old Hell’s Bells! Two demi-gods on the same day! He had seen Rogers once in the distance talking to James Ross when it was raining hard, but even so he should have recognized those widespread whiskers. He was leaner than one had expected, and looked something like a very determined piece of dried sinew. John hoped he would say Hell’s Bells, but nothing happened, and just then the blast went off. He counted three shots, which was right, and another slice of Big Hill went crashing into the valley. He gave his chin a jerk.

“All clear now, sir.”

“Want to stick to the road, eh, Hickey?”

“I guess so; there’s nothing else round here and I like the mountains: I was raised in ’em.”

“Well, perhaps the road will stick to you. Come on, major.”

He heaved himself up, and with Rogers riding like a featherweight beside, was soon out of sight. John stood looking after them with a sort of awe: he had an odd feeling that with Van Horne at the other end, life would somehow be different.

At the mouth of a newly opened rock-cut in Rogers' Pass a man in flannel shirt and canvas trousers squatted with his fingers crooked round a six-foot length of drill steel on which descended the rhythmical strokes of long-shafted hammers. These described smooth circular arcs, quickening speed just before they landed, while at each blow the drill gave out a clear musical note and jumped ever so slightly.

Presently, and without looking up, Williams straightened his right thumb; instantly the hammers came to rest and he swabbed the hole with a sapling broomed out at the end, jerking it clear with a spatter of white sludge. A little more water, a fresh drill, and the hammers began again.

The road, blasting its way westward, now scaled the Pass. Thousands of men were spread over five hundred miles of line, and Williams could see innumerable scars in the flanks of the hills, long gashes where timber had been felled and solid rock attacked: smoke rose from these clearings, and temporary bridges began to take form over the ravines.

At noon the men trailed off to the cook camp under shelter of a ridge. In fifteen minutes Williams and his mates came out and were sitting in the sun when there sounded a dozen scattered explosions: rock split into fragments, some rocketing in a deadly rain, others plunging to the valleys below, while wisps of grey vapour slowly dispersed.

Williams counted the shots and gave a contented nod. "All gone, lads; and do you notice our friend up top? Beside yon old cedar, he is."

Looking up they saw a spot of brown.

"He's getting too smart, and I'm after him to-morrow; I want that pelt for my wife next winter."

"Aw—let him live," yawned Paul Tregenna, "he ain't on the payroll but he's one of the gang: here long before we were."

They laughed, for this was almost true, and on the upper slopes that spot of brown had become a familiar sight. The six-year grizzly was growing humanized. At the first irruption of men he retired three miles to the lip of a glacial moraine, from which he made periodical nightly excursions to find what was going on, and would stand with all his wild senses alert looking down at the camp, smelling meat and fire, puzzling over the small lighted windows, strange smells and noises that reached him in the dark.

Gradually, confidence returning, he worked nearer, a giant shape moving without sound over the scarred mountains, till the time when twitching nostrils drew him to a

shed from which he carried off a slab of pork. Its delectable taste, the new gusto of civilization, undid him, and from that moment he lived on thievery: mindful of the thing that years ago had spat at him and hurt, he made no war on man, and learned that if the two-legged animal carried nothing, he was safe.

When on a Sunday some of the drillers climbed the ridges to hunt for wild sheep, the grizzly vanished: on weekdays he listened to explosions, saw splintered rocks soar skyward, and perceived that no threat lay there. The rest of his family had long since shifted to distant fastnesses, but he, now a full-grown male in his prime, stayed on, still Lord of the Mountain, held by that he could never understand.

Williams, Tregenna and David Yule went back to the cut joking, and the hammers recommenced their clamour: no boilers were here, no sigh of air compressors, no steam, no power derricks. Manpower, horsepower, mulepower were building the road, and the mountains were being conquered by axe, steel, pick, bar and shovel, all driven by the thews of men.

What it cost in life none could tell. Men were suddenly dismembered by dynamite, wounded by axes, smashed by rocks and falling timber, but death was brushed aside, their pay sent to the home address should there be one, others stepped forward, and the polyglot army with its teeth of metal, its mechanism of muscle, and its belly fed with pork, gnawed away at the eternal hills.

Beneath this unceasing attack the road took shape: it looked like a monstrous, mutilated worm, headless, tailless, wriggling blindly through the wilderness, chopped in pieces but each piece with a life of its own. Timber toppled from the right of way, sand ridges gaped open, embankments were plastered against precipices, tunnels burrowed through mountain spurs bursting suddenly into sunlight. And men had come from the ends of the earth to labour here.

On Sunday, the partners—they were Cornishmen from the tin mines near Marazion—set out for the heights, Williams carrying a Winchester rifle: they hardly expected to kill anything, but it meant a change from the cut where one's legs got stiff by the end of the week.

Just as they left camp the mail came in from the Columbia, and there was a rush. One letter with the Marazion postmark for Paul Tregenna; he hung back to read it, stopped and looked grave. John was pushing ahead, laughing and talking to David over his shoulder. Presently Paul got David alone and gave him the letter.

"It's from my mother. John's wife is off to Australia with young Blackett, whose father has the big store in Penzance. That came out the day before this was sent."

"God!" said David. "What'll we do, lad—tell him now?"

"No, let him have to-day, anyway: 'tis likely he'll be hearing himself next week."

“He’ll take it hard, Paul.”

“He will, but she was never the woman for John; she’s carried on with others before as he knows, though he pretends he don’t.”

“Every man’s for the woman he wants, lad, good or bad; John was fair crazy about her.”

“Happen he left her too much alone.”

“With the mines closing down, how could he help it?—an’ he was taking back a thousand dollars next year!”

“Then a better woman will get it.”

They went on and up till the camp lay in miniature far beneath and men were like ants moving with incredible slowness. Save for the sound of water rushing through hidden gorges the wilderness basked in silence; it was the seventh-day truce when humanity took breath, while the mountains seemed to stiffen against the next attack, and the three sat staring into the void that by their toil would soon be bridged.

“Far cry from here to Marazion,” said Williams lazily.

Paul nodded.

“An’ eight hours difference on the clocks. Folks over there’ll be thinking it’s bed-time now.”

The two glanced at each other. John was longing for his wife’s arms, and they knew it.

“It’s queer I don’t get any word,” he went on, “an’ me the only married man among ye.”

“There’s much can happen to a letter between here and there,” said David smoothly.

“Maybe, but—how is it ye’ve no wife yourself, lad?”

“There’s women—and women, John.”

“Spoke like one that can’t find what he wants,” chuckled Williams. “A woman,”—here he hesitated—“a woman is what a man goes back to.”

The others had no words for this, and into the gulf at their feet swam the phantom battlements of Michael’s Mount, looking across Mount’s Bay at the small white-walled houses of Marazion. They all knew every foot of it. Presently Williams got up, stretching his muscular arms: there was a good deal of the Spaniard about him, showing in the blue-black hair and dark, close-set eyes.

“I don’t see our friend at the minute, but I’ll bet he’s on to us.”

It was true: the grizzly, not a quarter-mile away, had watched every step they took since leaving the timber: when they rested, he picked a background against which he was invisible, noting that one of the two-legged animals carried something

like the thing that had hurt, and this vexed him because his brute consciousness had suggested that they were all living together, he and the new army on the mountain slopes. Never before had he been followed like this, and to-day he was more angered than afraid: he had no intention to desert the vicinity of the camp, concerning which he felt a vast curiosity, and the farther he retreated, the more loath he was to yield.

“Come on, lads!”

They climbed higher, Williams in the lead. Now they could see the length of Rogers Pass, which looked like a meadow in mid-air, but they knew it to be one with only a skin of long, tough grass. Far to south and west flowed the Columbia, hidden by intervening ridges; eastward the line hugged the slopes, describing extraordinary curves towards the Beaver. The air got thinner and sharper as they ascended, while above them stalked the Lord of the Mountains, who had by this time achieved a sort of contempt for these intruders, till at last they saw him at the edge of a rockslide about their own elevation. In the same moment he lost sight of them, and was masked by a vertical escarpment with a projecting narrow ledge, the one from which Rogers had stared three years previously.

Williams, who had a good head, eyed the spot with approval. “We’ll get him t’other side of that. Come on!”

“There’s no room for a difference on yon track,” objected Tregenna dubiously.

“Well, stay where you are.”

That was enough, and they went on gingerly. A quarter way round the escarpment—it dropped a sheer thousand feet to a booming canyon floored with a raging river—the shelf widened a fraction, and Williams noted dung droppings of mountain sheep, so the track must lead somewhere. Then it narrowed against an overhanging wall so that one stood erect with difficulty.

“Come back while the coming’s good,” warned David Yule.

But Williams felt reckless: he liked the sensation of being poised over an abyss and able to look down at the spindle-topped trees: kicking a pebble, he watched it out of sight, photographing this spot so that he might describe it to his wife and the folk in Marazion. There was a sharp angle ahead, and the track at that point seemed to float off in mid-air, but more dung droppings assured him that it went on.

“I’m going to the finish of this,” said he, “wait if you’d sooner.”

Reaching the angle, he could have touched the grizzly!

For a fraction of a second neither moved. Williams felt his hair prick: he ceased to breathe, and his blood became ice. Then a tremor pulsed through him, and with no time to aim he held the rifle level and fired.

Another report, with the muzzle buried in the dark brown fur, and his paralysed fingers lost their grip. The grizzly, now towering on hind legs, gave one lightning stroke, catching the man on the shoulder, and dashing him against the wall, broken and unconscious. Another—and he hurtled clear off the shelf, gyrating loosely into the canyon.

There was silence save for echoes that leaped back and forth in the bowels of the abyss, while Paul and David stood shaking, staring at each other, then into the depths where their mate had vanished. They had seen only that—not the grizzly—and their legs trembled.

Now on hands and knees they began to crawl back, not daring to look behind lest the shape be following, and once clear of the shelf plunged downward at a steep angle, starting miniature slides, little rivers of running stone that gave out a metallic tinkle.

They need not have run. The Lord of the Mountain was on his haunches, licking two bullet wounds, sniffing the scorched fur. When blood ceased to flow he lowered his huge bulk, standing with head and shoulders projecting over the gulf into which had dropped the thing that vexed him. Then, backing against the rock and upending to turn, he made his deliberate way to a familiar cavern that overlooked the pass.

Big John was on a sidehill watching two powder men at work: they came along, one with a sack of dynamite on his shoulders, twenty-five cylinders in greasy yellow paper, a foot long and thicker than a candle, the other with two coils of fuse under his arm. On the upper side of the cut were five holes each fifteen feet deep, stopped with wooden plugs, and to these they applied themselves, knocking out the plugs, swabbing the holes, pushing into each four of the yellow sticks, ramming them firmly home with a wooden rod.

The side of the fifth and last stick being slit, one of the men cut a twelve foot length of fuse, thrust one end of it into a cap an inch long, put the cap between his teeth and crimped its edges hard, grinning at his mate as he did so. This deadly combination was now thrust home, leaving the end of the fuse a few inches above ground, and the hole tamped tight with earth to the surface. Finally the exposed end of the fuse was split, revealing its core of black powder, fine as dust.

The two worked deliberately, while John regarded them with a critical eye, glad that nitro-glycerine was out of date and that dynamite had taken its place; the oil—as they called it—being a sticky, semi-fluid sort of jelly that one poured into the hole from a can: it was liable to explode on slight concussion, so that in earlier days on the

Fraser whole teams of mules with their drivers had been distributed in fragments when the wagon bumped too heavily over a rocky road. But dynamite, more solid, substantial, and less sensitive, was made of impregnated sawdust: it was apt to freeze, when it became dangerous, but could be readily thawed out not too close to a fire, and in zero weather if only a stick or two was needed the powder man very often carried them inside his shirt from the earth-covered magazine.

The caps, being exploded by the burning fuse, in turn setting off the dynamite, were far more perilous, since they contained fulminate of mercury, and the powder man was provided with pincers to crimp them, but these invariably got lost, so he used his teeth instead, knowing full well that without exceeding care the top of his head would instantly be removed. John, although now hardened, always felt relieved when that part of it was over.

To load five of these deep holes took half an hour, and he waited expectantly, reckoning that they should lift 200 cubic yards out of the cut, which would leave very little to finish the contract—his first contract. He sat on a boulder and began to smoke, thinking of many things. This job done, he would have over a thousand dollars, and be in shape to tackle something bigger.

It had been a hard winter on Big Hill; snowfalls alternating with rain, then frost, then milder weather, and in early summer there came a torrential rush from the heights. The bush was sodden, the tote road a morass. However, one became inured to this: soaking clothes were hung on a rope, to be donned half dry next morning, and the sleeping camps had a sharp acrid smell in which the fumes of tobacco were hardly noticeable. Those structures were well-built and tight, so the men, being sure of a dry mattress, did not fare so badly, but the 'blanket stiffs' in haphazard shacks along the line proved less fortunate. Their bodies were never dry.

Now the steel was being laid westward from Holt City, and men talked of where it might meet Onderdonk coming east. Below Big Hill one could descry the line, most of it graded, some of it even with ties spaced out: they had been hewn on the spot. The lower slopes were scarred with gaping cuts, and down, far down where location ran beside the Kicking Horse, one followed the right of way out of sight, a clean, curving swathe running between palisades of tall, straight spruce.

A familiar view, but John never tired of it. At Yale one had been shadowed by mountains through which the Fraser seemed miraculously to escape, but those, though less high, looked formidable, while here, when one worked in them, they became more human, more intimate, homely and comfortable, unfolding all kinds of unexpected vistas and moods, so that however often one glanced in a certain direction, new angles and reaches, new depths and heights continually presented

themselves.

He felt that way whenever he stared up the valley of the Yoho which lay straight north from Big Hill: it was invitational, giving him a sense of space and distance: it was mysterious, the sort of place where things began, while on the coast everything came to an abrupt end—the mountains—the Fraser and all else. Since he reached Big Hill he had not been 200 yards off the right of way, and now it came to him that he wanted to live in this country—always. It promised something.

He was responding to a thousand influences absorbed during childhood and youth, when for lack of other companionship unconsciously he walked in step with cosmic things. He had developed observation, and what he saw he remembered. Flung by an indifferent world against the breast of nature, he clung there blindly, a prehensile waif, sucking strength from her stony dugs, learning patience with her moods. In the high playground of the gods, from which in a season of the year were tossed their titanic toys of avalanche and rockslide, he felt when such vagaries were to be expected and what caused them, so he, a pigmy, took them as seasonable and of the appointed order. He noted where rivers were born under the dripping lips of great snowfields, and where loose rock menaced the mountain trail. He was part of all this. Even in the slack days at Yale before shame drove him out he had been dumbly aware of it, but needed to discard those who knew him before he could make the full discovery of himself, and to-day he wanted to make friends of things rather than humans.

He was happy here; he had shaken off his former restive sense of inferiority, and began to think less, or perhaps differently, of Mary Moody. That had gone hard at first: the picture of her followed him on the tramp eastward, but it got more dim when he met Nell Regan, and setting Nell against Mary he assured himself that Mary was no man's woman.

But Nell, and he could not shut his eyes to this, was too friendly to many men. She was more than fond of himself, withholding nothing whenever he went to Holt City: her passions were inexhaustible: being with her was like being embraced by nature herself, but this happened with others, and he understood perfectly why and when she told him not to come. She gave herself prodigally, but never to him had she hinted at marriage, and sometimes would draw away and look at him with an expression he could not decipher. He could not imagine himself living with her always, could not trust her enough for that, but her heart was recklessly generous and she seemed the only woman in the world who cared.

The life he now led was physical in the extreme; he read no books or papers, thought of nothing but the work, dropped to sleep the instant he reached his bunk,

yet it was interrupted at odd, unexpected moments by mounting desires that choked him, and for their satisfaction he turned to Nell. She fascinated and disturbed him.

The powder man was straightening up over the last hole: he lit a strip of birch bark, holding its flame to the split fuse that replied with a spitting flash as it began to burn, writhing like a wounded snake. Now he ran to the others in turn, and one could see them spitting till the powder had burned down out of sight, and the solid, undisturbed rock surface leaked smoke at five points through invisible apertures.

The two walked back a hundred feet, where John joined them. There was plenty of time—the fuse being rated to burn at two feet a minute, and they stood without speaking—as one always did when waiting for a blast—till under their feet came a dull knock as though a prisoned Titan had struck upward with a giant hammer. With this the first shot went off, followed at once—so well had the fuse been measured—by the other four in one mighty heave, and amidst these explosions it seemed that the side of the cut had been jolted from its parent body and shifted forward.

Now a vast creaking sound of splintering, a sharp unmistakable smell of burned powder that one could taste, and four hundred tons of rock tilted massively into the gulf below: it separated and plunged, spreading fanwise; it was alive, it bounded and leaped and ran, it sheared trunks of great trees; where there was soil it dug through, inflicting long scars that were projected into green bush, while far up the Yoho and far down the Kicking Horse flats spread a vast, hollow, booming, rattling roar that was gradually stroked to silence in blue depths of mountains.

John knocked out his pipe, went down into the cut and nodded approvingly. The granite had been carved like cheese, leaving little for the rock men to do in cleaning up, and better still, the floor of the cut now lay a shade below grade ready for ballast, ties and rails. A neat job!

“By God,” said the powder man, spitting out the sharp taste and biting off a chew, “we lifted her that time.”

John grinned at him. Good powder men were born, not made, and Dan had sent him a jewel.

“Well, that cleans her up: you’ll find lots more of it in Rogers Pass.”

“When are we moving, boss?”

“Next week: you can hang round till then.”

“Got another contract?”

“Yes, bigger than this: about ten thousand yards of rock and twice as much earth—I’ll let that out in station work.”

“Pretty cold up there in winter, ain’t it?”

“I guess about the same: it’s no higher, maybe more snow.”

"So long as it isn't rain I don't care; had to strike matches on my tongue last week; driest place I could find."

John laughed and moved on, feeling triumphant and free for the next few days. Dan Mann had spoken favourably of him to James Ross, the big contractor; Ross had beckoned him into the private car, and John for the first time sat in a great leather chair in what he considered a palace on wheels. He felt enormously pleased. Ross offered him a cigar, which he smoked, his pulse leaping, his lips oddly dry, while he gazed at this potentate with undisguised curiosity, wondering how a man reached that position and just what took him there. When Ross asked him to have a drink he shook his head, which, though he couldn't know it, had a good deal to do with his getting the contract: so now he was about to move on and up, and since Nell Regan had no intention of leaving the hotel business that affair would come to an end. He didn't know whether he was glad or sorry.

But he must see her again before he left: also he wanted to deposit his money in a safe place: so he tramped back to Holt City, told her what lay ahead and was disconcerted when she took it very coolly.

"Going to be a big contractor, eh?"

"I'm going to try," said he, "it's a fine chance."

"When are you starting?"

"We're moving up the line next week. Say, you could find a job up there too; better come along."

Nell laughed at him. "You're not the only one who's got a contract—I've got one with Cold and Hot: they're sticking here; they say there's more money in it."

"Not much there isn't: the trains will be rolling right through Holt City pretty soon with not a thing to stop 'em: this'll be just a way station with a siding and section house."

"Well, I don't know about that: anyway, I don't care; I'm staying. Now we'll have a drink to your luck."

"I guess not, Nell, thanks just the same. I've never had a drink with you, not once."

"You've had everything else," said she; then, her eyes suddenly and darkly bright: "it sounds as though you were a bit tired of me, John. Is that it—got tired and moving on? Or maybe you've some other girl on the string?"

"Aw, say, you're talking through your hat; there isn't anyone else and you know it."

"Or maybe you're superior now you've got a bigger contract?" Her breast was growing stormy.

"That's all wrong," he expostulated, wondering what was the matter with her, "you've been better to me than any woman ever was, bar none, but I've got to move on: I can't help it; I'm aiming at big things, and now's my chance." He blurted this out, thinking at the same time how attractive she was, the more so in her anger, the sort of woman any man would desire, especially as he might never see her again. So before he went once again he wanted all she had to give in the kind of farewell he would always remember. He was determined on that.

"You don't want to marry me anyway," he added, "you've never said a word about it even when——"

"Even when we should have been," she cut in with a subtle change of manner. "That's right, too; I never said it because I don't want to marry any man, but I loved you and I love you now. I guess you don't understand: if I was roped to a man I'd get tired and quit. It hurts sometimes to feel that, but it hurts more when one like you just sort of waves a hand and says thanks, and goes off! Hell! Do you think I want any thanks?"

"I didn't come here to——"

"Yes, you did, but you didn't know how a woman like me would take it. Well, you know now. Oh God! I wish I was dead."

She hid her face and began to sob: John sat rooted for a moment, feeling brutal and helpless, then put his arm round her.

"Say, Nell, don't take it like that; there's no harm done."

She sobbed the more: a door opened, Coldwater put his head in and vanished with lifted brows; being a man of experience with women, particularly of this sort, he allowed nature to take her course. It had happened before. John heard a laugh from Hotwater in the next room, flushed deeply, and reached for his hat. At this instant Nell looked up and at once her arms went round him.

"John, you big fool!"—she was laughing and crying at once—"you big fool kid, did you think you were going to get away like that?"

Her arms tightened, the rich lips sought his, the warm strength of her body reached him, and they stood locked, straining till she lifted her dark head and looked straight into his eyes.

"You don't know a thing about women, do you?"

"No," he said chokily, "but I love you."

"Then why didn't you tell me that before?" She brushed the tears from her eyes. "Sure I've been good to you: that's all right: but before the next woman does the same thing you've got to have one drink with me. If you don't, I'll come right on to your next job and bring it."

She looked as though she meant it—she did mean it—and John was deeply troubled: he had left drink alone for more reasons than he could remember, good and sufficient reasons: it hadn't paid; he didn't need it; a lot of things he wanted much more, and he feared the next taste of it. Against all this he wanted Nell badly. The struggle went on in him.

"Scared, John? Scared of me, too? Not big enough man to take a drink and kiss good-bye?" Then, with a curious tone and the odd expression he had sometimes detected: "You oughtn't to be scared of it either."

"What do you mean by that?" said he, wondering if she had heard anything about the days in Yale.

"Nothing—nothing at all." She turned away, her strong, white arms now thrusting him back. "Well, good-bye, better not come here any more."

"I'll have a drink," he countered desperately, aching to hold her again.

"Forget it; I've quit too: have it with some other girl; plenty along the line."

"But I want to, I tell you, I want to. Come on!"

"Pretty cold-blooded parting otherwise, eh? You see that now?"

"You're right, Nell: I was a damn fool."

Again she kissed him full on the lips, went out, and came back with a bottle.

"I guess we'll say good-bye upstairs, John: Coldwater's next door."

They went up, his heart pounding, and she stood for a moment at the window, her back to him, not speaking, staring out as though unconscious of his urgent presence, till like a woman who throws all to the winds, she ran to him in a rush, opulent, reckless, prodigal, hungry for his arms.

Later they came down; the liquor in John's brain and the girl's arm in his to steady him. He felt strange, but not content or triumphant: his throat burned, his face was hot, the world hazy. A laugh from Coldwater as they went out. The air tasted good, and he gulped it in. Nell was talking and laughing, but he did not follow what she said, and they took the best road, the one following the banks of the Bow near the track. Not many about now, and those they passed saw nothing unusual in the two. They knew her better than John did.

He tried to walk straight, but took irregular steps, now a short one, now a giant stride over some phantom obstacle, whereat he both smiled and frowned: something had gone wrong. So, breathing deeply and squeezing his lids tight, things around began to steady, memory got to work, and it seemed that no harm was done after all. Also he felt comforted to know that, having drunk a lot of whisky, he really didn't like it, so from now on he'd leave the damned stuff alone, world without end, Amen.

He had decided to explain this, but not just yet, when approaching he made out

two figures, a man and a girl: so, swaying a little, he halted, still balanced by the supporting arm, and with drunken gallantry made a wide, sweeping salute.

Then it appeared that a clean, cold wind blew straight through him, and he stood staring into the wide open eyes of Mary Moody.

It lasted no time: the man with her drew her aside; they passed on, leaving him turning his head slowly, mouth open.

“What’s the matter with you now?” asked Nell sharply.

“Who—who’s that?”

“One of the engineers and Nurse Moody: she got here last week. For God’s sake, straighten up: I’m tired and we’re going back now. You don’t have to be in camp to-night.”

John, filling his lungs again, felt a sort of knock at the base of his brain like the knock of a blast: now he was caught in a blast with big stuff raining down all round and no shelter. Of a sudden he stood erect, terribly sober. Mary Moody!

He looked at the other girl, puzzled, distant, as though she were new to him, frowning, his jaw projecting like a ram: he wanted time—time and solitude for something that would have to be done very quickly. Then in a flash he hated her like poison.

“Get out!” he barked, “get to hell out of this: I’m through.”

He walked on with no backward glance, now master of his body but slave of a tortured mind. Mary Moody! A face from the past! The last woman he had expected to find here, and in Yale she always happened to see him when at his worst. Shaking his head like a bewildered hound he cursed himself. But, again, why after two years should he take the sight of Mary Moody like this? He had never meant anything to her, so what did it matter after all? He had made money—was about to make more—was shaping some day to be a big railway man, and owed nothing as far as he could see to anyone except himself. This he found comforting: it diverted his thought to another channel, and instinctively he felt in his hip pocket.

No money was there.

He searched all his clothing. No money! In a wave of anger he knew who must have it. Drunk or drugged—then robbed! In a cold sweat he considered what he might do. The police? He could not establish anything there; no one in Holt City Hotel knew of it when he went there: he hadn’t to his knowledge shown it, or spoken of it; he couldn’t even prove it had left his own camp. So that’s what it cost to say good-bye to Nell!

Now he feared for the new contract, whether he had money enough to start, having wrecked himself for a bottle of whisky and a slut who picked his pockets.

He walked on, glowering, with no desire to turn back towards his own camp, and presently saw at the edge of the right of way a fire beside which squatted a man, boiling coffee and frying bacon. He looked up.

"Hullo, you big fellow, come on over."

The bacon smelled good and coffee would be about the right thing: also John knew the man, having met him soon after arriving on Big Hill. It was Tom Wilson, a famous guide and Rocky Mountain sourdough, a friend of Rogers and favourably known to all. He had pitched a two-man shed tent.

"Hullo, Tom. All alone?"

"For to-night, yes: what's your hurry? Sit right down."

The fire was a neat affair, just a strip of glowing coals between two small green logs on which sat pan, pot and a dish of hot water: he turned the sizzling bacon with a dry, forked stick, sniffed at the pot, cut slices from a slab of bannock, and produced a tin of butter packed in Nova Scotia. These actions were quietly deliberate with no lost motion: his face was finely modelled and highly intelligent, the lips betraying more than a touch of humour, while his lightly-built body spoke of endurance and physical strength.

"Sit right in, John; how's things?"

"Pretty good, Tom, pretty good: Dan Mann got me a contract near Rogers Pass; I guess it's somewhere up on the Beaver."

"Reckon you'll be a rich man some day?"

"Maybe—I don't know: no, I guess not: I kind of want to stay round here."

"Well, for me that's as good as being rich, maybe better: you sleep better, anyway."

"What's your job now, Tom?"

"I've got to herd a party of Easterners in to see the Lake of Little Fishes."

"Where is that?"

"A bit north of the line, but it's tough going. She's a beauty, John, and I found her myself: the prettiest lake I ever saw and I've seen a lot."

"You found her?"

"August, two years ago. I was camped near some Stonies over Pipestone way, that's just east of here beyond the Divide, when we heard the darndest avalanche come down not so far off; it was one god-awful slide, and the Stonies said it came from Big Snow Mountain above the Lake of Little Fishes. Fishes! says I, and started thinking because we were dead tired of living on sowbelly. Next day I went in and found that lake: I guess I'm the first white man that ever set eyes on it. Now those Easterners have heard of it. There's Jim Ross and Brothers and some more that

want to see it too. I told 'em it was tough going, but they say they don't mind. I want a couple of axemen, so you'd better come along: I've seen you at one end of an axe."

John, drinking his coffee, considered this. Why not? He'd have another look at Ross, perhaps another talk with him: also he liked Wilson. Further, it would take him clean away for a day or two, and get the bad taste out of his mouth.

"Well," he agreed, "I might do that."

"Glad to have you, and there's a plenty of blankets: I've started a couple of packers in to make camp. You can't ride, it's too rough, but there's no devil's club like on the Illecillewaet."

"I came up the Illecillewaet," said John reminiscently, "I walked from Yale."

"Found the country all on edge in the Selkirks, didn't you? I was camped up there a while ago, and one night when it rained hard we were sitting round the fire trying to dry out and heard a noise in the bush. I gave a yell and two fellows came out dead beat and hungry as hell. Lost, b'God! Darned if one wasn't an English Lord something or other, and he was certainly locoed: didn't seem to know how he got there, and said he had to catch a boat from New York next week. Think of that—New York! The water was running out of his ears, but all he thought about was catching that boat, while it would take him a week to hit the Columbia if he ever struck it at all. I never heard what happened to him. Then Sandford Fleming came over the Pass with young Al Rogers and a parson called Grant; they had a tough time, too. Fleming was sent by the Government to find out if old Hell's Bells was lying when he reported that the road could be put through. Never saw Hell's Bells, did you?"

"Once—no, twice."

"You'll strike him somewhere up the Beaver. Made out pretty well here, haven't you?"

"Yes, I guess so; but, say, Tom, I've been a damned fool."

"Which kind of one?" Wilson was now boiling water in the pan, scrubbing it with moss. "I guess you didn't hit anything new—more coffee?"

"Thanks, no. I just got drunk and lost 500 dollars."

"Lifted?"

"Sure—lifted: I never thought she was that——"

"It's my observation," interrupted his host placidly, "that a man makes a mistake when he starts discussing women: the right kind don't need it, while the others don't feel it. What's the use? You take 'em as you find 'em, or else leave 'em alone."

"I guess you're right, Tom."

"I haven't had much experience myself, but sort of keep my eyes open, and what strikes me is that what's easy to get ain't worth keeping. As for that 500, it's rough at your age, but if you learn where the hard spots are when you're young, it ain't so liable to happen again. We'd better turn in; it's no picnic steering tenderfeet through the bush."

He poured dishwater on the fire, hung the pots in a sack from a tree, laid a little dry wood under cover for the morning, rolled up coats and pants for a pillow, and instantly fell asleep.

She wore long, leather-laced boots, a short skirt, flannel blouse and wide-brimmed felt hat, but John knew her a hundred yards away where he waited with Wilson and the other axemen at noon on the next day. As the group came up he saw that Ross, whom he had hoped to meet, was not amongst the three men he did not know, and the two women of whom Mary Moody was one. With a growing sense of discomfort he learned that the men were from Montreal and interested in the road, and the other woman Mrs. Ross. Then he got a cool little nod from the girl. She had hardly smiled.

"Introducing Mr. John Hickey," said Tom gallantly, "he's a contractor just taking the day off and an artist with the axe. Well, we've a hard trip in front of us: better get moving."

At once they plunged into thick bush, Tom behind the leading axeman, who immediately became very busy, then the three men, Mrs. Ross, and lastly Mary, followed by John. On his shoulders was a bulging pack containing the day's needs and a canvas shelter in case of rain.

Now the last sound from the right of way dwindled to nothing and they walked through an abyss of silence. The line lengthened, spacing out as the ground became steeper: they wound through a great talus of loose rock tumbled from the heights: there were no birds and little game, but at times one could hear a startled elk dashing off with coughing grunts and clatter of flying hooves. Every half hour Tom insisted on ten minutes' rest, when there was little talk, and later the ground became so rough, the trail so crooked, that John found himself alone with Mary. Neither spoke, and she held on grimly. They had dropped well behind when she tripped, fell, and gave a little cry of pain. She sat up, clasping her knee.

"Hurt, miss?"

"Not much; I'll be all right in a minute; that knee isn't very good, anyway."

She got up, stumbled again, and collapsed, frowning. John, not a little frightened,

put his hands to his mouth and gave a long “*Coo—eee*” that echoed far: it brought Tom back on the trot, but Mary laughed at him.

“Please don’t wait—go on; I’ll catch up presently.”

“Well, if you’re sure. Matter of fact, we’ll have to push on to get there before dark—Mrs. Ross is keeping me busy right now.”

“You go on,” said John abruptly, “I’ll get her there.”

What emboldened him to say it he did not know, but Tom nodded and went off at once: then from far ahead a faint call and silence deeper than before. John didn’t know it could be so deathly quiet in the woods: he waited till Mary made another attempt and shook her head.

“I’ll have to go back.”

“I’ll carry you,” he blurted, looking at her sideways.

“You can’t.”

“That’s nothing.” He tightened the straps a little so that the pack came level with his shoulders, then picked her up as he would a child, set her on a stone and stood behind her, axe in hand. “Now you sit right down! Come on, you can’t fall.”

She sat, marvelling, on his left shoulder, finding herself perched securely and surprisingly comfortable when he tucked her feet under his left arm.

“Mind your eyes for branches: I’ll clear all I can: grab my collar—that’s right.”

He moved on, oblivious of her weight, stepping firmly, now and then swinging the axe at a branch stretching low across the trail so that its edge flashed past her head and she seemed compassed by shining steel: there was no effort in this; beneath her he felt like a great two-legged machine, intelligently human; he neither hastened nor lagged, nor could she hear him breathing; his knotted biceps pressed against her legs.

“All right, miss?”

“Yes—and you?”

“I don’t notice it—you’re no weight.”

She gripped his collar more tightly: they could distinguish voices in front that came no nearer, and she knew he was keeping just out of sight.

“John?”

“Yes, miss?”

“Why did you come on this trip?”

“I wouldn’t if I’d known: Tom didn’t tell me you’d be here.”

“Oh!”

He forged on, wondering if he’d been rude: it sounded rude, but was meant for an apology. Queer, he thought, to be walking through the woods like this and on his

shoulder a girl who had turned up from Yale and knew all about him. The Rake and Bulldog knew, but that was different, and he could not forget yesterday.

“John, did you mean that?”

“I did, but not the way you took it: any man would feel the same; but it was the first drink I’d had for a year, then you came along.”

“I’m glad—and sorry,” said she.

“I don’t quite get you, miss: it don’t matter.”

“Glad it was the first, and sorry I came along just then. You see,” she went on a little hurriedly, “I only reached Holt City a week ago, and haven’t been in Yale for a year past.”

“What happened?”

“I wasn’t very well, and went east: Dr. Hanington shipped me off. The end of steel was away up on the Thompson, and very little doing in Yale, so I went back to my people for a long rest. Then I missed the mountains so much that I had to come back for a while anyway. I’ve often wondered about you, you’ve never written as I asked, and you’ve changed.”

“Yes, I guess I have: I’m a contractor now.”

“That’s fine.”

He could hardly believe it: she didn’t seem to care about yesterday; she’d often thought about him. It was on his tongue to explain about Nell and the dollars, but he remembered Tom’s counsel.

“I’m kind of glad you’re pleased, miss.”

“We’re camping to-night at the lake, aren’t we?”

“That’s right.”

“Then you’ll tell me all about it: I want to know.”

At this she felt him take a long breath, but he did not answer: there came a whiff of wood smoke, and at the next turn of the trail she saw the others round a fire. John put her down lightly, and Mrs. Ross gave a laugh.

“Well, Mary, you’ve certainly solved the problem of transportation; I feel like changing places. How are you?”

“All right now, thanks to Mr. Hickey.”

Mrs. Ross surveyed the young giant with admiration. “I’m going to tell my husband about you, Goliath.”

“He knows me already, ma’am,” stammered John. “I got a contract last week, thanks to him.”

“Probably he was afraid to refuse. Well, then, when you’re ready for another, let me know and I’ll pick a nice one.”

“That’ll suit me, ma’am.” John turned crimson, whereat she liked him the more.

Three hours later, emerging from a tunnel of green, they found camp already pitched on a bay of the Lake of Little Fishes, and even John was impressed. Lakes a-many he had seen before, but none quite like this, none so like a sapphire in the secret heart of the mountains. On either side at a steep angle rose vertiginous slopes whose flanks presented an innumerable assembly of tall trees standing in a breathless pause. Above them slept wind-whipped heights of naked rock. Opposite, southward across the lake—it might have been four miles—lifted a vast rampart capped with an ice-field of immeasurable expanse, that when it wept under a hot sun wept into the lake. Its frosty depth of a thousand feet floated imponderably in mid-air, a sort of vacant, moonlike region, untraversed by the eagle, unsealed by the mountain sheep. These, empty heights, glacier and tree-clad slopes, cast themselves into the lake’s mirror, painting an inverted world that dissolved with every ripple, mysteriously coalescing again when the ripple died. One could shatter it with a stone only to watch it swim together, infrangibly complete, a picture puzzle assembled by the mountain gods.

Tom Wilson said very little, but was pleased that his lake surpassed all expectations: sometimes it occurred that it might be named after him, but already there were Lake Wilsons scattered over Canada, and the sound was not very euphonious, so he nodded contentedly when Mrs. Ross suggested that it be called Lake Louise, after the Marchioness of Lorne, whom all Canadians had learned to love. After supper he sat for some time with John, talking about these ranges which he knew, and about Rogers and Hector, the engineer, who had had a near thing of it not far away.

“Yes, sir, he was kicked by a horse in the belly, and laid unconscious for hours, and about to be buried by his Indians when he let out a grunt just in time. They had the hole all ready for him, and were letting him down when he gave that grunt. That’s why it’s called the Kicking Horse Pass to-day. Well, I’m for hitting the brush heap: so long.”

He went off, leaving John staring at the great glacier, now glinting like silver: it was as big as the big one he saw coming over Rogers Pass. A loon began to laugh out in the lake, waking the echoes to a wild, mocking clamour. It made him feel lonely. He had wanted to carry Mary again in the afternoon, but she wouldn’t have that, and had hardly spoken to him since. He wished she would—she had said she would—but evidently wasn’t really interested. Just then he heard a light step.

"Well, John?" She was beside him with a hood over her head, and he got up. "No, sit down, go on smoking: I wanted to talk with you, but Mrs. Ross has been talking to me. I think she's ready to be a good friend of yours, which is very worth while out here. Now, tell me about everything since—since nearly two years ago."

"There isn't much," said he, "I just walked over here from Yale and got a job."

"You walked!"

"Certainly I walked."

"How far is it?"

"I don't rightly know, miss, maybe four hundred miles."

"Is that all? Well, go on."

"Of course, I took jobs on the way to help along."

"I see: was there any road?"

"Not that you'd notice, miss: I guess that's all there is to tell you. You haven't any news from Yale?"

"I wasn't there very long after you left."

"I wasn't any good in Yale," he volunteered reflectively.

"Then why talk about it now?"

"Your being here sort of brought it up," he floundered, "I thought of Yale the minute I saw you—last night."

"John,"—she put a small hand on his arm—"I've forgotten last night; you're not married, are you?"

"Gosh! no, and that—that woman," he persisted, "is the only one I've talked to in a year except you and Mrs. Ross."

At this she sent him a swift, sidelong look, and began picking up pebbles, tossing them into the lake.

"Never mind about her; go on."

"Well, miss, I'm sort of pumped dry: there isn't anything more to tell you; I've just been working; nothing's happened except that contract; there wasn't anything else that could happen. I suppose I thought a lot, I guess without knowing it, and what little I did know turned out useful. I want to stay with the road after it's finished, and have something to do with what comes next. That's not interesting to a woman."

"Perhaps not to some, but to others, yes. We're not all the same, John."

"It's no life for a woman, that I can see."

"You don't know much about them, do you?"

"No, I guess not," he admitted, greatly startled at this confirmation of an opinion from a very different source. "Not the right kind; I never had much of a chance."

"But the chance might come. You see," she went on hurriedly, "I've had a bit of

this western life too, and don't feel like judging anyone now. We never can know it all, can we?"

John, very much wanting to illuminate her about Nell, shook his head and said nothing. Also he thought of Molly Kelly: kind enough in a way and not stinting a few dollars here and there, but certainly not the right kind. Against these two he put this girl, younger than either, yet undoubtedly wiser, with a sort of wisdom that he could appreciate though not quite understand. But one could bank on her being right every time. Also she didn't condescend, but in an odd way picked him up to herself and talked on the level. "I wish to God I'd gone to school," he thought to himself, then:

"I guess you're right, miss. I'll freeze on to that and every chance that comes along."

"Do I talk too like a school teacher?"

"Well, miss, you've certainly got the goods."

She laughed and sat watching him slyly, aware of the quiet, agate-blue eyes and mop of flaxen hair, wondering what was going on under that yellow thatch. She found strength in his face now; its former indecision appeared to have been worn away by exposure, and it occurred to her that the outlines chiselled in nature by wind and weather are always calm and strong. He had that look. As to Nell—for already she knew about her—that matter had ceased to disturb, and left her with a deep desire to help. It was not yet love, but deliberately she associated herself with this man, and pondered what the result might be: being carried hour after hour on his shoulder through that long, green tunnel was a strange experience and she loved that. Like most small women she was attracted to big men; they seemed to restore a cosmic balance—they were so immune from fatigue or fear—and this one was linked by destiny with the high ranges where his work lay. It pleased her to think of that.

"I'm glad you're living in the west, John: don't move east, you'd never like it."

"No, I guess not: can't see far enough."

"Stay here and conquer the mountains: that's what you're made for."

John shook his fair head. "As I see it, miss, that ain't just right: to my mind, you don't conquer any mountains; they ain't built like that. When I came along and saw where old Hell's Bells—that's Major Rogers—located the track, it struck me he knew his job and sort of edged his way through hoping the mountains wouldn't notice too much and object. I guess that's a fool way to put it, but you can't do more with mountains than make friends with 'em and learn their little tricks and not get too fresh or they'll drop something on you."

"Go on, John; I'm learning a lot."

"Well, that's what I aim to do: I ain't meant for a boiled-shirt country; I'd choke to death. I'm finished with Yale—never want to see it again—or anyone in it. Molly Kelly and that lot are all wiped out. Never heard from her after you left, did you, miss?"

"No, but she still worked at the hospital every afternoon: I know that much."

"Did she ever tell you she'd offered me 500 for my claim if I cleared out?"

"No."

"Well, she did, but I've never seen the money: I guess it was a bluff to get rid of me." He shook his head, frowning. "She said I'd have to get a contract first. Pretty slick, wasn't it?"

Mary worried over this for a moment, then:

"I'd be very slow to believe that: she's honest, she wouldn't trick you: did you write for the money?"

"No, I saw through it. She never really liked me and I never knew why, though sometimes she pretended she did. One of the Kellys told me the claim gave coarse gold the next year, so I guess she had a hunch."

"It wasn't being worked when I left: there's something wrong somewhere, John: she used to talk to me about you, and she wondered where you were."

"Well, it don't matter now," said he, with a sudden recollection of how queer Molly looked as she went splashing through the shallow pools across the bar, "I'm going to make good without her money."

She sent him a quick, wistful glance, then fixed her eyes on the glacier whose alabaster surface lay in high seclusion under a scimitar moon, and there reached her a breath of that austere loneliness expressed by nature ere man, the sentient molecule, invades her privacy: this imposed a sense of futility and unimportance.

"John, I must go now, but promise me something."

"Sure, miss."

"I won't be in Holt City for long: I'm offered a good job in a big Montreal Hospital; so will you write to me sometimes and tell me how the work goes?"

"Why, certainly, but my writing isn't what it might be: I haven't written three letters in my life."

"It'll be good enough," she smiled, "and I'll tell you about my job, which won't be half as interesting: and I'm terribly grateful for the way you got me here, and—and I hope you won't make a practice of carrying young women about on your shoulder for—for exercise. Good night, Christopher!"

She had gone before he knew it. And who was Christopher?

When they said good-bye after returning to the right-of-way next day, John felt

hurt. There were a lot of things he had wanted to talk about: she seemed to have loosened something inside him that up till now had been locked up: he was conquering the feeling that between them was a sort of gulf of difference that could not be bridged, and this made him ambitious, with a new kind of confidence. But it appeared that either she was tired or didn't want to say anything more; she walked close behind Mrs. Ross, so there was no opportunity: and even when she put her hand in his and thanked him again, there was nothing but her thanks and a strained smile that might have meant anything—or nothing. Its effect was to set him back where he was before, so he set off to his own camp feeling that his imagination had run away with him, and he had better forget these two days and apply himself to realities in which Mary Moody had no part at all.

A week later he tramped over to Holt City to arrange for supplies on the new contract, and found the place buzzing: a group of men had gathered outside Coldwater's hotel, but John, wary of meeting Nell, went on till he encountered Whispering Steve who was talking with husky animation, the centre of a fascinated audience. At sight of John he waved a long, skinny arm.

"Say, you knew him in Yale, didn't you?"

"Knew who, Steve?"

"Bulldog Kelly."

"I kind of knew him: what about it?"

"Then I guess you'll be wanted for a witness. The Rake has lit out."

"What in Sam Hill are you talking about?"

"Murder! Bulldog's killed Jim Baird."

"Eh?"

"They found his body a while ago just past Hog Ranch—that's Ed. Johnson's stopping place near Golden. Darned if Kelly didn't try and kill Jim's packer too. Packer's with the police now, and they won't let him talk, but I got it straight."

"Why did Bulldog kill him?"

Whispering Steve was pleased to oblige. After a good many years of colourless activity, the most strenuous being devoted to whacking bull-teams uphill, he had unexpectedly attained a position in which the white light of publicity shone round him with welcome radiance. He had sat in a game destined to be notable with notorious gamblers on either side, he had actually made money; one of them had disappeared and the hands of the other were red with blood. He had drunk the dead man's whisky, and exchanged with him such limited pleasantries as the situation allowed; he had observed the roll of three thousand dollars which, added to the calling of a gambler's bluff, lighted the fires of cupidity and revenge.

This concatenation of circumstances provided the high spot in Steve's life, and would furnish inexhaustible conversational material for the rest of his days. He was more than grateful.

"Why did he kill hem! Well, sir, I'll tell you how it started, and you'd oughter have been there. Gosh! The four of us were having a game up in Coldwater's place, and it seems Jim knew the pair from the start, and just lay low while his wad got thicker an' thicker. Then he quits, looks at 'em both like as they'd made a bad smell, and says he was on to 'em two years previous in Yale. Bulldog—I guess he'd drunk too much of Jim's whisky—seems kind of hurt, but The Rake—he hadn't had anything but sarsaparilla—is just as polite as one of them starched collar pilgrims from the east. Now Bulldog reaches for his gun, but he ain't quick enough—Jim has his irons out first—and he puts his wad so's he can feel it when he sits down, and says something to The Rake about chewing up the ace of spades. Well, sir, you ought to have seen Kelly's face: he didn't say a word, but just sat there kind of green, so I guess it did happen somewhere, maybe in Yale. Then Jim goes out, calm as a chunk of ice, and Bulldog begins to talk. Well, sir, it was a treat: I've had a vocabulary myself, but ain't in his class, and I sure never could talk to a mule as he did about Jim Baird: no mule'd stand for it. I guess The Rake smelled murder before long, and just sat there shaking his head. Then they both looked at me and I took the air with ninety dollars of their money."

"Well, go on. How long ago was that?"

"Maybe three months. I was figuring that Jim was liable to be held up, but he got out to Helena all right, and came back and collected another roll—it seems he was running grain alcohol down the Columbia—and started back once more with his packer and Manual Dainard, but this time Bulldog was ready for him. Those three were riding up towards the Flats, Jim in the lead, packer on the drive, when someone pokes out a rifle behind a stump and shoots Jim through the heart. The others flew, and a second shot goes through the cantle of the packer's saddle and cuts his thigh but not so bad that he can't get back to Ed. Johnson's. He takes to the bush on the way. Now Jim's money is in the pad of a pack-saddle, and when they got back it was cut clean open and the money gone."

"But who saw Bulldog do the shooting? Maybe it wasn't him at all."

"When I aim to tell a story, I aim to tell it in my own way," said Steve with dignity. "If you don't like it, go an' chase yourself."

"Aw, say, I wasn't meaning anything like that. Have a cigar?"

"Sure—that's all right—thanks. Well, sir, it works out this way: a couple of days later, Bulldog is seen to ford the Kicking Horse at Golden. He moves down to

Donald to a camp where some of his friends hang out west of that, and about that time a rifle—a Winchester .45-75 is picked out of the ford. Kind of queer, ain't it? Now, right here comes in Jim Taynton: Jim was camped near the second crossing of the Columbia, when who turns up but Bulldog. He rode up on a mule, and allowed he'd trade it for a canoe—any canoe that'd float. Likewise he tried to buy an ivory-handled six-shooter off Jim. Well, he fell down on both trades and takes the mule and starts off for Red Duggan's—that's Jack Duggan—and Jack gathers in the mule and starts down river with Bulldog, who says he was in business in Spokane. Well, sir, as soon as they'd crossed the line, one night in camp when it was raining, darned if Bulldog didn't fetch out a pile of cut bills—tens, twenties an' fifties—and start sticking 'em together with paste an' stamps. 'Where in hell did you get all them cut bills?' asks Red, and Bulldog says he's a citizen of the U.S.A. an' the rest is none of Red's goddam' business. Then Red comes back an' tells the police, and that's as far as she goes up to the present."

"They'll get him yet," said John with conviction.

"Someone'll get him," agreed Steve, now feeling the strain on his vocal cords; "he's heading right for it, though I guess he don't know it: there's only one end to them tin horns. Well? I guess I'll liquidate."

He moved off, assured of a new audience when his voice recovered, leaving John in thoughtful mood: the news was interesting, though not altogether surprising, and he wondered if this was Bulldog's first killing. Probably not. Also he felt quite sure that The Rake would highly disapprove, if indeed he knew anything about it. But one was finished with them both now, finished with the old days at Yale, and heading for something better.

He was nearing Ross's office to put in a requisition for supplies—Ross being ready to furnish all he needed, and deduct the amount from progress estimates—when at a turn he encountered Nell Regan. She came straight up to him.

"Hullo, Christopher, I've been looking for you."

He got very red, but understood at once that the packer must have overheard something.

"Well," he said roughly, "keep on looking, I'm busy."

She laughed in his face. 'There's no shame in her,' he thought.

"I've been expecting you back this week past."

"Not back to you?"

"Sure, John: don't you want your money—or maybe you've enough without it?" She took a roll of bills from her pocket; "I don't know how much there is, but it's here, anyway. What's the matter with you now?"

"Nothing!" he floundered, flushing hotly. "Thanks."

At this she lifted her head, eyes suddenly hard and metallic, staring at him, through him, till slowly her expression changed, her body seemed to droop and two large, bright tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You—you thought I'd stolen it!" she said in a husky voice.

"Aw, no," he protested. "No, Nell, I never did; I never thought that of you—I just missed it—couldn't remember what I'd done with it. Cut that out."

She pressed her hand to her mouth, gripping a clenched finger with strong white teeth, looking up at him, primitive, passionate, and cut to the heart.

"All right—we'll—we'll let it go at that, but you're a pretty poor liar: better count it right now."

"Honest, Nell, I didn't mean it: I got drunk and——"

"Sure you did: you loved me, and I made you drunk, but took your money so as someone else wouldn't lift it, and you made a wrong guess about that, and now it's over and you've got your wad, so there's nothing more to it. That's what you figure?"

"Yes," he conceded unwillingly.

"Then you might have said so right away. Well, there's something else now; it has to do with another woman—one something like me—and I'll bet you thought she was crooked too."

"Who's that?"

"You knew Molly Kelly in Yale?"

"Yes, but she isn't in your class: I don't want to talk about her and——" he broke off, bewildered. "How in——?"

"Wait—I haven't started yet: Molly made a deal with you on some claim, didn't she?"

John gaped at her.

"I reckoned you'd take it that way: she said she'd give you five hundred when you wrote for it, and you never wrote. Why was that?"

"I didn't want it, and didn't have to: I'd done with her."

"Well," said the girl gently, "Molly was a friend of mine."

"You've got me locoed," said he, completely confused, "you've never been in Yale—told me so yourself."

"There's other places besides Yale."

He stood frowning, shaking his head. "Why can't you give me the rest of it? She didn't mean anything to me."

"Is—that—so! Well, here's some of it." She felt in her blouse and brought out a

small folded paper. "There's your five hundred; it's marked good by the bank so you can cash it right here—does that make you feel any different?"

He took it stupidly, gazing first at her then at the cheque with an extraordinary feeling of having been shadowed, shadowed since the day he left Yale. He felt choked.

"John!" said she.

"Well?"

"Put that in your pocket and come over to the hotel for a minute: you needn't be scared this time. There's something else, and this isn't just the right place."

He followed, wordless: she took him to the room where he had been before; now she was different, softer, gentler and he too; his mind was in a daze; he felt on the edge of things—queer things—and was nervous of he knew not what. She continued to glance at him as though wanting to speak but not quite sure of herself till finally it came in tones strained and unnatural.

"Where and when I met Molly doesn't matter; anyway we liked each other from the start. She went to Yale and I struck Calgary, then came west with Coldwater because I knew how to run an hotel. Molly and I kept on writing to each other, and about five months ago there was a letter saying that if you came along I was to—well—keep an eye on you and not mention her. I wrote back and said you'd just showed up on Big Hill. Then she sent me that cheque and said you were to have it when you got a good contract of your own, and not before. Well, John, I kept an eye on you all right, maybe too much of an eye, and I fell for you; there were others, but you came first. I never wanted to spoil your chances, and the other day I guess my foot slipped because you were pushing off up the line and I hated to see you go. I know enough to know better, but every now and then a woman is just a woman and nothing else, that explains the cheque part of it."

"Go on," he creaked.

"Yesterday I got another letter from Yale, one of Molly's girls wrote it saying she was dead. It's kind of queer you never guessed it, John, but she was your mother."

FROM the eastern gateway to Rogers Pass one looks down two thousand feet into a vast tree-lined abyss through which a glacier-fed river curvets a sinuous course between banks and bars of shining gravel towards the Columbia. Up the slopes of this depression the line location sidled ever higher to gain entry to the Pass, where, as though protesting its passage in lonely and crystalline rebellion, rose the triple peaks that Rogers had spied as he toiled eastward through devil's club and fallen timber in the gorge of the Illecillewaet.

The proportions of this wild setting suited the colour of mind in which John Hickey now found himself: he had shaken off Holt City with all that pertained thereto: he felt drugged and clubbed: he had no ambition left except for work: it seemed proven that work was the sole purpose for which nature designed him, and he attacked his contract with savage, silent energy.

A sense of unreality followed him. For a short time he had been fool enough to imagine that some day the girl he now wanted might be within reach, that he would rise in service of the company, they would marry and live amongst these companionable mountains. He had dreamed of learning from her much that he wanted to know, so that the might move amongst her sort when occasion required with the same confidence that he had with his own kind. Van Horne had intimated that if he stuck to the road, the road would stick to him. He had no social ambition, but those few moments with the boss of the all-red line infused him with the desire for self-development: he was conscious now of the passage of time, and aimed at lifting himself clear of rock cuts, explosives and station work. Surrounded by those who were content with this rude horizon, he himself had become discontented, and that night by the shore of the Lake of Little Fishes only sharpened his restlessness. He wanted much, but not all for himself.

It was suddenly over, blasted by four words from Irish Nell, and the memory of the man, stirring, bubbling, brought to the surface much that time and distance had begun to blur, so that on the shelves of his mind there now presented themselves a host of small happenings that had merely vexed or puzzled him at the time, and for which the sudden, blasting truth was the only explanation. They set him firmly back where he belonged.

He did not argue with himself either at the moment or later, and characteristically asked no questions. He only looked strangely at Nell, made a queer noise in his throat and walked off! Molly was his mother, and—well—he didn't want to talk about it. There was roused in him no regret on her account, though he conceded a

grave appreciation that she had kept the truth to herself: he could not grasp what her self-immolation had involved, and in his own direct fashion merely assumed that she had been too ashamed to tell him: it was natural for her to bail him out of jail, want him to make good, and send him the five hundred dollars.

He did not feel tainted, and was no child of sin, but he could not now marry any woman without first telling her who he was; and this, it seemed, ruled out Mary Moody, who had talked about Molly, gently, generously, but would never give herself to Molly's son. That was obvious, and with a blind instinct that approached bigotry, he accepted the stigma. She was, he argued, too different. Part of him, the secret part, loved her, but he did not understand love: all he had so far experienced was desire and passion much as a healthy animal feels hungry. The soul of the man still slept.

During that autumn of '84 the end of steel moved on over the first crossing of the Columbia to winter headquarters on the Beaver River, and here there collected another cosmogony, the last of those transitory axe-hewn towns hacked out of solid bush to house the builders of the line. It was divided by a bridge over the glacial stream: on one side were the office and storehouses of Ross, the barracks of Steele who commanded a small detachment of Mounties, a log-walled jail with capacity for thirty prisoners, separate accommodation for females, a court-room and stables. Across the bridge swarmed another element of gamblers, liquor dealers and roving women whose numbers were recruited from over the border where Hill had completed the Great Northern, the road on which American Congress counted to seduce British Columbia from the Canadian Commonwealth. But the only menace it achieved was to send its human scourings drifting north where in the Selkirks they resumed a lawless activity.

Steele was perfectly at home in these hard-fisted surroundings. Intimate experience with malefactors on the plains, forceful dealings with predatory Indians, a powerful body inured to fatigue, a mind quick to decide and act, a courage that never failed—these at once established him as the arm of law in the valley of the Beaver; but much as he might desire there were things he could not do. The Selkirks were British Columbian territory, and a local sheriff administered the pliable regulations of the Province; he issued licenses for the sale of liquor under Steele's nose, imposed such moderate fines as his fancy might suggest, shutting his eyes to much that was illicit, so that when Steele felt prone to intervene, his hand was too often stayed for lack of authority. Here one found disorderly houses, here drunken men were 'rolled', searched and robbed, but so often as he might, it was Steele's merciful custom to land the drunkard safely in jail before the robbing could take

place. Ross did not permit these establishments to bring in supplies by his construction trains, which occasioned much burglary, but there was always the Columbia to carry loaded scows from Canal Flats and round the Big Bend.

From John's new camp higher up, this huddle of buildings was about fifteen miles, but he never went there except for payroll money, and then rode fully armed with his foreman leading by a hundred yards and another man behind. It was on one of these days in November when a letter came from Mary Moody asking why he had not written, and telling of her own work in the Montreal hospital to which, she said, a Mr. Donald Smith had promised a large sum of money. She understood he had something to do with the line, and did John know about him? She hoped he had not forgotten the Lake of Little Fishes. Again, why had he not written? And she sent him a book she thought he would like.

John read the letter in the log shack he had knocked together for himself. It was twelve feet square, and had a pork-barrel chair like the one in Dan Mann's office: there was a table flap that folded against the wall, the logs were chinked with mud and moss, the roof of split cedar scoops, very warm, watertight against the heaviest rain and strong enough to carry a weight of snow. Sometimes twenty feet of it fell in the Pass.

Outside, a pile of wood cut and split for the sheet-steel tubular stove: one could stuff it at night, shut off the draught, and find red coals at daybreak. In a corner he had fashioned a sort of locker desk for the daily record of work done, which Dan Mann had told him he must certainly keep if he wanted to know where he stood. This he considered the only real home he had ever had—very different from a shanty on the slopes of the Jew's Nose—and in a grim, silent, self-contained way he felt as happy as he ever would be.

Things had gone well with him during these last few months: earthwork was over for the season on account of frost, but from rock cuts still came the clink of steel and boom of blasting. Dan, acting as right hand of Ross, dropped in frequently, when the two giants, dark and fair, would talk and smoke round the tubular stove, and more than once Dan hinted that Ross, for some reason or other, had his eye on young Hickey, and if all went well still better things were in store.

A grey day and flurry of snow when Mary's letter came. In the evening he read it again, carefully. "Always your sincere friend." It being one of the first letters he had ever received he assumed this to be the customary signature, more of a society phrase than "yours truly": it was kind of her to write; she sounded busy and said that her work was in the surgical ward. And she would be anxious to know what he thought of the book.

John had never read anything but the *Inland Sentinel* and some paper-covered trash he picked up in Yale, so he opened the parcel with no particular interest. "Mr. John Hickey, Contractor, Care of Mr. James Ross, Superintendent of Construction, Rogers Pass, Canadian Pacific Railway, British Columbia", written in small, block letters, very clear and painstaking. He liked the "Contractor" part of it. *Lorna Doone*—a queer name for a book! Inside was written: "John Hickey, from his friend Mary Moody, Montreal, October 29th, 1884." Now he trimmed the lamp and began to read.

He read on and on. Rogers Pass was blotted out; the north-west wind began to whistle across from the Illecillewaet, but settling the more solidly in the pork-barrel chair he heard it not. By God! After the first few pages he knew how John Ridd felt. Chin on chest, and with curious breathlessness, he burrowed into the immortal tale, absorbing every word with a deliberate tenacity till the pages grew dim and he became aware of a smoky smell as the lamp burned down.

It was three in the morning when, in a sort of dream, he looked out. At the triple peaks streamed thin wreaths of flying snow whipped from their summits like meteor trails; the roofs of camp buildings were white with it; snow was covering the floors of the rock cuts, plastering against derrick masts and ginpoles, blanching the north-west sides of the tall, green spruce, outlining window-frames, piling in curving little mounds in the lee of storehouse and magazine. Winter had come to Rogers Pass.

John, rubbing his tired eyes, did not care. He had discovered another world.

A hard season in Rogers Pass, thickening the upper icefields, plastering millions of tons of weight on overhanging cornices where avalanches would later be born and come roaring down when the Chinook breathed eastwards from the Pacific; while below the timber-line the woods were muffled in a blanket that on the south branch of the Illecillewaet lay twenty feet deep; but though work was perforce spasmodic on the grade leading up to the Pass, nevertheless it persisted where a thousand men toiled amid bitter wind and flying snow on these dismembered sections of the snake that could never die.

Cuts gaped; the right-of-way was cleared between the first and second crossing of the Columbia; one could now trace the location looping tortuously around hanging valleys, squirming through ravines, and at times plunging into the black mouth of a half-driven tunnel: everywhere it climbed, using it might be two miles of future track to gain easting or westing of half that distance. Thus approached the consummation of the vision that came to Rogers before an axe was laid to a tree.

John glowed in this struggle on what looked like the roof of the world, and kept his reading till Sundays, when for an hour or two he shut himself up and lived amongst the crags and farms of Devon. There were no Doones in the Selkirks, but by now he pictured himself as another John Ridd in love with another Lorna, another humble giant whose soul was beginning to worship something beyond itself. The Selkirks had no castles to storm except those bleak heights where the line was thrusting its indomitable front, no Carver Doones to master, only the dæmons of frost and storm, but by degrees it began to seem possible that if he followed the steel, if by this work that lay to his hand he could rise and rise, if he could save money, if he could make friends of those in power and become a living part of the completed line, the son of Molly Kelly might be considered more worthy than he now deemed himself. Such was the gate he saw opening before him, the one salvation that appeared possible: it suited the virile body and simple unquestioning spirit of the man, and he set himself to it with all the force he possessed. To begin with, he reckoned that he should make five thousand dollars out of his present contract. A fortune!

At the end of January, his progress estimate, representing eighty per cent of the month's work, was four thousand dollars, of which he needed one-half to pay wages; and as the snow was too deep for riding, he put a revolver in his pocket and started for Beavermouth the day before the pay car was due. From his camp it was a nice walk, so, wanting to be alone with his thoughts, he left the right-of-way and travelled through thick timber, happy in his own strength and the feel of springing, wide-webbed shoes under his feet.

The woods were quiet as death. No wind could penetrate here, every stump was crowned with a convoluted minaret of snow, and when he touched a laden branch it divested itself soundlessly of a fleecy burden and swayed softly back, ready to accumulate another. Here he crossed the rutted trail of wide-horned elk, and spruce partridge rose from patches of ground hemlock with a flurry of russet wings, but save for this no game was moving. The waterfalls were mounds of ice, shrunken mountain creeks chuckled invisibly deep beneath the snow, and far below him the Beaver meandered like a ribbon of black tossed on a white tablecloth. These solitudes through which his warm, strong body moved with swift certitude filled him with their message of hope and confidence: nothing was impossible; the son of Molly Kelly was making good.

In early afternoon from the hillside he looked down at Beavermouth three hundred feet below, at the white roofs, each with a projecting stack from which grey smoke mounted in a vertical spiral thread. The bridge was an eighty-foot timber

span, on its farther side a cluster of saloons, dance halls and bothys. He could see the temporary engine shed, and the grade rounding a curve, but the track had not yet reached Beavermouth, though a wire ran through from the Selkirks to Montreal.

John made for Ross's office, and as he expected found Dan Mann.

"Hullo, Hickey, how's all up your way?"

"A bit slow with all this snow, but not so bad: didn't move any earth to speak of last month."

"No, you wouldn't: got your estimate?"

John took it out with no little pride, flattening the sheet on the table, but the other man after a casual glance only shrugged.

"Not so bad, but you won't need it for a while."

"I'll need the money to-morrow."

"Figuring on the pay car, aren't you?"

"Well," said John puzzled, "she's due at the end of steel, isn't she?"

"She's due all right, but she isn't coming."

John gave his head a shake, and blinked. Mann was looking at him with a sort of gravity.

"She's not coming, Hickey, and that's all there is to it."

"I don't understand: had a smash?"

"Not that kind, nor has she left Montreal either. Look here!" He leaned forward, hunching his huge shoulders. "First thing you'd better do is get into your head that there's more to building a railway than bullmeat and blasting. The Company is up against it: I don't believe it'll last, but out here we've got to see it through: it's the same all round, with the crowd in Montreal taking the biggest chance."

"But suppose the money doesn't come—ever?" said John in a stiff tone.

"Take your mind off that and keep it off: here's Steele—he's likely to have a worse job than yours."

Steele came in as he spoke, pausing at the door to kick the snow from his boots; and John, who had already met him, felt a grip that matched his own. Steele sent him a quick, faintly amused look, and sat down. Three big men they were, strong men, whose motions had the same quiet deliberateness; they represented a cross-section of humanity in the Selkirks, and John in this company felt not quite so much alone under his sudden blow. He waited, silent, and increasingly depressed.

"Major, you look as though you were expecting trouble," grunted Mann.

"This time I suppose so, I've seldom been disappointed." The voice was full and round, but with an underlying suggestion of metal. "How late is that pay car going to be?"

“God knows! Ask me something else. I’ve a wire from Ross: he’s just been to Montreal, and says there’s no cash in sight anywhere, that’s all I can tell you except that Stephen seems to be living in Ottawa nowadays but making no impression. Van Horne’s orders to Ross are to keep the men here at work and not let ’em out: it’s a case of freeze-up all round.”

“Easier said than done. I can’t arrest them if they start for the east.”

“No, but Ross won’t let ’em set foot on a train, and walking’s none too good. He’s promised to get in all the grub that’s needed, and if these fellows begin to trickle out, what they’ll have to say won’t do the Company any credit. That’s the point. I’m glad you’re here: you know this crowd. It’s up to the contractors, too; if they weaken there’ll be hell to pay.” He wheeled suddenly. “Get that, Hickey, you’re one of ’em.”

John, who thought they had forgotten his presence, gave a nod, visioning his own arrival in camp with an empty satchel. The stream of money that for all these years had run without a ripple in its unbroken current had resembled some seasonal process of nature; it was like a river-flow, but reversed, because its fountain-head was like an irrigating ditch, one deep current that, subdividing, gradually spread out into other channels, increasing in number, becoming smaller and smaller till the final trickles landed in thousands of individual pockets. Now it appeared that the current had been dammed at its source and all the channels were running dry.

Fumbling over this, it came to him that perhaps the men like Van Horne and Ross who travelled in private cars had troubles of their own, but, he argued, it was not for them to deal with hard-bitten rock gangs, their palms callous from hammer handle and drill steel, or hot-blooded Italians who put in fourteen hours a day on station work. Presently, and in no uncertain fashion, these men would be demanding what they had justly earned.

The only strike he had ever seen was out in Yale when a thousand Chinamen swarmed round Donk’s house demanding higher wages; but that affair had been simple, and a Chinaman from the Yangtse a very different person from a sullen Cousin Joe from Cornwall.

Involuntarily the young man glanced at Steele, who seemed more thoughtful than anxious.

“I’ve an idea that trouble won’t be confined to the Selkirks—not by any means,” said the police officer. “Things haven’t looked well on the prairie round Prince Albert for months past. Louis Riel’s back there again at his old tricks, stirring up the Metis: last fall they sent a deputation to Montana to fetch him seven hundred miles—and it walked most of the way. They’ve had meetings at St. Laurent and Batoche: they’ve

given Louis a house and a purse.”

“Is that known in Ottawa?” put in Mann.

“Of course, but they’re all asleep.”

“Or too busy catching votes?”

“Perhaps—I don’t understand Ottawa.”

“I guess Sir John’s afraid he’s bitten off more than he can chew,” suggested Dan with a gleam in his dark eyes.

Steele gave a shrug.

“It’s Louis Riel this time. Fifteen years ago I was on the Red River Expedition with Wolseley, and Louis had run away by the time we reached Fort Garry. We certainly gave him time enough. That’s past history, and probably Ottawa thinks he’s no more dangerous now than he was then, but they’re wrong, and Prince Albert is too far away to sound important. Macdonald’s never been west in his life and wouldn’t know a Metis if he saw one: Lacombe’s soft-soaping the Blackfeet; he’s warned the Archbishop, and he and Grandin have been bombarding the Department—but nothing happens.”

“What’s at the bottom of it, anyway?”

“Farm surveys, Dan, and nothing more. The Metis want their 160 acres laid out in long strips fronting the Saskatchewan like their fathers’ farms on the St. Lawrence, but the damned fools in the Survey Department lay them out in squares, mostly away from the water. If there’s a second Riel rebellion, that’s at the bottom of it—which in one way has nothing to do with the Selkirks.”

“How many of those toughs are there across the bridge, Sam?”

“Between two and three hundred, not counting women: most of ’em are wanted across the line, and daren’t go back.”

“What’s your force now?”

“Eight—under Sergeant Fury; it ought to be enough.”

Mann gave a grunt. “Well, Hickey, you know more now than you did yesterday. How many in your camp?”

“Sixty.”

“Can you hold ’em—I mean without help from here? Hell! you’ve got to hold ’em.”

John thought he could: he would try.

“The important thing,” put in Steele, “is to keep them out of Beavermouth, where we’ve all we can handle: also the whole thing may come to nothing but a growl.”

“There’s a thousand dollars I left with the Company last month,” said John; “it’s my money; couldn’t I get that?”

Mann shook his head. "It's hard for you to understand, but the Company at this moment hasn't got your money or any of their own either. Right now they're just plain broke, which is the result of biting off more than they can chew. No one in the east is drawing a cent of salary. Your money—well—you'll have it some time, sure, but to-day if you walked to Montreal they wouldn't let you into the office. Too many others trying that. It's tough, son, but if you'll stick to your job we'll keep you going with all you want except cash. Tell your men they'll be paid next month—tell 'em anything you like—but for God's sake keep 'em where they are. I may be up your way to-morrow."

This sounded like dismissal, and John, having nothing more to say, got up.

"I'll do my best, gents."

"Sure you will: and look here, Hickey, this road is just started: it's too big to bust wide open for good—don't you forget that."

John, nodding, went out and picked up his snowshoes. At the post-office he was handed a letter, and thrust it in his pocket without interest: he had meant to spend the night in Beavermouth, but there being nothing to stay for now, he put on his shoes and struck westward uphill, wanting still more to be by himself and think this thing over. It swept the ground from under his feet.

Following his own trail back, his courage flagged. It seemed that he had been blindly labouring for nothing: a few hours ago he indulged in thoughts that now were knocked out of his head: he was never meant to be a contractor, and only fooled himself with vain ambitions. He entertained no hostility for those in the east who were responsible for this business since even Van Horne was working without pay. Van Horne! Even Van Horne! At first this fact seemed unimportant, but in a curious way it persistently presented itself till he could almost see Van Horne, who had been to him a sort of demi-god since the day they met on Big Hill, and then slowly it began to appear that if men like Van Horne and Ross were ready to work for nothing, and perhaps others like Dan and old Hell's Bells himself, there must be something behind this line that determined them to stay with it whatever happened. And there would be others he had never even heard of.

Forging through the bush in growing dusk, hearing only the creak of springing shoes, John Hickey, waif of the Cariboo, wastrel of Yale, did something he had never really attempted before: he began to shape a sort of theory, and the first step was to realize that the wisest move for such as he was to look about and attach himself firmly to the biggest, strongest thing he could find, to stick like a leech, work like a slave, and trust like a child. There might be some reward, but if not it would still be better than the days in Yale.

Darker now in the woods, too dark for travelling in comfort, so he struck downhill to the tote road, took off his webbed shoes and did the last five miles on the twisting highway. Reaching his shack, he lit a fire, stretched his big body, and suddenly remembered the letter.

The postmark was Yale, which made him finger it dubiously, rather averse from reading anything that had to do with Molly—it was not possible for him to think of her in any other way—till he decided that it was in a man's hand, and turning the envelope saw printed on the back *Inland Sentinel*. That piqued him: he tore it open.

“MR. JOHN HICKEY,

Late of Yale,

B.C.

Dear Sir,

It should interest you to know that by the will of Mrs. Molly Kelly, who died here a few months ago, you were named as sole inheritor of her property in Yale. Her effects were sold here by auction soon after her death, and realized the sum of 1,500 dollars after paying funeral expenses. This sum was paid into court till claimed by rightful heir. The *Inland Sentinel* only heard recently that you were working on the line near Big Hill, and this letter is written in the hope that it may reach and inform you of your good luck. Mrs. Kelly is not known to have had any living relations, and no one has put in any claim. The *Sentinel* will be glad to publish any reminiscences you may send us about Mrs. Kelly, who, as you are aware, was a well-known and charitable member of this community.

With our congratulations,

Yours cordially,

M. HAGAN, Editor.”

John read this in a daze, then reached for the cigar-box in which he kept paper and envelopes. Taking out Molly's cheque, he stared at her signature, bold, flowing, with round, loose letters and a long, sweeping dash beneath; he could almost see her tilt her head as she made it, and it struck him somehow as like herself. Dated a year ago, accepted by the Bank of British Columbia in Victoria, creased with folding, it gave him a strange sensation, a sense of loss that was quite new. He could not be sure what was lost since he had never possessed it, but something persuaded him that he was poorer now, and this voiceless gesture from the dead touched him far more deeply than could any demonstration by the living woman. It produced in him a revulsion: it endowed with fertility a soil that the hardness of life had kept arid, sowing in it invisible seeds of affection, and with unexpected poignancy he recalled again that last meeting when Molly, in soaking skirts and the yellow bird in her hat, balanced herself on the rocker and with urgent eyes begged him to get out of Yale and be a man. God! he admitted silently, that must have hurt.

These new thoughts came at an opportune time when his mind needed some background against which to lean: they made him feel less lonely, less anxious. Someone had really cared enough to take punishment for his sake and keep it secret: the knowledge of that would always be with him, and now, since he felt differently about Molly, it helped him to understand another woman better, and Mary did not seem quite so far out of reach.

Meantime—and he turned to it in a more confident if more chastened spirit—there was the matter of the payroll. He had, or could secure, two thousand dollars, about the sum required, and with a rising tide of loyalty for the company he considered this for payroll purposes. The company would then owe him five thousand, which ought to make his later advancement certain. He found something attractive in that picture—in being a creditor of a concern represented by men like Van Horne and Hell's Bells, and could hear himself saying later on: "In the winter of '84 the company owed me five thousand, but Van Horne and I were friends so I didn't worry them."

He had decided on this freehanded action when there arose in his mind a sharp, discomfiting doubt. What if the pay car did not arrive next month, and his men looked to him again? What if it never arrived?

He sat biting his lips, setting cheque and letter on edge and staring at them: they were very potent: more money there than he had ever seen: he could do a lot elsewhere with two thousand cash in case the line did go smash. Visioning that possibility, he was appalled: he saw the clean-cut right-of-way overcome by crowding bush till it was only a faint furrow through the mountains—saw abandoned tunnels caving in, embankments overgrown, bridges carried away by rockslide and avalanche: he pictured the death of the line, and buried somewhere in the general wreckage five thousand dollars of his own money.

His large intentions were thus brought up with a jerk, but the impulse still persisted, so he decided to leave the matter till after another talk with Dan Mann, who would doubtless be a little surprised but would thank him and wish there were more contractors in Rogers Pass with the same point of view and ability to carry it out. The next morning he remarked casually to some of his men that though the pay car might be late this month, they had nothing to worry about. A few of them cursed, but only a few, none took alarm, and the sensible ones reckoned that their money was better with the company than across the bridge at Beavermouth.

That afternoon Mann came up on the work, large, confident, even jovial. On the work with John he approved all he saw in a deep, rumbling voice, picked out the location for a section house under ten feet of snow, and announced that the company

had undertaken that trains would be running through Rogers Pass before the year ended. Finally John caught his eye and they went back to the shack.

“Look here,” said the young man in an abrupt fashion, “I want your advice: it’s about that two thousand I expected.”

Dan looked vexed and disappointed. “What’s up with you now? I’ve told you all I know.”

“I don’t mean it that way: fact is I’ve got two thousand dollars of my own, and _____”

“You have—you!”

“I hadn’t when I saw you yesterday: I got a letter afterwards, and my—my mother’s left me 1,500. I had 500 before that.”

“Mother dead?”

“Yes, in Yale.”

“Too bad, son, too bad. Sick long?”

“I don’t know; ’twas a while ago: I knew she was dead, but nothing about this money,” explained John, feeling how queer it was to tell this much yet withhold the greater truth. “It’s about that I wanted to ask you; ’twould just meet my payroll.”

Dan sent him a strange look, almost compassionate and more than friendly, such a look as a man might bestow on his son: he seemed amused, touched, surprised.

“Were you figuring to pay your men yourself?”

“Why not, if it would help all round?”

“Forget it, Hickey: it’s white of you, but forget it: you don’t owe the money.”

“Would it help the company?”

“As nearly as I can get to it the company owes six million dollars,” said Dan heavily.

“Eh?”

“I said six million, but that’s between ourselves: maybe it’s more, and it’s certainly more every day: they don’t feel your two thousand—it’s a fleabite that doesn’t mean anything in Montreal. At the same time, I’ll tell Ross what you said, and he’ll be glad to know you thought of doing it. Hickey, it wouldn’t work the way you reckon, but just the opposite. There are a lot of reasons. We couldn’t pay or let anyone else pay sixty men without paying the other ten thousand: it would raise hell all round. Another thing: supposing the pay car doesn’t come along next month, you’d be expected to do it again—you’d be cleaned out and no thanks for it. One of our troubles is going to be that Onderdonk at his end has a Government contract, and is paid by the Government, so he’s all right whatever happens; his estimates are safe, but the fellows working for us won’t understand the difference between that

and working for a company that has to raise money by selling shares when nobody wants to buy 'em. You follow me?"

It was too plain to miss, and John had his eyes opened.

"I see now," said he dubiously. "It was just an idea that came into my head: I guess you're right."

"I know I'm right, and Ross will back me up and so would the directors: you hang on to what you've got, and thanks just the same. The Montreal crowd are having a bad time of it right now. It's going to be tough enough here, but I don't know that I want to change places even if a private car does go with their job. You plug along, Hickey: we'll see you through somehow. Well, I'm due on the Illecillewaet by sundown. More snow coming, eh?"

He struck off over the tote road, his huge frame magnified in its heavy clothing, thinking with a sort of masculine affection about the young man who stood watching him out of sight. Charged with the peculiar type of strength and fortitude that imparts its own quality to others, he was grimly content with the battle that lay before him, and contemplated its issue with Olympian calm.

PART III

A STINGING day with Montreal deep in snow that had collected in the city streets, raising their surface high, while from pavements the winter harvest was shovelled by storekeepers into long, parallel embankments over which one could hardly see the elevated horses and vehicles. Through these ridges were cut constricted alleys opposite shop and office doors so that passengers might reach their objectives. The narrow roadways were left to innumerable open sleighs like landaus on runners, with buffalo robes and high box seats where there perched French-Canadian drivers with cracking whips, rugs tucked round their legs, and round fur caps beneath which their breath spouted into the frosty air like jets of steam. There came a constant jangle of bells, the roofs of buildings were buried in snow, the motionless air bright, keen, sparkling, and northward rose the white mass of Mount Royal like the elongated bulk of a stranded whale.

This was what Van Horne saw when, pacing the board-room, he halted impatiently at a window to look out: as usual he was smoking, and now and again would turn dubiously towards Shaughnessy, who sat at the large central table concentrating over a sheaf of papers, periodically glancing up without words, running his fingers through his crumpled hair, and concentrating again. The manner of the two expressed uncertainty—almost foreboding.

“Well, Tom,” said Van Horne with a shrug of big shoulders, “it’ll be over soon, and for one I’ll be glad of it. If the Government takes over the line—and I don’t see how they can avoid it—you and I will be asked to stay on and finish up; we must not go back to the States leaving a half-done job, so I suppose we’ll have to. Hullo! here they are now.”

A private sleigh drawn by two blooded horses had pulled up, and two men got out. Now Donald Smith entered accompanied by Stephen: they wore long coats of plucked beaver, with glossy otter-skin caps and fur gauntlets. Stephen’s face was pale and drawn; he looked almost haunted. Smith’s cap had ear-flaps fastened by a black silk ribbon under his chin giving him the grotesque appearance of a bearded patriarch in a bonnet; his eyes held a glint, and frosty spots blossomed delicately in his lined cheeks. Drawing off the gauntlets, he rubbed together his large, white, bony hands.

“Good morning, gentlemen! We have a very fine day, have we not? I hardly remember a morning when I found the air more invigorating. My principal objection to winter in Labrador was that the low temperatures there were too often accompanied by wind, which made them trying: the effect was to rob the body of its

envelope of radiant heat, as Professor McLeod of McGill University puts it. Well, Mr. Vice-President, shall we get to business?"

"We'd better: there's a good deal to be settled. Isn't Buchanan coming?"

"No," said Stephen, "he can't, but I've talked things over with him, and he'll approve any action we take—however drastic."

"Or Macintyre?"

"Macintyre came to see us yesterday, and his manner was such that I knew at once why he came. It was not unexpected."

"Cold feet?" said Van Horne sharply.

"You are quite correct, sir," nodded Mr. Smith, "the circulation in the pedal extremities of Mr. Duncan Macintyre is undoubtedly deficient. He expressed some opinions that he stated had been in his mind for a considerable time past, and my conclusion is that they began last year with our first financial difficulty. Not to burden you with unnecessary details, Mr. Macintyre feels that his directorship of the C.P.R. becomes embarrassing; he argues that——"

"That since he controls the Central Canada from Pembroke to Brockville, and it's been a money maker from the start, he's not going to risk an alliance with a road which in his view is heading straight for the rocks," interrupted Van Horne forcibly. "Also the wholesale woollen business needs all his spare time. I can hear him say it."

"He did not express himself in precisely that fashion, but I am disposed to agree with your analysis. Gentlemen, our little company is going through the sifting process of time: first Mr. James Hill and now Mr. Duncan Macintyre has been eliminated, but I believe," here he sent the three a penetrating though slightly quizzical glance, "that the finer and more valuable material has survived. Mr. Macintyre is resigning his directorship to—to warm his feet in wholesale woollens: he prefers, therefore, not to attend this meeting, and we shall receive formal notification of his resignation in due course."

"Also we must find someone to take his place," suggested Stephen. "That might wait too—it won't be easy, or perhaps advisable at the moment."

"I regret the occurrence," said Smith looking anything but downcast, "and it is a poor policy to change horses while crossing a stream: but perhaps this one was not pulling his weight. He will not, however, throw any of his shares on the market: that is agreed."

"I can't quite see him doing it at 42," blurted Van Horne cynically. "Most kind! Come on, Tom, out with it: give us the worst and get it over."

Shaughnessy nodded soberly: he had reduced a dozen sheets to one, and now sat with this in his hand: he knew, they all knew, that it epitomized the situation of the

all-red line and was the forecast of disaster. The work of scores of thousands of men and ninety millions were here presented in a few bloodless figures, cold, brutal, inescapable. He hesitated before putting them into words, but this was a Board meeting of the greatest private undertaking in the Dominion—indeed, at that time in the whole world and routine procedure must be followed however downhill the road. His face was tense and tired. Stephen looked more and more exhausted: the burden so buoyantly assumed that day in Dover Street more than four years past was sharply testing his unflagging courage; already he had shouldered more and greater risks than he would have countenanced on the part of any other man, but there still remained in his finely-modelled features a suggestion of weary humour, as though in the present extremity he had caught a gleam of light and found in it a touch of secret comfort. Van Horne looked fighting mad; he was in open revolt; and of the four only the expression of Donald Smith was quite unreadable: he resembled, as it were, a courtly iceberg; whatever he might be feeling, that he guarded, nor was it remotely possible to decipher what was taking place behind the granite of his countenance and the metallic glitter of those cold, grey eyes.

“Gentlemen,” began Shaughnessy, “our cash resources were, as you are aware, exhausted some two months ago, and since then we have been living on credit. The markets are more against us than ever, and it has not been possible to place any further shares. Next week there will be due the guaranteed dividend on our issued capital; the amount required is six hundred and fifty thousand dollars, for which we have not one dollar available.”

“Dear me!” said Mr. Smith. “Dear me! what an unfortunate situation! Mr. Van Horne has evidently spent money much faster than we can find it. Yes, Mr. Shaughnessy, pray proceed.”

“There is the matter of wages. Our Montreal salaries have not been met, and, much worse, for the very first time the pay car has not been sent out. The wage bill and other debts of a similar kind amount to about half a million. In addition, there is the Bank obligation——”

“And that?”

“A little over four million, sir, to which add various acceptances of about one million more given for supplies and construction material.”

“I must put it on record now,” interjected Stephen, “that it is impossible to use the Bank any further: many millions have been advanced to other clients on the security of C.P.R. shares held by them. The Bank has reached its ultimate limit, and will have to face a run if we crash. That—well—that’s next on the programme.”

Mr. Smith, who had counted these depressing items, ticking each off on a broad

finger as though he had not known them for weeks, now elevated his bushy brows.

"In round figures, then, we might put our present urgent liabilities at six and one-half millions?"

Shaughnessy nodded.

"A hell of a lot of money," rumbled Van Horne.

"It is indeed a large sum, an exceedingly large one," agreed Mr. Smith, "in which connexion I feel bound to say, Mr. Vice-President, that your sense of hospitality and natural pride in the line and your work has been partly responsible for the present low price of our shares."

Van Horne, flushing, shot him a startled glance. "Perhaps that's right: I know what you mean."

"I am referring, of course, to the visit paid on your invitation by members of the British Association to the Rocky Mountains: a kindly thought, but as it proves, a trifle impulsive. Personally," he began polishing his spectacles with a large silk handkerchief, "I have avoided acting on impulses; it may be dangerous, and—ah—later on, rather expensive."

"I guess you've got me," admitted Van Horne ruefully. "They were meeting in Winnipeg when I came through from the west last year, but, Mr. Smith, you'll have to make allowances this time. They may have been scientists, some of them, though I couldn't find a soul that knew anything about fossils, but all of them were damned ignorant about this country: they thought they'd be scalped when they reached the prairie. That got under my skin, so I did send out a batch to Ross as our guests, thinking it would make friends for us when they got back to the Old Country. But it worked the other way, and when I read the published interviews it made me tired. Most of those fellows had never seen a real mountain in their lives—nothing but a few English hummocks with a windmill on top, so when they struck the Rockies they thought us mad for figuring on a railroad through country like that, which didn't do our shares any good. It's up to me all right, but the next Britisher that goes west will pay full fare, who ever he is. That's all I have to say."

Smith, as though brushing away an insect, put the matter aside.

"My cousin has something to tell us about the situation in Ottawa."

"There isn't much," said Stephen quietly, "but here it is. I made every effort to get in personal touch with Sir John, but could not. I did see John Henry Pope, Frank Smith and Schreiber: they were sympathetic, but that's all. It seems that Sir John is working out some Federal franchise scheme, and thinks of nothing else, and Pope can't pin him down—it's always 'to-morrow'. The Minister of Marine—that's McLellan—swears he'll resign from the Cabinet if the Government gives us any

more help, and if he should Sir John is afraid of losing Conservative support in Nova Scotia. Mackenzie is not as antagonistic as one might expect, but Blake is camping on our trail with his hatchet ready. He's vindictive because the line is so nearly through in spite of him, and he may have to swallow what he said about our not earning enough to buy axle grease. Roughly, that's how things stand in Ottawa. If Sir John was determined, I believe the party would see him through, but he simply refuses to come to any decision. He won't face the facts."

"Mr. Van Horne, how many miles have we now completed?" put in Smith.

"With what we've bought and what we've built, just two thousand six hundred, that's not counting Onderdonk."

"And the north shore section should be finished—when?"

"In May—not later."

"And as Vice-President in general charge of the work, how in your opinion can the situation best be handled for the immediate present?"

Van Horne gave a snort. "I expected you'd ask that: there's only one thing, paid or not paid, keep the men on the job—somehow: make it easy to get in, hard to get out. Walking's pretty tough in the Selkirks just now. Isolate 'em—freeze 'em in tight. They can't do much work—the snow's too deep for that—but work isn't the most important thing at the moment. I told Ross all about it and what to do before he went west last week. This morning he wires from Beavermouth that there's no real trouble yet, but the tough element is getting a bit restless."

"Major Steele is in charge of the police there?"

"He is, and I'm glad of it."

"I remember him very well, and he accompanied Colonel Garnet Wolseley to Fort Garry in '69. He was a good officer, though little more than a youth, and a very powerful man: on occasions I have heard of him shouldering a barrel of pork weighing four hundred pounds and carrying it across a portage. My impressions are most favourable."

"He'll be able to handle that crowd if he's left there," said Van Horne briefly, "but I'm not so sure that he will be left."

"You think he may be called to the prairies?"

"It's quite possible: Louis Riel seems bent on making trouble: he shouldn't have been allowed back in the country."

"In my opinion Louis is mad."

"I don't doubt it, sir, but he's dangerous. Well, what about our ten thousand men expecting their money?"

"That, Mr. Van Horne, is very much to the point, and perhaps we have

wandered a little; but equally, we have many thousand shareholders expecting their guaranteed dividend. Which would you say comes first?"

"Does it matter—since we can't pay either?"

"I think it does," affirmed Mr. Smith smoothly: "yes, indeed I do; and having had a certain business experience, I'd give the shareholders the preference. It is a matter of comparative value—that is, value to us. If this dividend is actually passed, the company is unquestionably ruined, no question lies there; we antagonize countless invisible clients the world over, and the—ah—the repercussion would be fatal. That, I feel, is much more perilous than keeping our own employees waiting a while longer, and——"

"My God!" exploded Van Horne. "You talk as though the dividend *could* be paid."

Mr. Smith took out his silk handkerchief, dabbed the tip of his nose, glanced at Stephen, and received from him a slight nod:

"It can—and will," said he calmly, "my cousin and I came to a mutual decision on the way here this morning, so perhaps he will tell you the rest."

"We agreed," began Stephen in a weary tone, "that while we have any private resources at all, nothing humanly possible must be left undone to save the situation: we feel there's more at stake than the success or failure of some three thousand miles of line. It isn't entirely honour—though our honour comes into it—it's more a matter of personal responsibility, since a great many people have become shareholders because—well—my cousin and I gave them the lead. During the last year we have been deeply conscious of that, and all things considered it seems there is just one thing to do. Here it is."

He handed Shaughnessy an envelope.

"What's this, sir?"

"Our joint personal acceptance for six hundred and fifty thousand dollars at three months," put in the long-bearded Scot, "for which it is arranged that the Bank will furnish cash; and if it can be managed, which I doubt, we prefer that nothing of this be known outside these walls. Will you please instruct your staff accordingly. For security we are prepared to take the Company's undertaking to repay at the due date, by which time this tension should be over." Here he gave his head a little tilt, while the faintest suggestion of a smile softened his rugged features. "I am not a man given to superlatives, Mr. Van Horne," he continued, "and my view of compliments is that they do but pander to a type of intelligence we estimate inferior to our own—I have, in fact, an inherent antipathy against those who employ them—but permit me to say that Mr. Stephen and I are greatly impressed by the work you and Mr.

Shaughnessy are doing. Mr. Shaughnessy seems to have paid our way without any real cash whatever for weeks past, if I may so express it. As to this matter of wages, it must of necessity wait for the present: we must lean on our contractors and mercantile friends a little more heavily while Mr. Stephen returns to Ottawa and tries again. I would accompany him did I not feel that the—shall we say—restoration of amicability between Sir John and myself is of so recent a date that I would regret to appear to be using it at so early a moment. Now I must attend a meeting of my own Company, so pray excuse me. But first,”—here he put on his otter-skin cap—“if you, Mr. Van Horne, would kindly fasten these ear-flaps—ah—thank you. Good morning, gentlemen.”

He went out with a firm step, very erect, encased in nut brown beaver hide, gauntlets tucked under his arm: from the window Van Horne saw him step nimbly into his sleigh and be whirled off with a silvery jingle. Stephen, who had not moved, was leaning back, his face strained like that of one near the limit of endurance. Shaughnessy had opened the envelope and was staring at the note.

A strange moment, and one that brought its inevitable reaction. None of them felt triumphant, and there presented itself the question of whether those invisible shareholders were, after all, worth such a personal sacrifice. Could Van Horne have had his way they might fish for themselves, and he would pay his men; those were his promptings; but always when in contact with Donald Smith one was aware of a sort of emanation that exuded from him suggesting an uncommon, uncanny instinct for affairs that could not go wrong. One felt that he *knew*, not by any process of reason or elimination, but simply that it was his nature to be correct in judgment. There moved no soul in his expression; no fire of ambition had ever been visible in those eyes; he remained foreign to enthusiasm, impulse, or regret, he was often unreadable to those who thought they knew him best, but he had unflinching courage and a peculiar power of selectiveness as though surrounded by delicate retractile tentacles that sent him automatic signals should they touch what had better be avoided.

“I don’t very well know what to say.” Van Horne’s voice, breaking a long silence, was a little ragged, “but you’re doing a fine thing, Steve: I hope to God you’ll be rewarded.”

Stephen gave a tired smile. “That’ll come when the last spike is driven and not before. Smith and I look at it this way. The Government’s got to help us—Macdonald knows that perfectly well—they all know it—but won’t admit it. That’s why he dodges me. It’s unthinkable that any Government should see Onderdonk through, yet allow to founder the company that’s building the greater part of the same line—without which Onderdonk’s work is in the air and British Columbia on its

hind legs again. Smith and I believe that the best way to force Sir John, to make him see how desperately the case stands, is to do what we've done, though that's not the principal reason for it. If we lose our money—well——”

Suddenly he got up and gave his head a shake as though ridding it of unwelcome thoughts; his eyes brightened, his face assumed its habitual expression of pleasure and satisfaction with life, and he became once more the man to whom they were accustomed, the high-spirited optimist whose friends were legion.

“Well, now it's done, I'll go back to Ottawa feeling better: I don't believe that Old To-morrow can hold out much longer.”

Cold it might be in Montreal, but colder still in Ottawa with a north-west wind howling downriver over the mountains of Hull. In his study at Earnsccliffe Macdonald gave an involuntary shiver, poked the fire into stronger life, and addressed himself to a large map of the Province of Ontario on which the counties were heavily outlined and marked with a record of votes cast at the last general election. Eyeing this with intense concentration, he began to make notes, crumpling his sensitive lips, nodding in the manner of one who approves his own procedure.

“This theory, Joe,” he said to a young man at another table, “is entirely my own, and one you are likely to hear a good deal about in the near future. It's new, therefore attractive, especially to me. In Ontario we need fortifying, perhaps because I lived there myself for five years, and the best method is a line of tactics—politics are mostly tactics—by which there is arranged a redistribution of votes. The voter himself has, fortunately, nothing to say about it. Re-balancing might be more correct. Kingston, as you are aware, once treated me in a surly fashion; while Carleton, which is just next door, returned me at once by a large majority—you follow me?”

“Yes, Sir John, perfectly.”

“Well,” smiled his chief, “keep on following. That gave me the idea—defeats are more apt to breed ideas than successes—and I hate to see good votes wasted when they might be well used close at hand, so if by an imaginary line—that is imaginary in a geographical sense—I slice off a bit of Lennox with its admirable Conservative colour and glue it on say to Addington—an uncertain quantity—they will both go Tory in the next election. It's the simplest thing in the world.”

Joseph Pope, private secretary, gave an amused nod. He was a young man, under thirty, with wiry hair, sensitive intelligent face, an alert manner, and of great devotion to a chief for whom he felt something like worship. When one wanted to see the Prime Minister one first satisfied Pope, which placed him in a position of

peculiar intimacy, and one that he never misused.

There had been much to learn. The mind of Macdonald formed a curious precipitate in which seriousness and humour were so blended as to conceal from most eyes the man's deep fixity of purpose: his brain was in constant motion, disposing itself this way and that, and just as a chemical deposit in a beaker of water will generate a profusion of glittering bubbles, so Macdonald liberated a succession of restless thoughts, to analyse which, to distinguish the real product from the fanciful, was the first problem encountered by young Joseph Pope. This time he perceived that his chief meant what he said.

"Yes, sir, but how will the opposition take it?"

"Like one takes Gregory's mixture—with a wry face. My friend Edward Blake will froth at the mouth: their language will be notable, and sharpened by regret that they did not think of it themselves when they had the chance. Joe, how do you like your job?"

"Very much, sir."

"How's your wife?"

"Well, thank you: Ottawa is rather a change from conventual life."

"Why did you marry a Grit?"

"You've seen her, sir."

"Very good, Joe, very good: you make your point: I wish I had some of that Taschereau blood on my side of the House, and strictly between ourselves, I believe we ought to have a Cardinal in Canada, and—well——"

It was a habit of his to feign ignorance—or at least unawareness of matters with which he was actually well acquainted, an attitude that contributed not a little to his congenital weakness of procrastination—the favoured refuge of the born optimist. He hated to give a flat decision, but made circuitous excursions more or less relative to the focal point, though seldom grappling with it, and such was the art of the man that when finally affairs brooked no further evasion, he would be found, whimsically triumphant, having attained in some mysterious fashion the dominating position that from the first he had intended to occupy. That was one side of him, while on the other shone forth his fixed conviction that the destiny of Canada was linked for all time with the mother country across the sea, and to the riveting of those infrangible bonds he devoted all the strength that lay in him.

"Anything pressing to-night, Joe?"

"Wire just in from Mr. Dewdney, sir."

"Ah!"

Dewdney, Lieut.-Governor of the North West Territories, was a product of the

north-west; in the early '60's he had built the first trail into the newly-discovered placer mines of the Cariboo, and was a member of the British Columbian legislature, the sittings of which body he refused to attend. A man of the open, he affected the dress and appearance of the prairie scout of former days and wore long, black locks reaching unshorn to his wide shoulders.

"What's the matter with Dewdney now?"

"He telegraphs for general instructions."

"Good God! About what? Am I supposed to know all about everything?"

"He says the Indians are restless, and fears they may leave their reserves: he's afraid of rebellion, sir."

"Then wire him to get his hair cut."

The young man chuckled, whereat his chief sent him a benignant smile.

"In a way I'm sorry I got you into politics: there's nothing new or fresh or invigorating about them—ever: one sees things coming too far off. Now take this Riel business—it's just the same story over again, and I'm partly to blame for it. Before we bought out the Hudson's Bay Company in Manitoba we should have told the Metis we were going to chop up the country; now in Saskatchewan it seems we're doing the same thing and those same Metis are again frightened about their land."

"Here's another memo, on that matter, sir."

"Read it: my eyes are tired."

"It's part of a letter from Bishop Grandin. The Metis, he says, ask for landscrip to give them title, also that the Government sell a certain amount of land and use the proceeds for schools and hospitals they want established, also for farm implements and seed. The Bishop says that if this had been done he's sure there wouldn't be any trouble."

"H'm! Well, if I were a Metis I don't believe I'd be half as reasonable: I'll look into it. Any more memos?"

"You told me to mention Father Lacombe and Archbishop Taché."

"Quite right: I'll give you letters to them to-morrow."

"You said that last week, sir, and if you please, the week before: I have a note of it," ventured the young man, daring greatly.

"Did I, Joe, did I really? My memory must be going: make another note. Where is Grandin at the moment?"

"Prince Albert, sir."

Macdonald tossed back the lock of greying hair that overhung his forehead, and thought hard. There was one man who could be very useful in the north-west during

this anxious hour, but a sense of pride made it impossible to call on him. Damn the north-west!

“Anything more from the Department of Interior in this connexion?”

“Yes, sir, a note by the Minister that he has been requested to send Major Steele from the C.P.R. to assist Police-Superintendent Crozier at Prince Albert, but does not think it wise on account of expected strikes on the railway. Mr. Van Horne has particularly asked that Major Steele be left where he is for the present.”

“Cheerful outlook, isn’t it? Arrange that the Minister sees me in the Council Chamber to-morrow at noon.”

“I will, sir; and Mr. Stephen called to-day: he had already seen Mr. Pope, who referred him to you.”

“Yes, I know: you’d better refer him back to Mr. Pope: if he objects, tell him it’s a matter for the Department of Railways. He won’t believe you, and neither would I in his place, but tell him anyway. Well, go on.”

“The Sudan expedition, Sir John?”

“Hah! The Sudan! Thank God for something one can smile over. Strike that off altogether, I’ll speak to Mr. Pope about it to-night. Is that all?”

“Mr. Goldwin Smith’s letter in *The Week*—you told me to remind you.”

“Well, you have. Is *that* all?”

“Yes, sir: I think Mr. Pope is coming with Mr. Schreiber now.”

“Then good night, Joe: I’m glad you’re so young; we old political war-horses need the enthusiasm of you colts to encourage us.”

Pope and Schreiber came in, brushing feathery snowflakes like swansdown from their coats, and he grinned at the sight of them. “Messrs. Castor and Pollux, my salutations.”

“What’s that, sir?” asked Schreiber, puzzled.

“Don’t you remember the inseparable pair, reputed sons of Leda by a swan, which gallant bird was credibly reported at the time to be Zeus himself who had assumed that form for the occasion? Well, gentlemen, sit down. J.H., from your joint appearance I’d say you’ve been thinking of our friends in Montreal.”

“Tell him, Schreiber.”

“Sir John knows as well as I do.”

“Ye-es, perhaps you’re right: Mr. Stephen is back in Ottawa and aching to see me?”

“That’s it, sir.”

“What is the present position of the C.P.R.?”

“Perilous.”

“How the devil did they pay that dividend? I thought I was dreaming.”

“Donald Smith and Stephen paid it.”

“Eh!”

“It’s quite true, Stephen told me himself: they wanted it kept quiet, but that proved impossible.”

“They took more than half a million from their own pockets!”

“They did, sir.”

Macdonald, who was now pacing the room with nervous vitality, halted and stood gazing into the fire: his features losing their former quizzical expression, were sober, and he remained for a moment without speaking. The visitors exchanged glances.

“I wish Disraeli were alive,” said the Premier in a grave tone, “it would make a great difference: he had vision, imagination: he would have helped, but instead we’ve got that grumpy old lion of Hawarden who can’t see past his own Roman nose. There’s a great gulf between those two: Disraeli was flexible, self-adjustable, but Gladstone—well, speaking of Gladstone suggests the Sudan business. What do you think, John Henry?”

“I was talking to the Militia Department about it to-day: they’re against any Government action, think it leaves the door open to possible future embarrassments, and say the public is quite unprepared for any move by Ottawa: also that there may be need for our militia much nearer home.”

“In the north-west?”

Pope nodded. “White has also heard privately from the United States that if we send troops against the Mahdi there will probably be another Fenian invasion, this time on the prairie Provinces. On the other hand, a lot of our militia colonels are volunteering and producing the wrong impression in England, which is unfortunate.”

“Then why not a volunteer battalion composed entirely of colonels?” chortled Macdonald. “I’d send Edward Blake and Goldwin Smith with them: Blake could and would exhort the troops, while Goldwin advocated Egypt’s political union with the United States. No, I’ll have nothing to do with it. Gladstone has got himself into a proper mess by his own crass obstinacy, and can pull his own chestnuts out of the fire: we’ve no dispute with either Khedive or Mahdi, who, by the way, seems a tough nut to crack: the north-west is far more serious for us. The hirsute Dewdney of the Samson locks says the Metis are going to rise. What’s your idea, Schreiber?”

“It’s hard to say, sir—they’re natural wanderers, practically nomads and not farmers: the Metis are being stirred up by the land sharks to demand their scrip, then the sharks will swallow them: what’s paid for scrip will go in whisky, and they’re left

no better off. There's no question that Fenian agents are busy on the C.P.R. and making some impression since wages are overdue. The whole west is restless, and I think trouble is brewing. Men will ask why they don't get their wages when they hear that the company has paid a dividend: it's natural enough when Onderdonk's men are getting theirs as usual."

"A Fenian invasion would very well suit that Irish Catholic sheet in Montreal," added Pope.

"Then it looks as though we shall have to hang Mr. Louis Riel, late member of Parliament, which will cost us the Conservative vote in Quebec. Constitutionally those fellows are born Conservatives, close to the soil and clinging to their own, but they'll certainly see red across the body of Louis." He paused with one of the inimitable shrugs that revealed his swiftly-changing temperament. "Have either of you ever heard of the Hunters?"

"Somewhere," said Schreiber, "when I was a boy: the original Fenians, weren't they, and behind some kind of an invasion?"

"It was before your time, back in '38. A young Pole started that crowd—Fenian in sentiment, of course—they wanted to eradicate everything on this continent that had any royal origin or association. Neils von Schoultz—I remember it now—was his name: he had seen his own country raped by the Sclavs when his father was killed, then he came to New York and made a fortune by refining salt from brine springs at Selina. Having a chivalrous soul he decided to liberate Canada from the oppression of the Crown, so organized an expedition that crossed the St. Lawrence at Prescott. They occupied a stone mill just below the town, and we had them. Of course I volunteered with the rest of the young chaps of Kingston, shouldered a musket with—ah—a swelling heart and marched off to the mill; but Schoultz, with his hundred and seventy men, had surrendered before I got there—he must have heard I was coming. I was retained by his friends in Syracuse for his defence, but extraordinarily enough he was hanged on the glacis of Old Fort Henry in December '38. By his will he left £400 to the widows and children of British Militia who fell in the fight, though I don't remember that anyone fell, and also a letter stating that he had been slightly misinformed about the sufferings of Canadians under the Crown, so there must have been a dash of Goldwin Smith in him. That was my only personal contact with Fenians or their forerunners."

"Who first called them Fenians?"

"Ah, you've got me there, but they took the name after the *fienne*, a band of warriors who defended Ireland in early days against foreign invaders. . . . So you gentlemen think I ought to see George Stephen? Frankly I don't want to, I like him

too much.”

“It’s serious, Sir John.”

“Hmph! and for me, too: twenty-two million last year, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, without which there would now be no C.P.R.”

“But Stephen then assured me that that would see them through, and I believed him.”

“He had no intention of misleading you, sir,” volunteered Schreiber, “it’s the north shore that’s done it; heavier work than the Rockies or even on the Fraser, with not enough timber for one decent-sized trestle. Van Horne has done all humanly possible—one must give him the credit for that—he’s even built dynamite factories.”

“Credit—yes—but he wants cash. Oh, I know what’s at stake: I’ve gambled with the Conservative party for Imperial reasons, but as you two very well know, the party is nervous and restless, especially in Quebec; Frank Smith is having a job to hold the Catholics in Ontario, and Riel is sowing discord instead of wheat. What a kettle of fish!”

“Sir John,” said Pope smiling, “I’d like to ask you something.”

“Well?”

“When you were in England you were reported in a speech as saying that any Englishman of education who came to Canada naturally joined the Conservative party no matter what his politics were at home.”

“Really, J.H.! Did I actually say that?”

“It made Blake furious.”

“Well, well! Now you can tell me something: if Blake has the poor opinion of me with which he is credited, why should he be disturbed by anything I say? No, you can’t answer that. Now, getting back to this railway of ours?”

“Stephen and Smith can’t carry it alone, Sir John.”

“I fancy not. It’s curious how often when national affairs come up I have a consciousness of that same Mr. Smith: this time he has put his hand into his own pocket, and I’m glad it’s a deep one. Some day, perhaps, I’ll tell you about our meeting; ’twas in St. James’s Club in Montreal, and quite affecting for—er—a brace of Scots. Anyway, for the first and only time in history the waters of Spey and Clyde flowed in a common stream, as I told Stephen after it was over. He arranged it all, very neat and tactful, then evaporated himself when Donald and I were left alone to bury our scalping knives under a carpet of thick velvet pile. They have wonderful carpets in that club. Of course, I felt flattered to be friends again with the richest man in Canada except perhaps George Drummond and William Macdonald—with one of Canada’s most distinguished sons, so to speak—but I didn’t call him that since he

knew it anyway. It was eleven years almost to a day since we parted. Schreiber, do you repeat that all those last millions have been spent?"

"They have, sir, and more."

"My God, I wish Tupper were here again, but I can't do that twice. You remember how Blake kicked when I made Charles our High Commissioner and told him to retain the Ministry of Railways as well, with our friend here as deputy. Now I begin to think he was right. I'd like to do something to please him once in a while, but I have never quite fathomed that Toronto crowd: perhaps it's their Blakeism—or no sense of humour—or the effect of years of travel by the Grand Trunk. Yet they're sound people."

"I think Toronto feared being sidetracked by the C.P.R.," said Pope.

Schreiber shook his head. "If that's it, they're wrong: Van Horne is after traffic and nothing else; he doesn't care where he gets it, provided it pays, and before long you'll find him giving a better service than the Grand Trunk, and stealing their Toronto freight. As to finances, Sir John, they've spent in all ninety-two millions of which the Government has found fifty-five."

"Whew! Enough to run the Conservative party to the millennium! Gentlemen, with that Russian war scare looming up, and Tyler doing his best—or worst—we can't borrow money in England. On my word, I don't see where it's coming from."

"I wish we could afford to forget that British knight," ruminated Pope. "He would not have got his title were he not at the head of a Canadian railway."

"A railway in Canada would be more correct, J.H. Got any C.P.R. stock, yourself?"

"A little, but paid too much for it."

"Hang on, you'll be all right; if those two put up six hundred and fifty thousand they won't lose it for lack of a bit more, and as for Tyler—oh—wait a minute,"—he took a paper from a drawer and looked at it smiling—"I wanted some powder to put under our British knight, so the Treasury Department dug this up for me. Gentlemen, the Grand Trunk has owed the Canadian Government nearly four million sterling, not dollars, plus interest for the last thirty years. It was used for what they called a Canadian road with its terminus in Chicago. I think I'll shoot that at him."

"Which brings up straight back to George Stephen," said Pope stubbornly. "He'll have to be told yes or no."

"John Henry, in some former existence you must have been a slave driver: I'll think about it; damn it, I wish I could stop thinking."

At this confusing announcement the two exchanged a glance and rose to go: he made no attempt to detain them: they had accomplished nothing, and Schreiber, who

was in closest touch with those slaving for the all-red line, had a pang of regret.

Left to himself, Macdonald looked slightly hurt; given to procrastination, he approached any decision by circuitous routes, making tentative side-track excursions, testing the wind and observing with extreme shrewdness the attitude of others who might be involved in the same affair. He found satisfaction in this procedure, and his intentions, like those of Donald Smith, were unreadable to the last moment; but while in Smith they found concealment under an expressionless exterior, with Macdonald the screen was provided by the diversity of his manner and the vagaries of his quizzical speech. The difference was that between nature and art.

Now he fondled his chin for an abstracted moment, made another survey of the Ontario map, jotted down a few additional notes whereby ere the next General Election a few thousand voters would make an interesting discovery, then drew the heavy curtain and stood again at the window gazing into the north-west. This was a habit of his when the day's work had been put aside, and many reflections came to him in these moments of silence.

To-night he thought of Disraeli. Like Disraeli he had made friendship between French and English, and like him laboured to cement Great Britain with her colonies: there were other similarities; the oriental nose, the lonesome curl on forehead, the jauntiness and eyes of fire, the oft-changing expression scarred with strange lines, the personal charm, the love of power and contempt for money: all these they shared, and the memory of Disraeli moved him deeply.

Then with mind vaulting back to his own land and the all-red line, he pictured the old Hudson's Bay post of Fort Garry, now reborn as Winnipeg, and a thriving city: Brandon shipping hard Manitoba wheat to Van Horne's elevators on Lake Superior: Pile o' Bones, now Regina, a forwarding point for fat prairie-fed cattle instead of the skeletons of buffalo, their predecessors: Calgary sprawling out along the Bow River, humming with land speculators, new settlers, traders, adventurers, the east hustling the ancient west out of its way with every crude, violent element that makes for progress whoever may be hurt in the making: he saw the all-red line straddling the Great Divide, twice leaping the conquered Columbia, and now thrusting its twin steel ribbons up through Rogers Pass: on the other side Onderdonk advancing, feeling for the magic touch when steel would meet steel and the metal girdle be riveted tight.

It was his dream, his and Tupper's, but had he strength enough to run the full course? Once tasting parliamentary defeat, he felt no readiness to repeat that bitter dose, yet as matters stood he must perforce bulldoze his party into further support or go down to final ruin buried in a ravished treasury under a mountain of rusty rails.

Now, curiously enough, there appeared before him, summoned from mysterious

regions, a phantom figure exactly like that of Donald Smith: it had eyes of grey steel, features of granite, a beard of greying wire, the verisimilitude of the man himself, reproduced in those physical substances which his personality most suggested, a Robot form, imperturbable and undefeatable. Macdonald was not thinking of Smith at the moment; this individual simply presented itself, and the Premier, contemplating the grim apparition, instead of being alarmed felt unaccountably fortified.

Nodding in a friendly fashion to the Ottawa, he left the window, took out a pack of cards and began his favourite game of solitaire: he looked a little worn but almost happy.

In weeks that followed, a tall, well-groomed man with anxious eyes and haggard face became familiar in the corridors of the Parliament Buildings. George Stephen, haunting the place in his determination to meet the Premier, buttonholed senator after senator, member after member, but met only with evasions: the matter lay with Macdonald, with him alone, and Stephen, a proud man of position, wealth and authority, assumed in vain the cloak of the suppliant. He was pleading a high cause, but the plaint fell on deaf ears, the price of C.P.R. shares sank lower and lower as day by day the noose tightened.

It seemed that 2,000 miles of steel rails had become magnetized and drawn to themselves countless helpless human particles that stuck there, incapable of escape and doomed to be swallowed in one prodigious ruin for which he, carried away by unwise enthusiasm, was mainly responsible. To what siren song had he listened that fateful day in Dover Street?

This tense period found Macdonald distraught with uncertainty about the west. Père Lacombe, friend of the Blackfeet, was squatting day after day in Crowfoot's lodge, arguing, persuading, while the old, black-eyed chief smoked his pipestone *puagun* and deliberated whether he should join hands with the Crees, his ancient enemies, and wipe the prairie clean of interloping whites. His fighting men with the short guns under the blankets stood ready. There was a sharp skirmish at Duck Lake: the Mounted Police saved the settlement of Prince Albert from the Metis and their savage allies, and all through the Upper Saskatchewan country canvas-topped waggons packed with women and children with the men riding beside trailed over the plains, seeking security in some flimsy prairie settlement.

Aware of this, watching his own weighty problem being further displaced from the public mind by every wild rumour from the west, Stephen reflected bitterly that, were there not an uncompleted gap of one hundred miles on the Lake Superior

section, Van Horne could in less than one week transport troops from Montreal to the affected area. But the gap yawned, and Lake Superior was fringed with a thirty-mile belt of clear, blue ice.

It was not till the first week in April that Frank Smith convinced the Premier that this matter was going too far, and Stephen finally entered Room 95 of the House of Commons, when, facing the man he sought, he found it hard to speak, so heavily did the burden weigh on him.

Finally it came in a flood. Macdonald sat listening, the blandness of his features conveying nothing.

"Sir John, the time has arrived when personal interests count not at all: we have reached the parting of the ways."

"What ways, Mr. Stephen?"

"Success or bankruptcy: we have strained every individual effort, and——"

"I was much impressed to learn that you and Mr. Smith had put up nearly three-quarters of a million to pay that dividend," said Macdonald sympathetically. "'Twas a fine gesture."

"That is not all?"

"It is a very great deal of money for any two men."

"Mr. Smith suggested and I agreed that while we had left a dollar of our own, the C.P.R. must not be allowed to crash."

"That sounds very drastic, Mr. Stephen."

"We have also endorsed a five months' note for another million; Sir John, we felt that we were honourably bound to do so: merchants have been too long unpaid: Shaughnessy has been renewing notes till the paper wore thin, and only by his efforts have those notes been withheld from protest. In that and other ways he had accomplished marvels, and——"

"You—two—found—another—million!" repeated Macdonald in an odd tone.

"Yes, but it is not enough: a strike may break out in the Selkirks at any moment: the largest merchants in this country cannot discount our paper at the banks—not even at my bank where my private fortune is pledged to support the company," he added bitterly. "The C.P.R. is in existence to-day solely on good faith: contractors big and little, manufacturers, farmers, all we do business with have kept us from bankruptcy because they believe we are straight men. Never have I known such an example of trust. Ross told me that one small contractor in the west actually offered to lend us two thousand dollars when we already owe him five. There's a sample! And if the line goes down, I go with it: I am ruined both in spirit and fortune: the Montreal staff is working without pay, and how they live God knows. For myself, I

have reached the limit of endurance; I've had warnings of which none know but myself, but I'll fight to the last. Any business man would call Smith and me a pair of fools. Perhaps we are, but we have tried to build a Canadian line from one ocean to the other."

"I believe that, Mr. Stephen, on my soul I do," said the Premier earnestly, "but my position is——"

"Well, Sir John, if your Government allows the C.P.R. to go to the wall, we shall feel that we have done our best, but if this situation could have been anticipated four years ago in Dover Street you would have assured us of your support. Now we affirm that we have not had what we could reasonably expect."

"We've found you fifty-five millions instead of the originally agreed twenty-five."

"You have, and if you can prove that any and all of us have not at all times consistently acted in the best interests of the line, I withdraw my request for more help. None of us realized what we were tackling."

Macdonald smiled faintly. "There at last is something we can agree on." He paused, studying the man's face; Stephen might have passed under the Inquisition; not only his features but the highly-strained mind exhibited signs of torture; he was on edge; he personified mental anguish, and the fineness of his sensibilities inflicted on him the greater capacity for suffering. "No, we didn't anticipate this because we couldn't. But Mr. Stephen, with every recognition of what you have done and are doing, a man in my position is pulled many ways at once. I cannot be sure of party support in going farther, and were my party defeated, where would we stand? I have not forgotten '73."

"This is not a parallel case, sir."

"Not as a matter of economics, but as a party issue—yes."

"If the line is not completed, British Columbia will secede."

"Victoria, B.C., elected me to Parliament in '78 when Kingston, my old constituency, declined with thanks, so I think I am safe out there," said Macdonald dryly, "also B.C. was not in Federation when their first threat of secession was made, and they realized that the line must ultimately be finished, sometime, somehow. But were I not to be in office when that is accomplished it would be the heaviest blow of my life."

"You admit that, yet do nothing? At that Montreal banquet you announced that no achievement in Canadian history surpassed the building of the C.P.R.: well, Sir John, I am one of the builders, and the market price of our shares is thirty-five and no buyers: I fail to see any achievement there."

"I have not stated that I will do nothing," replied Macdonald, hating to see this

man suffer, “merely that I cannot do it now—to-day. While we sit here, the west, thanks to Louis Riel, is like tinder awaiting a match: there lies my first anxiety—and responsibility.”

“Nothing will do more to establish the west on a sound basis than the completion of the line,” maintained Stephen firmly. “Transportation spells civilization the world over. If the North Shore section were through we could land troops in Calgary four days after leaving Montreal.”

“Yes, I fully agree, but my hands are tied till I hear from General Middleton—he went west a week ago to take command—and——”

“Went west by an American line—Hill’s line, the enemy of the C.P.R.—to save the Canadian prairie!” interrupted Stephen acidly.

“*Touché*—you have me there—but this unrest must be scotched before I think of anything else. The Metis have seized Government stores, captured an Indian Agent with threats of torture by the Crees, and terrorized the country round Prince Albert. You know what has happened at Duck Lake? I have begged Father Lacombe to keep the Blackfeet pacified—he’ll do it if anyone can—and behind all this is the Fenian party threatening invasion from the United States. Mr. Stephen, try and see that I too am a greatly burdened man; I cannot move before the west is in order, and——”

At this moment young Joseph Pope entered, very tense, a yellow slip in hand.

“I apologize, sir, but this has just come in: you should have it at once.”

Macdonald glanced at the telegram: his brows went up, his face hardened into a mask on which furrowed lines were suddenly and deeply graven, he seemed strangely aged.

“Stephen, it is what I feared! The Crees have butchered two priests, our Indian agent Quinn, and killed Cowan, a mounted policeman: Cowan’s heart they left impaled on a stick. There has been a massacre of whites at Frog Lake, and Fort Pitt has surrendered to Big Bear. The west is in a blaze!”

The visitor made a despairing gesture and left the room: in the corridor he encountered the Minister of Railways hurrying to join his chief, and Pope halted.

“Bad news! You’ve heard it?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I thought of you at once and there’s just an off-chance if you can snatch it. If your people could possibly rush some militia into the north-west without using Hill’s lines it might improve your prospects: we can’t send our troops through the United States. I won’t promise anything, but that’s what occurs to me.”

He hurried on, leaving Stephen with a sudden wild thought that quickened his

pulse, when hastening to the Parliamentary telegraph office he flashed off a wire.

“Van Horne. On line between Montreal and Toronto. Drop everything. Join me here at once. Most urgent.”

Macdonald spoke truth. Rebellion was now spreading in a quick grass fire across the prairie, and like a spitting fuse laid between the rails of the all-red line the explosive agent ran westward over the Great Divide and on to the Beaver, where Steele was prostrated in Police barracks, smitten by fever, fuming at his own weakness.

From his bed he could see beyond the bridge the log-walled buildings where gamblers, liquor dealers and thugs plotted riot, and the grim shadow of a riot spread wide. In this nest of law-breakers crazy fiddles sounded interminably, throughout the hours of darkness yellow light gleamed from frosted windows over a wilderness of snow, and hither came Fenian agents down the Columbia from Canal Flats to stoke the smouldering fire. Here was the danger point: here the rock man, station man, timber man signed away his overdue pay, squandering in one reckless night the toil of months. Here he became a potential criminal.

For weeks Dan Mann had tramped the Selkirks, fending off what he knew must happen, his massive figure fighting through piled drifts, appearing at scattered camps at all hours, plastered with snow, icicles tinkling in his short, black beard, cajoling, promising, bearing on his Atlas shoulders the hopeless burden of pacification. Messages of encouragement flicked over the wire from Montreal where Donald Smith, Van Horne and Shaughnessy waited for some ray of light from Stephen, but these were no more than signals, and the pay car still stood motionless nearly three thousand miles away.

March was a turbulent month in the Selkirks, and before April came, Nature, rousing herself beneath her crystalline blanket, took a hand in the commotion.

A new force had been at work in these solitudes disturbing their shrouded calm, and through fields of air high above the line, over wastes where had passed only the shadow of the eagle's wing, now rolled a constant reverberation of blasting. The cushioned thud of dynamite was violating the cosmic balance of the peaks, threatening their stupendous and brittle fragility till far out of human sight the alabaster cliffs and giddy, wind-fashioned cornices quivered, splintered and toppled into sparkling cataracts that took headlong course to the valleys below. As they flowed they grew, they swelled, they widened, gathering from the winter harvest millions of tons that ramped down through tall forests, snapping huge trees, scooping up

boulders, till in one final plunge they swarmed across the valley floors, burying glacier-fed rivers, and mounted by their own impetus far up the opposing slope. Before them rushed a great wind that levelled standing timber with the blast of its fierce, invisible breath, leaving only a ruin of mushroomed stumps to tell of what had passed that way.

In the middle of this inclement season an undersized priest, riding a large, white mule, dismounted at Beavermouth Police barracks, and, tossing the bridle over the neck of his mournful mount, went in to see Steele. The big man was on a narrow wooden bed that complained under his restless weight, but at sight of the visitor he put out a welcoming hand.

"We've been expecting you, Father: how's Bucephalus?"

"Fine, major, fine; both well in spite of the weather. I'm sorry to see you laid out."

"Only a touch of the old complaint; but it takes hold of one's bones."

"Don't I know that by experience: it made a baby of me a year ago. I saw Sergeant Fury down the line: who's the big constable with him with the build of a bull moose?"

"That would be Walters."

"A broth of a boy, major! It won't be news to you, but I've kept ears and eyes open, to say naught of my nose, an' I smell trouble. Your force is too small for what's coming: across the bridge just now I picked up something." Leaning forward, he lowered his voice. "The strike will start to-morrow."

Steele propped himself on an elbow, fever burning in his hot face. "No, it isn't news: go on, Father."

"You needn't ask how I learned it, but there's the fact: I told them they were lunatics cutting their own throats, but they're just crazed with Fenian talk and bad whisky. Some aren't so eager to strike, but they ask what's the use of working any longer without pay: they've no money to send home and are shamed to go back east with empty pockets. Can't you strengthen your force?"

"Not while the Crees are butchering whites on the Saskatchewan," said Steele grimly, "and Crozier needs every man he can get: no—we must carry it through as we stand. Seen Hickey lately?"

"Two nights ago."

"I don't hear anything from him: all quiet up there?"

"A lot more than elsewhere: he's got his crowd in hand, an' told me he'd promised to pay them himself if the company didn't, so they've given him two weeks. Is that bluff—or can he do it?"

"It's not bluff; he can, but I hope he won't."

"Surely it's not wise, but 'tis a queer thing to find that kind of philanthropy up in Rogers Pass. Now what can I do for you?"

"Nothing, I'm all right."

"Don't be obstinate, you—you big Protestant."

"Then put a little strength into me, just a little."

"H'm! The Church, my son, is all powerful, but—well—first I think I'll attend to the other mule."

Next day—it was the first of April—work stopped on the Beaver and all through Rogers Pass. A pristine stillness descended on the wilderness, as though the mountains in ultimate triumph were closing in to witness the final struggles of the invading snake that till now had refused to die, while deserted rock cuts choked with shining drifts, axes ceased to flash in the standing timber, horses stood idle in their low-roofed stables, blacksmith forges went cold, earth-covered magazines remained locked, and only the cooks with their cookees were busy. In camp men sat smoking moodily, unable to occupy this unaccustomed leisure, or else tramped down the right-of-way to Beavermouth where, across the bridge, credit might still be had, the supply of reputed whisky was unexhausted, and loud-mouthed emissaries from over the border advocated destruction.

Of Big John's gang but few deserted him. Dan Mann and Ross himself had come up the line to counsel and encourage: Ross, a much tried official, announced that relief was in sight; two of the directors had put up a million dollars each and would undoubtedly find more. John thought of his two thousand and smiled. Not worth taking, he concluded. Two millions! He had no conception that in proportion his own offer was the greater, and felt abashed: but he clung to the intention.

It was strange to find this tense affair not unwelcome, since it made him explore his own resources with what he thought were satisfactory results: he had wanted to be one of Van Horne's men after the line went through and take part in their triumph. Now to his own surprise he relished sharing with Van Horne and the others this unexpected struggle.

It gave him more time to himself, so he went on with *Lorna Doone* to the chapter where John Ridd leads the attack on Doone Castle, and was poring breathless over this when a second letter came from Montreal.

He read it hungrily. Mary was well, but anxious, and Montreal full of talk that the line was in trouble. She had seen the Mr. Smith she wrote about before; he had walked through her ward with the matron and stopped to speak to her: he had meant to be kind, but rather frightened her, and could John Hickey have carried the

big tub that John Ridd carried for Maggie? She thought so. Did he like that part of the book where John Ridd hitched himself to the sleigh and pulled Lorna away from Doone Castle through the storm? Did that remind him of the Lake of Little Fishes? Would he please write to her often because she missed the west dreadfully, and she sent him some handkerchiefs.

John put the letter into the book and wrote:

“DEAR MISS,

I’ve just got yours and don’t you worry about anything you hear in Montreal as things are all right with us except that pay is a bit late but that’s nothing. There’s quite a lot of stuff coming down from on top—I mean avalanches. They don’t come as fast as you’d think and slow up just before they quit and it’s queer to watch them climbing up the other side of the Beaver like as they were trying to get back where they belong. I lost three men in one last week but they don’t hit right where this camp is built. I learned a lot about snowslides when I was a kid in the Cariboo and it’s useful.

I’m certainly obliged for those handkerchiefs you sent me but they’re much too good for me in a place like this. It’s the first time I ever had my initial on anything except a contract.

I guess I’ll clean up pretty well when things get straightened out. Ross told me that the Mr. Smith you wrote about put up a million dollars to help the company so I guess he’s kinder than he looks outside. Ross told me too that I could reckon on a solid job when the steel goes through.

There’s another superintendent name of Dan Mann who I guess is as strong as I am maybe stronger. He weighs more but ain’t quite so spry on his feet and we’re going to have a wrestling match some day but I’ll have to look out he don’t get a clinch. They say he’s the huskiest man in the Selkirks. We’re good friends.

I’ve been thinking a lot about the book and Lorna is certainly fine but John Ridd to my mind is kind of humble when he don’t have to be, and he hadn’t nothing to be ashamed of being as his family was as old as hers maybe older. It would have been different if he’d been born right low down and his mother maybe wasn’t a straight woman then I’d understand his attitude better—I guess that’s spelt wrong.

I’m just coming to the part you write about it’s the kind of weather we’re having here in the Pass right now but I guess there’s no English avalanches. If they marry at the end and I reckon they do if Carver don’t kill John Ridd I’d like to read the next book if there is one telling how they get along. I’d certainly be interested in that.”

Here he paused, narrowing his blue eyes, listening to the east wind roaring over the Pass: it was a homey sound: he liked it, hoped he would hear it all his life; it was friendly and had power in it, but perhaps to others——?

“The thing about John Ridd if he marries Lorna is which life is going to be led for I can’t see him sitting round in store clothes doing nothing and at the same time she’s liable to get discontented living the way he did in a big farmhouse. How does that strike you miss?

Well, that’s about all the news. I don’t see many folks round here mostly engineers and such sort. Hell’s Bells as they call Major Rogers blew in last week and took quite a while to

thaw out his whiskers in my shack he said he dasset crack a smile till they melted or he'd pull the hair out by the roots and that's why I shave. He told me about his first trip into the pass and it sounded rough but nothing special and he's certainly pretty smart for his age. Well so long miss, and hoping this finds you as it leaves your cordial friend,

JOHN HICKEY."

He read this slowly, the longest letter he had ever attempted, wondering not a little at his own temerity and what she would say in reply, then stood at the door investigating the weather.

Ragged clouds with torn fringes were scurrying across from the Great Divide; they gave a promise of rain, which meant a movement on the upper snowfields and more stuff coming down from on top. The usual course of these avalanches was now indicating itself, and already Rogers had staked out where heavily-timbered snowsheds would be needed over which they might roar without carrying away the track: these were man-made timber tunnels of prodigious solidity with sloping roofs, strongly anchored to the tilted slopes.

Skies were grey, the air perceptibly milder, and around the camps one could observe that curious shrinkage of snow that signals the approach of spring, when forgotten objects reappear, the bush looks oddly black, and the first chirping of birds breaks the silence amongst the dark, green hemlock tops. This season, so often as it came, always made Big John feel restless, quickening his blood and calling him elsewhere as though the winter stopping-place had been used long enough. Now he reckoned on perhaps another four months in the Pass, by which time, according to Ross, the steel should be up and over and moving down the Illecillewaet to the second crossing. Somewhere thereabouts it ought to meet Onderdonk. And what then?

He was turning back to close the letter when from the direction of Beavermouth there reached him a faint popping noise repeated several times, at which he stopped, stiffened and listened sharply: it sounded like the bursting of dry pods, but one could not be mistaken and he knew it for distant gunfire.

At this he gave an exclamation, reached for his revolver, and started along the tote road in a long, loping trot.

Miles away Steele lay on his bed, cursing his weakness, when down the right-of-way towards the first crossing sounded a fusillade of shots, then the harsh scream of an engine whistle. Staring across the bridge, he could see knots of men gathering and talking, but nothing more threatening: save for the constable on duty at the jail

crammed with unruly prisoners, he was alone in the barracks, and could only wait: he had thought of wiring to Calgary for help, but, according to the last reports, Louis Riel was now threatening the settlement of Battleford and the Crees were on the warpath. That put reinforcements in the Selkirks out of the question.

Three hours later, Sergeant Fury, a man above middle height, with a bulldog face, square shoulders and long, powerful arms, came in and saluted stiffly.

"That end of it's all right now, sir."

"Where, Fury, where?"

"Down at the end of track, sir."

"Exactly what happened?"

"It began when a gang held up the tracklayers, sir: they started out and were getting to work when a mob assembled and drove them back into the yards. Then Mr. Ross got on the engine, put on steam and ran her through the mob; that was at Beaver Canyon where there's room for the track and no more. They had to jump for it. They did some shooting, but no one was hit, so I stationed my men and told them to shoot at sight whoever interfered. Then the mob got tired and came back to Beavermouth. They're across the bridge now. Mr. Ross is on the job at end of track, he's laying steel again, and all clear there, so I brought my men back here. Hope I was right, sir?"

"Quite right. Where's Mr. Mann?"

"I heard he'd gone over to the Illecillewaet, sir."

"Father Fay?"

"Started for the Pass not long ago. He's not got far."

"Where's Mr. Johnstone?"

"On his way here, sir: he's bringing the Riot Act."

"We've not finished with it yet, Fury."

"No, sir, that's my view."

"Take your revolvers, go across the bridge and arrest any man you recognize as belonging to that mob. Shoot on resistance. I'm sorry to miss it myself, but—well _____"

"Very good sir, that'll be all right."

Saluting again, he turned on his heel, while Steele propped himself against the window on shaking knees: a hundred yards away men were clustering like flies around a carcass and he estimated their number at not less than six hundred. Now Fury with three constables walked smartly over the timber structure in open order, heads up as though on parade, scarlet tunics glinting with the bright hues of blood.

At this moment, Johnstone, the local magistrate, hurried into the room: he

seemed shaken.

"It looks bad, major, damned bad; those fellows of yours will be eaten alive."

"Tough chewing!" grunted Steele. "Got that Act with you?"

"I have, but they'll never listen to it."

"So much the worse for them. Stand by, will you?"

The four tunics marched calmly on to be at once absorbed into the crowd; they were swallowed, assimilated, while the voice of the mob communicated its rasping animal note. Walters's big shoulders stood out and suddenly could be seen to plunge forward while round him the crowd foamed and frothed. Steele gave a chuckle.

"Got his man that time! Wait a minute—wait!"

There was a shot, and Johnstone felt nervously in his pocket.

"There's one gone to hell, major."

"Then come on: we'll have a look in. I think I can make it."

Summoning his last vestige of strength, Steele stood upright in his underclothes and snatched a rifle from the rack above the bed. As he did so the crowd parted, disclosing the figure of Walters dragging, with another constable, a struggling man towards the bridge, while Fury and the fourth Mountie retreated slowly, standing off the rioters with drawn revolvers. In the forefront of this violent tide was a cursing Maenad of a woman in a flaming red dress.

Steele staggered to the door—out—and on. Midway on the bridge he levelled the rifle and at sight of this man who was rumoured to be at the point of death there fell a momentary stillness: his great bare chest, wild hair and fever-flushed face gave him a truly formidable aspect. A derisive yell came from the squirming desperado in Walters's grasp and the constable's huge fist battered him to insensibility with one crushing blow.

Then on the bridge sounded a hollow clatter of hooves and there rode up a little priest on a large white mule. There was another pause, and Father Fay, rising in his stirrups, spoke out in a voice that belied his stature.

"I'll excommunicate every mother's son of ye that moves one step farther," he shouted furiously. "I mean what I say and ye know it. Get back out of this, ye rascallions."

Steele gave a hard smile: his strength was going fast, but the rifle held steady.

"Read the Act, Johnstone."

Johnstone read, his voice shaky, while men listened, aware that here stood the Church, the Bench and the Police arrayed against them, and as Johnstone finished Steele got in his word.

"You've heard," he barked, "and I will open fire on any twelve men found

standing together. We'll mow you down. Disperse and behave yourselves."

That got home, and in the following silence one could hear the Beaver rushing under the bridge. Father Fay sat upright, eyes sparkling with an unholy lust for combat: four constables with a senseless man at their feet ranged themselves without words, revolvers drawn, and Steele, sensing his strength fading, leaned against a timber for support. Now from behind came running feet, and a big man trotted up, panting, feeling in his hip pocket. He had covered eighteen miles of dislocated mountain road in three hours. Steele sent him a welcoming nod.

"Good for you, Hickey, but it's all right: they've had enough. Over their heads first time. Fire Fury!"

Four revolvers spoke as one in a language not to be misread: beneath their singing bullets the mob dissolved like rabbits seeking their warrens, and Steele wiped his burning brows. He felt happier.

"Fury!"

"Sir?"

"Take your men and make a patrol: if there's any insolence, make an arrest: if there's any resistance, shoot. Hickey, give me an arm, will you: I'm weak as a baby."

He had nearly reached the barracks when a young man came running toward him waving a yellow slip.

"Just in this minute for Mr. Ross, major: I thought you'd better see it."

Steele took the sheet dizzily, but the words swam before his eyes: he motioned to the priest.

"Never rains but it pours. Read it, Father."

"Pay car leaving Winnipeg to-day, will arrive at end of track April 7th Shaughnessy'," chanted the man of God in a triumphant voice. "Now why the devil couldn't that have come one hour ago?"

VAN HORNE, who had come to Ottawa like a gale of wind, sat with Stephen in the rooms of the Deputy Minister, his face full of power and determination.

"There's the situation," concluded Pope heavily. "I don't know if it's possible—that's for you to say—but if it is done I'll guarantee that Sir John will be a good deal impressed: also it should strengthen him in the House."

"Just exactly what do you want?" demanded Van Horne, realizing that now the boot was on the other foot.

"Two field batteries with all equipment, and the Montreal 65th Battalion picked up at Kingston in forty-eight hours and set down on the prairies in the very shortest possible time," said Pope succinctly. "You do that and—well—we'll see. So far the North-west Mounted have saved Prince Albert, but the whole of Duck Lake region is terrified: settlers, missionaries, Indian agents, telegraph operators are on the run for police or Hudson's Bay posts, and Irvine must have support without delay. It's the chance of your life."

Transport of troops! Van Horne leaped at it; an old story to him, for had he not seen it on the Michigan Central twenty years ago when, as an expert seventeen-year old telegrapher, he wanted to have a hand in the American Civil War? Unable to withstand the excitement of passing troop trains he enlisted, only to be demanded back as indispensable by a cold-blooded superintendent: but he remembered enough of that experience to put one very pointed question to this anxious Minister.

"Do I have a free hand—no bossing by any damned officers?"

"Free as you like—it's your railway," said Pope promptly. "But you'll have to feed 'em *en route*. Can you do it?"

There was a movement, a chair pushed back, a door slammed, Van Horne vanished. Hurtling to Montreal, he flung himself into another chair, one of authority, and the brain of the man, clear, masterful, rejoicing in its own congenital ability, set to work. The hundred miles of open gaps on the North Shore were known to a foot: no steel there, only half-driven tunnels, half-built trestle bridges, half-completed embankments, but the shores of Lake Superior were still girdled with a belt of ice, and there he perceived a highway ready to his purpose.

In forty-eight hours his trains pulled out from Kingston stuffed with guns, ammunition and shouting Montrealers. At the first gap they were vomited on to the solid ice and marched under granite cliffs to the next section of the snake that could not die: another gap, and they tramped the right-of-way or were pulled in straw-covered sleighs. Where the track was laid they travelled, jolting over frozen rails on

open flat cars, the first tourists to inspect the grandeur of this solitary scene. Everywhere was found food ready in abundance at construction camps. At Nipigon they swarmed into waiting troop trains that roared north and westward past Winnipeg, Brandon and Pile o' Bones till on the tenth morning from Kingston they came to attention beside their guns at Q'appelle in the country of Louis the Rebel, while through those days and nights the wire sang with orders from Van Horne and a fascinated public followed their progress across a continent.

It was a race with the coming of the prairie grass, when new fodder would give Indians and Metis a still more dangerous mobility.

Meantime Father Lacombe had not been idle. In the cab of an engine he thundered from Calgary, and at daybreak lifted the flap of Crowfoot's lodge to the secret astonishment of that weathered chieftain. Raising a hand in ancient salutation, he entered and sat cross-legged.

"How! My friend, I am very lonely and could not sleep, so have come again to visit you."

Crowfoot's graven features conveyed nothing but dignity. "You are welcome, *Arsous-kitsi-rarpi*, but how come you at this hour?"

"In the thing that eats black stones and drinks water on the iron road, and not before when there was no road. It is much faster now, taking two hours instead of twelve. We grow older and wiser, you and I, while many things happen under our eyes."

"You have not eaten?"

"I had thought to eat with my friends the Blackfeet," said Lacombe smoothly.

The old man made a sign, and food was brought by a silent squaw who disappeared at once, leaving the flap open so that from where he sat gnawing deer flesh the Oblate could see a semicircle of pointed teepees with their crossed poles and threads of smoke climbing through. The snow had yielded to early Chinook winds that sucked it up as by magic leaving no moisture, and at the roots of the long, brown prairie grass one discerned the first fine thread-like shoots of new herbage that soon would stretch out of sight. Movement set up amongst the lodges, tall blanketed braves strode bravely from one to the other, and Lacombe realized that his coming was common knowledge; but not till Crowfoot had finished his second pipe did the visitor speak.

"It is in my thoughts," he began obliquely, "that those who live to the north and have not seen what we have are thereby the poorer."

"That may be so, but there is much that I would be content not to have seen. My eyes are tired with that which is strange."

"Yet, my friend, it is not possible to close them yet." Here the priest drew a whiff from the proffered pipe, restoring it ceremoniously. "And such things cannot be prevented."

"The coming of the iron road?" asked Crowfoot grimly, "I would have been glad to stop that."

"You would like it then taken away?"

"Not unless the buffalo come back."

"In that you are wise," nodded Lacombe, "for how shall the buffalo return? We are becoming old men, you and I, to whom buffalo are only dreams of our youth. Now there is something else, and news has reached me that the Metis, with the Crees who were once your enemies, are killing the whites on the Saskatchewan. Runners have also come from the camp of Poundmaker, your adopted son, with the same story. But if they had seen what you and I have seen, these matters would not be."

"The Crees were always fools, and what man shall answer for the son of another?"

"You speak truth, but we do not wish to have even fools killed."

"The blood of a Cree brings no sorrow to the lodges of the Blackfeet," rumbled Crowfoot cynically. "What else lies in your mind, *Arsous-kitsi-rarpi*?"

"My tongue is straight, and I will speak. I am told that some of your young hunters also talk of fighting, and I would save them. The thing that taps at the end of the wire tells that many men, all white men, are on the way here with many guns from the rising sun. Some of these guns are so heavy that they are drawn by horses on strong *travois*: when they speak it is like thunder, and they kill more than two miles away."

The black eyes regarded him fixedly. "You the Man of Good Heart tell me this?"

"Have I yet told that which did not prove to be true? Listen now, my friend of many years, and what I say is for the ears of Poundmaker and your young braves. I do not desire to see anyone killed. The whites came with the iron road that could not be stopped, and it has gone on, over those mountains we can see, even to the Bitter Water. This road is bringing those who will take vengeance for their brothers and sisters who lie dead on the Saskatchewan. Some of them may perish, but for one that falls a hundred will step forward to take his place. This is what I came to tell you. I have spoken."

Crowfoot set his beady eyes on the priest and reflected deeply, for here sat the one man who gave all, asking nothing, and the word of such was not to be put aside.

"What then would you have me do, *Arsous-kitsi-rarpi*?"

“It is well that with myself writing down your speech you send to the Great Chief in Ottawa a letter he will be glad to receive. Then I will go north to the camp of Ermine Skin and tell him that I have talked with you.”

“I will do that after calling a council.”

Such was the burden of their conversation exchanged suavely with considered pauses and no haste, while the sun grew warmer and snowy peaks on the western horizon gleamed like distant bergs stranded in a clear, blue sky. At high noon Lacombe went off with an historic document in his pocket. Later, after days and nights of hard riding, he dismounted in the *coulée* where the wildest of all the Crees had gathered his warriors. Here, close by Bear Hill, Ermine Skin heard words of wisdom and followed the man of peace to the camp of General Strange not far off. Challenged by a sentry, the father gave at hazard his own name, which happened to be one of the passwords of the 65th Montreals who were not ignorant of this priestly medicine man, and the truculent Cree, awed by the array of force, swore loyalty to the Crown.

It was the beginning of the end of Riel's rebellion. Within a fortnight—after the battle of Batoche—the last explosion of mixed and tribal blood died away on the prairie, and the fanatical Louis surrendered.

Peace in the Selkirks and on the plains, but no peace in Montreal whither Stephen returned exhausted, empty-handed. Van Horne had done good work, so good that the German General Staff asked for details, which amused him greatly; Canada was given its first glimpse of what the all-red line would ultimately mean; but Macdonald, now besieged with appeals for help from ruined settlers, and meeting with bitter opposition in his projected electoral changes, seemed deaf to all petitions. Stephen wired to Pope that no blame must be attached in the case of serious catastrophe; Van Horne, driven desperate, haunted Schreiber's office; Donald Smith felt in his pocket again, found something of value and handed it to the Company. But long overdue millions in the shape of oft-renewed notes were piling up, the stability of the greatest bank in the country was undermined, and the line about to be smothered beneath its own unhonoured promises to pay.

Louis Riel, in jail in Regina, wrote an extraordinary letter to Macdonald in which he laid all responsibility for trouble in the north-west on Edward Blake and Mackenzie: Quebec was inflamed since Louis's life stood in the balance, while Vidal, Roman Catholic Bishop of Prince Albert, though condemning Louis, pleaded mercy for his followers, many of whom were now miserably wrecked. Thus the Church on

the St. Lawrence and the Saskatchewan became divided amongst itself.

But the work on the line, inspired by clogged faith, supported only by tottering credit, did not cease: the North Shore gaps were closed, and in May an unbroken track ran to the Columbia. Now the Cabinet under pressure guaranteed an advance of a million. It vanished like a drop in the river, whereat Macdonald, finally cornered, introduced a measure of relief carrying a loan of five million and authority to place fifteen more on first mortgage bonds, which brought from the hostile Blake a speech in the House surpassing all previous vindictive attacks.

Weeks dragged out with nothing done, ruin was in the air, and Stephen, recalling his first fine enthusiasm, found it acid in his mouth. His own future was pledged, he had never acted except in good faith, but secretly felt himself liable to prosecution for involving his bank, and never had a man of honour faced a more bitter trial. Sitting in the Strangers' Gallery with Van Horne, he listened to long-drawn debates—Macdonald now being absorbed in his Redistribution Bill—realizing that the crash must inevitably come before many days passed, and he was doomed to be written down as an irresponsible visionary: he longed to change places with the navy who would lose only some hard-earned pay and not a reputation in the world of men.

The month of June drew to a close; July came in with the furnace heat that so often smites the Ottawa valley, the river lay a burnished mirror, but Parliamentary chatter went on and on while Shaughnessy, haggard and distraught, staved off from hour to hour the bankruptcy that threatened. Finally, on the 20th, the bill became law, and three gathered in Montreal staring at each other with incredulous eyes, while a fourth, seated in a large leather chair, stroked his silvering beard nodding contentment.

"Gentlemen," said he after the conversation had ranged wide, "I'm thinking at the moment not of the C.P.R. but of Sir Henry Tyler and the Grand Trunk. It is now 9 p.m. here, therefore 2 a.m. in England, so Sir Henry is doubtless asleep and will not get the news until to-morrow morning. I should like to see him receive it. No doubt," here Mr. Smith relaxed into a wintry smile, "it will be delivered with the cup of tea in bed—an effeminate English custom which I do not follow—and possibly he will not fancy his breakfast. Mr. Stephen, have you made any immediate plans?"

"Yes: the *Montevidian* sails for Liverpool this week and I am leaving in her: I have already cabled to Tupper who will get busy at once sounding the market, and to-morrow I am attending a bank meeting. Go on, Van."

"Ross has been wired that the pay car starts at once with all arrears in wages up to date: it's the second time it's late, but I guess they're used to that. You, Tom."

"I'm looking forward to writer's cramp from signing cheques instead of

promissory notes,” said Shaughnessy with a strange expression. “My God! is it true?”

They exchanged smiles. At first when the news arrived Van Horne took it boisterously as became his resilient nature, then sobered at the knowledge of all that remained to be done, and over them all had now descended a curious calm of reaction. The burden that bowed them so low was removed only to be succeeded by the nostalgia of a success that to-day seemed unaccountably tasteless: in a curious fashion this long-hoped-for easing of the load created an abnormal situation, and though the chains that had clanked for so many months were struck away, the seared and burning sores they inflicted were still unhealed. Those marks must endure.

“First mortgage bonds,” ruminated Mr. Smith in contemplative tones, “being a prior charge on the entire assets of the Company, should now appeal to sound people like Barings. In my opinion they will bring something like par value.”

“With thirty millions to repay to the Government within twelve months?” objected his cousin. “We’ll be lucky if we get eighty.”

“More I think, Mr. Stephen, considerably more than that. Gentlemen, it is—ah—interesting to recall the fact that at this time last week the Company was within three hours of bankruptcy. Well—well!”

“Why bring that up?” growled Van Horne.

“Because I find a certain satisfaction in the comparison that you no doubt are unconsciously sharing. Comparisons, Mr. Van Horne, are not infrequently instructive, and now I am convinced that all along Sir John has been privately resigned to the inevitable necessity for coming to the rescue, but would not act till the hour struck and he had to admit that we could not possibly do more ourselves. It is quite imaginable that he found a certain satisfaction in watching our efforts, especially mine, but the moment his relief measure was introduced—let me see—that was the 30th of April, was it not?—he committed himself. Now the fact that this measure remained before the House was of great assistance in enabling Mr. Shaughnessy to placate our creditors, since its withdrawal would have meant the defeat of the Conservative party and Sir John’s political destruction. Sir John, believe me, had no intention of being destroyed.”

“That’s right enough,” admitted Shaughnessy, “the old fox knew what he was about all the time.”

“Yes, I think so: also he relied upon our perception to grasp this, and that is why during these past few months I personally did not feel the anxiety I had last year; also it justified me in—ah—proffering certain financial aid from time to time. I shall look

forward with considerable interest to my next meeting with Sir John, and speaking very privately I have volunteered to contest the next election in Montreal West as his personal supporter. Well, Mr. Stephen, we wish you every success in England, and I suggest no offer under ninety for the bonds be entertained.”

Within a fortnight the Montreal papers announced that Lord Revelstoke on behalf of Barings had become a purchaser at ninety-five for the fifteen million, and Shaughnessy began to sign cheques instead of promissory notes.

NEAR the west end of Big John's contract Luigi Donatello was stretched on his back in a small two-man tent at the edge of the right-of-way: next to him, Pietro, his brother. The hour was midnight, the sky cloudy, and save for a murmurous note of hurrying waters the world seemed void of sound.

Pietro's eyes were closed tight, but Luigi could not sleep, and he fingered the loaded rifle close by his blanket, straining his ears and imagining things moving outside. He had fallen into a doze when there came the snapping of a stick.

"*Ecco!*" he hissed, with a shake. "*Al fino!* He has come—listen!"

They sat up, tense, suppressing their breathing. Pietro lifted the door flap. One could distinguish tall, ghostly trees and rectangular piles of freshly cut sleepers, all blurred and dim. Then of a sudden they heard a crash, a thud, a deep coughing grunt. Luigi emptied his rifle in that direction, and the two ran out.

They saw a dark bulk melting into the timber, and there came a shouting from other tents along the right-of-way. Lanterns jogged toward them, carried by excited men. Followed a babel of talk, all Italian. Luigi was now at the log penthouse in which had been stored his reserve of meat, he being cook for the gang of twenty hewers. The place was smashed in, and a ring of lifted lanterns revealed its emptiness.

"*Ancora il vecchio diavolo!*" barked Luigi, his dark eyes flashing. There was laughter from the others as the gang dispersed. He lingered there, hot with anger.

"I get him or he get me," said he with a great oath.

"You big fool take so much chance," objected Pietro. "For me I would poison. Never kill that bear by a bullet. How many times now you shoot?"

"Six."

"An' Gasparo an' Paulo, they shoot too, but no use at all. You take nice piece of meat an' leave him on dump with poison inside, then *addio* that old bear."

Luigi, finally agreeing, put the matter to the section engineer next morning, and word went down the line for arsenic.

It was time. The seven-year-old grizzly from a thief had now become a killer, still haunting the pass, and animated by a growing ferocity. One of the Cornishman's bullets was flattened in the articulation of his shoulder joint, where it set up a constant irritation: when he walked it scraped the bone and made him limp. A month later he had killed a man within a stone's throw of the rock cut, and from that hour became a public enemy. There followed a war, offensive and defensive, in which man's wits were matched against animal instinct and availed nothing: traps with great steel jaws

operated by a powerful spring were sent for and set where the man-like impressions of the huge foot could be found, but they remained empty except for one into which Carl Svenson, a Swedish driller, stepped on a dark night. That was an amputation case.

The beast went on with robbery, and equally he seemed to relish destruction. Isolated tents were torn to pieces in the absence of their owners, provision shacks broken open, their contents scattered and fouled. Parties climbed the slopes, hunted for him all day, saw him not, and returning, made out the brown spot poised motionless where they themselves had passed. Men hesitated about using the right-of-way in the dark, and slept with loaded rifles at hand. Hit more than once, each encounter increased the grizzly's hostility, lessening his fear of man, till now he was the untameable spirit of the mountain, warring tooth and claw against every invader of his kingdom. This was his ground, and he could not retreat.

By now the Selkirks were nearly surmounted. Gangs of men still trimmed the rock cuts, blasting what seemed insecure; everywhere sounded the stroke of axes, and from the standing timber were dragged thousands of sleepers. On the embankment they lay spaced ready for the steel. Other gangs drove spikes into the decks of skeleton trestles; the telegraph line, long since in operation, clicked orders from east to west, barrels of water were set in readiness on the wooden bridges, and shacks for section men appeared every few miles.

Then a pause in the hewing, drilling, blasting, digging, and men waited the coming of the steel.

Its herald was a hoarse scream, harsher, more dominant than had ever before awakened the mountain echoes, travelling high where wild sheep clambered over the giddy ledges and the bald eagle swooped to feed his young. It was the voice of steam, of power, of an engine pushing before it a train of flat cars loaded with steel rails. Those who heard it looked at each other and smiled.

Slowly, indomitably, it climbed with a grinding of wheels, this being the savage music of its conquest, stopping every few lengths to disgorge the metallic road on which it rolled, spewing out its own foothold, rasping with bumping buffers over the unballasted track, vomiting rails—they had been shipped from England up the St. Lawrence—that even as they fell were dragged forward by sweating men, centred, spiked and bolted.

There was a grim haste about it, a sort of triumphant fury, for here were the last envoys to scale the heights before east and west became one. For this the mountains had been bored and riven, and the panting engine with its inverted cone of stack, wire-covered lest belching sparks set the forest ablaze, was the ambassador of

civilization. The rock men, leaning on their hammers, stared at it, voiceless and mesmerized. This was the thing they had dreamed of, and the driver, grimy arms resting at the cab window, looked like a god.

The grizzly, watching from his upper slopes, felt that here was the most formidable enemy of all: its roar confused him, its strange smell made his hair bristle. The night before it arrived he had padded over the spaced sleepers, wondering what they were, and trying to discover whence had come the sound so threatening and repeated that reached him on the heights. In the morning he saw the thing, heard the thunder of its wheels, the clang of steel and clatter of innumerable hammers. At this he became angry, restless, and even more curious. When night fell, the engine remained stationary near the rock cut, and he ventured quite near to investigate. Next day he stayed up high till dark, and grew hungry. At sunset, the thing that roared moved on.

Luigi sat at the door of his tent pushing pinches of arsenic into lumps of meat. It was an expensive experiment, but roused keen interest along the right-of-way, and a dozen men had contributed to the cost. When he had finished he stowed the meat in a sack and climbed up the embankment: with him went Pietro, carrying the rifle.

At the edge of the standing timber was a faint trail where the grizzly's imprints had been seen, and from which the traps were removed because of danger to men: here, a hundred feet from the track, they laid the first bait, a small piece, not poisoned. Nearer the track, another. The third had arsenic. The last, largest of all and highly poisoned, lay between the rails.

"Ebbene, è fatto!" Luigi peered into the dark. "How long you think it take to kill him?"

Pietro gave a shrug, and there ensued an argument as to whom the hide would belong to: both wanted the pelt, and discussion grew warm till they compromised on a raffle amongst those who had bought the arsenic. The skin, they reckoned, would fetch twenty-five dollars, while the long teeth, with a little gold cap on the big end, would hang well from a watch-chain. Then they went back to the tent, and sat waiting.

"Suppose he don't come down that way?" hazarded Pietro an hour later.

But even as he spoke, the grizzly was coming. Driven by an empty stomach, he descended, moving with infinite care, nostrils twitching, limping, yet transferring his vast weight from foot to softly reaching foot without a sound. Finding the first bait, he sniffed and swallowed. It had more of the man smell than anything he had ever tasted, but the meat was sweet. The second morsel disappeared at once.

At the third, which lay near the toe of the embankment, he hesitated, testing it

with a curving red tongue. It seemed not quite the same, but was larger and very fat, and fat being to him what sugar is to a child, he gulped it down. His nose led him to the fourth, and this too he swallowed.

Gradually he knew that something was wrong: feeling a burning heat in his stomach and the sharp throbbing of pain, he stood waving his massive head, jaws open and dripping. The pain increased, scorching his vitals, and he began to cry in a medley of choking, sobbing sounds that were almost human.

By now a dozen men had gathered from the shadows on each side, watching the great shape dimly outlined in the dusk: for fear of hitting each other they did not shoot; each hoped that the skin would be his, and waited to see him die, while torture drove the brute mad. His body was on fire, and he experienced a horrible thirst.

At the end of the cut was a stream—part of the spring that flowed both ways—discharging into a deep ravine, a spring that he knew well, for here had he not first tasted the flesh of man? It passed under a trestle bridge on to which the track led directly it left the solid rock. To reach the stream one must traverse the length of the cut, and thither by instinct the great beast turned. Insensate with pain, he now feared nothing, and water he must have.

Coughing, sobbing, whining, he began to lurch over the sleepers that that day had been given their first tamping of ballast. When he entered the cut, Pietro, knowing that the enemy was trapped, gave a shout. The grizzly did not hear him: he heard nothing, and rocked on.

He was half way to the stream when up the line reverberated a hoarse whistle as the train backed eastward for another load of rails. Over the creaking trestle it rumbled with the weight of jolting flat cars behind it, driver and fireman leaning out, peering into the gloom. Perilous work this, but every hour was golden, and men forgot what danger meant.

Suddenly the driver gave an oath, and snatched at his brakes. Steam hissed. There was a grinding of wheels biting at the steel and an irresistible thrust from the bumping cars. The engine hitting something soft, was lifted a little, canted clear of the track, smashed against the vertical wall of the cut, and toppled back on its side. The train piled up, slithering over itself like a pack of cards; boiling water shot from a burst pipe, and a scalded man, pinned under hot metal, screamed in agony.

Beside him, crushed to a bloody pulp, lay the grizzly, Lord of the Mountain, wild guardian of the Pass.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EAGLE PASS,
November 8th, 1885

DEAR MISS,

You'll certainly think I'm a long time answering your last letter but quite a lot of things have happened round here. I'm kind of glad you feel the way you do about John Ridd and that it's alright they got married and she would have felt the same if he hadn't been a yoman farmer but just a blanket stiff that noseyed round from one job to another. Some day I'd certainly like to talk to you about that book, when do you reckon you'll be coming west again for I guess I'm here in the mountains for the rest of my life.

Well miss starting back a bit I got through my contract all right and cleaned up six thousand dollars that's in the bank right now, then Ross said he wanted a man who could smell a gravel pit under two feet of moss so he gave me a ballast engine and some flats and a plow and started me in on that. I like it fine. When the flats are loaded and spotted for dumping we hitch the loco to the plow so its slides from end to end over the flats and scrapes the gravel off both sides. Of course the flats are braked hard so they stay put. It's pretty slick work if I do say so. We've got a steam shovel to load the flats.

Well miss, yesterday I saw the last spike driven and it wasn't as exciting as you'd think being just a standard iron spike out of the keg. It was like this, Van Horne had come up with a carfull of big bugs from the east and I saw them all a lot of them had beaver hats but not Van Horne or Ross or Dan Mann. Dan hadn't any hat. There was a tall man with a long square beard that was Fleming and Tom Wilson had told me about him the evening before we hit the Lake of Little Fishes, and your friend Mr. Smith who put up the million, his beard was white, and Hell's Bells and a lot of track-layers and my gang and a water boy.

The grade was all ready and we could see Onderdonk's men working up the pass slamming down rails as fast as they could and spiking while we were doing the same till there was just twenty feet left open. Everyone was kind of quiet and quit talking so you could hear nothing but those last two rails getting sawed to length, and someone told me that Onderdonk's rails had come right round south America to the Fraser to get there to Eagle Pass in the Gold Range. It seemed a long way to come.

Well miss, when the rails were sawed off Onderdonk's gang took one end and mine the other and laid them in place then someone hands Mr. Smith a hammer and old Hell's Bells takes a spike and holds it right where it ought to go and looks up at Mr. Smith like as he was scared for his nuckles. I guess Mr. Smith is 70 years old and then some but he gives Van Horne a sort of frosty little smile takes a kind of half swing and darned if he didn't come down fair and square as if he'd done it all his life while Hell's Bells sat right there and laughs. I was kind of surprised but he drove her home good and tight into a spruce tie with an eight inch face which is standard. No one said a word while he was swinging and Hell's Bells was certainly relieved over his nuckles. The weather was dull and rainy but I guess it's going to turn colder.

Then someone started cheering but Mr. Smith didn't turn a hair, he keeps just as quiet as a January muskeg and says he thinks the whole job is very well done, and Van Horne allows that anyone who travels over that road will pay full fare, and right there they called the place some Scotch name that I can't spell but it's chalked on a board so I'll copy it out. Then the crowd from the east got aboard the private car with Onderdonk's gang of friends

and started for the west with a lot on the back platform and us fellows waving our hats and it started to rain. I ain't quite used to the steel being down but I guess that'll come. Some fellows say right now that Onderdonk's road isn't up to our standard.

Nov. 9th.

I'm keeping this letter to send back on Van Horne's train when she comes through. I don't suppose you ever met a gambler in Yale called Kelly the Rake. He blew into my camp last night pretty hard beat and wanted to borrow ten dollars, I let him have five and it's a gift.

The name of the place is CraGeLLaCHie. Dan told me it's something the Montreal crowd used to say to each other when the pay car couldn't go out but is nothing like what we said in Rogers Pass when she didn't turn up. Van Horne's train is due to-morrow so I'll send this along. After the spike was driven Ross asked me if I wanted to be a roadmaster and look after a piece of track for keeps and I said yes and where and he said anywheres round here so I'm going back to the east end of Rogers where my contract was and I know the ground. It's kind of tricky for avalanches but I always find them interesting and when I told him that he laughed and said he'd fix it with Van Horne.

When you write please send to Mr. John Hickey, Roadmaster, C.P.R. Rogers Pass C.P.R. Selkirk Mountains, B.C. Hoping this finds you well your true friend,

JOHN HICKEY, C.P.R.

My fingers are kind of stiff In case you don't know that word I copied means see her through or something like that.

Nearly a year had gone by since Van Horne and Donald Smith stood on the ground that is Vancouver, and there was being hacked out of timber a fitting terminus for the all-red line. This embryonic city by the sea was still little more than a clearing amongst vast trees that for centuries of growth had peopled the slopes, absorbing sweet influences of sun and rain and salty breeze while monstrous roots gripped the earth ever more strongly, brown trunks took on the proportions of cathedral columns, and a hundred feet in air spread a confluent canopy through which the sky appeared as a chequerwork of distant blue.

At the water's edge sprawled single storey sheds, sidings, boarding houses; farther along the shore smoke rose from other clearings where new citizens of the west reared their axe-built homes, sawmills hummed the year round, ships were already steaming through the Narrows from San Francisco and Seattle with freight to feed the line, silk and tea were moving across the Pacific as the first reminder of trade to be done with the Orient, and in these expansive hours men began to look back on construction days as something of a dream.

Vancouver was burgeoning to uncouth strength, raw, gawky, awkward, restless with growing pains, sniffing the Pacific, while along the line ran a reshuffle of humanity as the snake that did not die sloughed off what it no longer needed and

settled down to a more ordered but not less vital life. Yale relapsed into a wayside village of a few hundred inhabitants scattered through hundreds of flimsy wooden shells with gaping windows and idly swinging doors, past which Van Horne's trains thundered up the Fraser gorge watched impassively by scattered Chinamen in conical straw hats, who still won a day's wage from the river's ravished bars.

Through the mountains it was the same. Deserted construction camps were swallowed again by rampant bush, tote roads overgrown, trails obliterated under the suave sequence of seasons as though nature, yawning, recaptured her own again save the tiny fraction that man had wrested from her for his usage.

One could see the line being re-adjusted, smoothed, fortified, tittivated and manicured; rock cuts were scaled and widened so that their walls held no overhanging menace, grasshopper timber trestles replaced by solid embankments or spanned with steel; ballasting was continuous and hungry steam shovels scooped their way into hills of gravel: at intervals there were erected water tanks, huge barrel-like, steel-strapped affairs balanced on stilts, each with its pump sucking at a mountain stream. Divisional points, stations, repair shops, roundhouses where Van Horne's steel stallions ranged in concentric order to be groomed, greased and garnished, and every few miles a section house.

It seemed, too, that out of the mingled multitudes who fashioned the line there had by some invisible process been sorted that human fraction of the whole essential for its maintenance, as though in the building certain men had built some part of themselves into it, a part that remained incorporated and could not or would not withdraw when construction days were over: it remained fused into the now living organism, and the line through its articulate length was now sheathed with it, much as a nerve is sheathed with protective continuous tissues. These men understood the line; it meant much to them; it was the biggest, most formidable, exacting, exasperated and fascinating thing they had ever known; it demanded all—all they had—giving in return nothing but work, danger, hardship and an odd conviction that they were doing right to stick to it. And that, strangely enough, seemed sufficient.

Amongst them, Big John. Without knowing it, he had been explored, dissected at many an odd hour, and watched in times of emergency. With Ross he had had talks, blunt and searching, when he bared the essential stuff of which he was made and left it naked to the keen eyes of a judge of men. There were no compliments. Ross, looking at the work, would say it was not so damned bad; and John, glowing, would vow to do better next time.

Before winter moved round again he enlarged his shack—it was now the shack of a Roadmaster—at the east end of the Pass, building on another room for an office

with windows east and west so that he could see up and down the grade. The company supplied furniture and he thought it a palace. He had forty trackmen under him and his own jigger, a velocipede on rails, driven by a sort of vertical walking beam that one gripped and swung and went crisping along at twenty miles an hour on the level: he sat it as one would a horse, loving the thin drone of cast iron on steel, delighting in his strength when he put his back into it and the thing lurched forward as though it was alive.

During that winter of '85 he felt that for the first time he was at school, with many things to learn: no real traffic yet came through the Pass—though the road was making money as far as the foothills—and he saw the track assailed by dangers that deepened his protective instinct. It was his bit of line, and by God, no harm would befall if he could help it. He lost men in avalanches, and dug out warm corpses from a tangled matrix of snow, ice, boulders and splintered timber: there were rockslides started by swollen streams that ran wild on the upper slopes: these he thought not so bad, since they sometimes gave warning ere they came.

In February he had a letter from Mary—a long letter. In conclusion she said:

... I so much wish I could see you and have a long talk. I'm so proud of your progress. I wish that——

[Something here was heavily inked out and he could make nothing of it.]

Can't you take a holiday and come to Montreal? I know quite a lot of people here now, but you're my best friend. Remember that. I think you'd be glad you came, that is if I am right in my thoughts, but can't explain any more on paper. Write me all about everything. I won't be content with just a bit of it.

Always your—[here another heavy erasure]

—friend,

MARY.

He read this several times and stared at his ceiling of cedar scoops. Now he knew—no man could mistake it—she loved him but would not say so in a letter. Incredible! Something jerked in his mind back to Yale hospital with Mary plastering his cut face and Molly holding a bloody basin: Mary felt nothing for him then—that he deemed impossible—but what must his mother have felt? She *was* his mother: instinct backed by countless little things that memory had presented to him in these later years assured him of this; but now for the first time a horrid doubt intruded its ugly head.

Frowning a little, he took from the cigar-box the copy of the will of Molly Kelly sent him by Hagan of the *Inland Sentinel*.

‘I being of sound mind and . . . all I die possessed . . . my dear son John Hickey late of Yale . . . Big John . . . wishing . . . had . . . better mother . . . loved . . . too much to tell . . .’

Was James Hickey really his father?

This, swimming in from nowhere, took violent possession. It shook him. In body he was nothing like James Hickey—hair—eyes—build—none of him. Had Hickey banished his wife because—because he too saw that, but nevertheless fathered and lent his name to another man’s offspring? Was that why he had always avoided speaking of her? Was he too shielding someone from the other half of the truth?

John covered his face and groaned.

Who was he?

He groped about, a drifting giant, feeling for some kind of anchorage. Mary didn’t know to whom she was writing. No one knew. Now the man’s childlike simplicity instructed him that in such a case only one thing remained to be done: she had asked to be told all—all about everything. He went at it grimly, shattering his heart’s desire with every word.

. . . so if you don’t answer this—he ended—I’ll understand alright. I should have told you about Molly as soon as I heard but couldn’t see myself doing that and reckoned I could work into a position where it wouldn’t matter who I was, and kept on thinking about you and didn’t know how to quit. There’s room for a lot of thoughts up here in Rogers Pass, but I guess I reached too high, anyway I can’t prove anything about my father and Molly’s will I got from Hagan in Yale don’t mention him and you know what he was. I feel mean about this, meaner than you’ll ever know so don’t answer if you don’t want to. I’m sending back that book because John Ridd knew who he was. There’s a pile of difference between us now.

Yours respectfully,

JOHN HICKEY, Roadmaster, C.P.R.

The line was not yet formally opened, and nothing moving east for some days, so he had thoughts of going to Beavermouth on the velocipede to post the letter, but changed his mind about that and gave it to the operator at Stony Creek to be sent on, then tried to forget and counted the days till her answer might be expected. Two weeks with luck; three at the most.

But the telegrapher at Stony Creek handed the envelope to a section hand on his way to Beavermouth, and two miles past the bridge some vagrant boulders swooping across the track took final charge of both man and letter, hurling them two thousand feet into the Beaver. That swollen stream in turn bestowed the corpse on the greater Columbia when it began a journey round the Big Bend to the Arrowhead Lakes. But John knew nothing of this.

Early summer came heralded by avalanches. By now the line was plastered with

curving snowsheds, the yellow timber of these open-air refuge tunnels glinting blatantly across scarred slopes down which trickled and roared vast rivers of snow and rock, but so soon as they were completed the mountains in sportive disdain unleashed new perils in new places, and it was not until the end of June, seven months after the last spike was driven, that Van Horne felt safe in dispatching his first through transcontinental passenger train from Montreal.

Here was the real thing at last and the new engine and polished coaches were cheered all along the line: her coming was a great event. John heard her far down past Stony Creek, coughing as she breasted the grade, and knew by the black smoke that No. 371 was burning coal Van Horne had dug from the new measures just opened on the eastern foothills. She worked a baggage, diner, two passenger and two sleeping coaches, with a pusher engine, and when she drew abreast her grime-faced god, one William Evans, waved an arm to John who had unlocked a switch, run the velocipede into a siding and stood rigid, possessed by strange emotions. She clanked by, a veritable train at last with veritable passengers who had paid full fare, proclaiming her labours, her exhaust reverberating in buffeted echoes, while strange faces observed John through shining windows and strange hands saluted from the rear platform. He heard No. 371 ease as though to take breath: then she reached the summit: then silence.

This irruption elated and disturbed him; he felt rewarded, yet in a fashion incomplete, and experienced a latent hostility for all who had not to do with the line, for the soul of him was spiked down to the permanent way. No letter had come from Montreal, so that dream was now over, and the sight of those foreign faces gave him a novel sense of loneliness. They didn't know anything about him—or care, and having given much of himself he now wanted to take something.

In such a mood he thought of Nell. She was, he had heard, still with Coldwater, who after watching Holt City degenerate into a flag station had moved down to the new town of Field, now a divisional point with a tank, roundhouse and engine sheds.

Field was below Big Hill on the Kicking Horse flats with good ground for marshalling trains, and the operator on John's section used to talk to Field over the wire. One got all the news like that, so on a night when the wire was idle John asked if he could get a message through.

"Sure, Mr. Hickey."

"It isn't official."

"That's all right," grinned the operator. "Anything goes from you."

"I want to find out about a girl," said John blushing hotly, "I knew her at Holt City on construction: name Nell Regan—housekeeps for Coldwater Jimmy who runs

the hotel.”

The young man laid the second finger of his left hand on a Morse key, his right scribbled rapidly, and presently pushed over a pad.

“Nothing doing right now, Mr. Hickey. She left yesterday for the States for two months, but the gent called Coldwater says he’ll be pleased to see you any time: it’s called the Field City Hotel. Why don’t you try Golden? Things are lively there.”

John shook his head and went out. Headmasters didn’t drink—the company insisted on that—and he didn’t want Golden, there being, he reckoned, just one woman who quite understood him; and though she wasn’t the marrying kind he thought he could persuade her to come and live up in the Pass long enough to—well—carry him through for the present.

In many ways she was like Molly, with the same darkly passionate nature and buoyant fearlessness—and straight: she knew about his mother, would not care who his father might have been though perhaps she knew that too, and he’d feel at home with her. He had, in short, been a fool to try and step out of his own class, so presently he’d go down to Field and bring her back.

November came, grey with sodden skies that sent a slithering of loose rock from the upper slopes and kept the maintenance staff anxiously busy. Van Horne was now running three transcontinental trains each way every week, so John covered the whole of his section every twenty-four hours, and at night would often ride out to join the track-walkers at some soft spot, and see a headlight climbing up from the Beaver, vanishing round curves to reappear like the single yellow frontal eye of some angered monster lost in a dripping forest. He liked to stand back and watch the driver leaning at the cab window on a crooked elbow to pick up the track-walkers’ swinging lanterns semaphoring that all was well with their bit of the line, and get a wave, and follow the tail-light wind on and up into the Pass.

It was on one of these nights when coasting down grade that he nearly hit a man who lurched to one side in the last fraction of time: John slammed on his brakes, walked back cursing, and lifted his lantern.

“Hullo, Mr. Hickey,” croaked a sepulchral voice, broken by a fit of coughing. “I guess you don’t recognize me.”

A tall man with a cadaverous face on which the cheekbones were sharply, prominent, with large, dark, feverish eyes, a body excessively thin. He was wrapped in a long frock coat tight at the waist, now soaked with rain; his knee-high boots had the trouser-legs stuffed inside; a once white neckcloth covered a stork-like throat,

and a wide-brimmed clerical hat flopped dejectedly over his ears, distributing shining drops on the shrunken shoulders.

John, staring at him, suddenly remembered a great deal.

“Hullo, Kelly; how’s things?”

“Things, Mr. Hickey, aren’t what they might be. Is there any stopping place round here?”

“My shack, if you want to: nothing else within ten miles.”

“I hate to inconvenience you,” said this echo of the past with a touch of old-time dignity, “but right now I’d certainly appreciate it, business being kind of slow with me.”

John, nodding, put the human wreck on the back seat of his velocipede and pumped homeward, while claw-like hands clutched his swaying shoulders: The Rake did not speak but coughed as the cold struck into his lungs, and when finally he lay in John’s bunk sipping scalding tea, he rested silently for some time, eyes exploring these new surroundings. The shack was dry and warm; the weight of blankets comforting, his body was enveloped in a suit of John’s heavy woollen underclothing, his own wet garments hung steaming on a line over a glowing box stove, the lamp burned softly. John, also silent, sat mountainously in a real arm-chair sent from the east, and the wind roared over the hidden Selkirks.

“I’m sure obliged to you Mr. Hickey: I’d have passed in my checks right there but for you: I got stalled on the grade.”

“That’s all right,” said John, “and you don’t have to ‘mister’ me.”

“Roadmaster now, ain’t you?” countered The Rake with courtesy.

“Yes, I’m roadmaster.”

“Quite a job, eh?”

“I like it.”

“Nice place you’ve got here, too.”

“It isn’t so bad. Say, Kelly, you’re a pretty sick man.”

“Sick!” The Rake gave a faint smile, “I’m dying.”

“Hell! Don’t talk like that.”

His guest, dabbing his lips with a fine linen handkerchief that had J.H. embroidered in one corner, made a slow gesture. The long narrow hand, now clean, looked transparent. “I’ve known it for quite a while, maybe two months. The last time I saw you was in Eagle Pass when they drove that last spike, and I wasn’t any too pert then, and since that things have been kind of irregular with me. I guess I’ll last a couple of weeks longer if it suits you.”

“Kelly, you’re crazy! You lie round as long as you like and get fixed up: it won’t

cost you a cent.”

“Mr. Hickey, I’m just so darned sensible I feel like another person, so if it’s all the same to you I’d like to die right here. I won’t make any trouble.”

John blinked at him: the man was no more than an animated skeleton, his head a bony framework, and the large eyes, unnaturally bright, held a certitude one could not evade. Marked and doomed, already there proceeded from him that faint but unmistakable aura of translation that cannot be misread: but he was not unhappy.

“Stay as long as you like, Kelly: you’ll get better; just look after yourself for a while: you’re certainly welcome.”

“I reckoned you’d say that, Mr. Hickey. I guess I can keep the place swept and do the cooking till——”

“Now you quit talking like that, and settle right down; there’s plenty of grub.”

The Rake gave a little sigh and said nothing more while John made a bed for himself in the office: he listened to the other man coughing, and lay awake for hours while the night became peopled with shadowy figures that passed before him in a procession as thought claiming remembrance. They all came back: Graveyard, with flat Sphinx-like features; Silent Kelly absorbed over a solitaire deck; Hanington, the so called man-butcher; Big Mouth Kelly, tumbling still warm Chinamen with swollen, blackened legs into sandy graves; Molly, with her dark straight brows, rich colour, and large generous mouth; Mary, so different—in a strange way she had grown still more different; Bulldog with furtive eyes and manner of latent insolence; Hagan—one could see him tugging at the big lever of the single platen press; Onderdonk, spick, span, and air of cheerful assurance; *Skuzzy* half-way through Hell’s Gate with a wall of water in front and her stern wheel thrashing the stream to turgid foam; Jack Kirkup coming into a cell in Yale and telling the prisoner that his fine was paid. Lost now, all except the dying one in the next room; and it seemed that the line had collected and used them for a while—or else they had used the line for their own purpose—till the line shook itself free of them; while he, John Hickey, a survivor, simply stepped away from that old life into a new one. This should have been comforting, but to-night it only made him feel oddly naked, and he wondered what the rest of life would be like.

“Supposing,” he thought, “I hadn’t been Molly’s son—supposing she hadn’t shamed me out of Yale and I’d stuck there—supposing my wanting that girl hadn’t made me reach out and get a contract and climb up to where I am now—what then?” So often as he got this far, he gave it up.

There ensued a strange fortnight at the end of which The Rake died just as he said he would. The line doctor came in, looked at him sharply, said very little and

talked to John outside: he said what John expected, then went away, and The Rake only gave another of his whimsical smiles and said nothing. He knew. But as the days drew out he developed an increasing desire to converse, and John so often as he could would listen and hazard how long the tenuous thread might last without snapping. Always at night when he got back he found the floor swept, something hot on the stove, and The Rake on his back exhausted, but grateful for the word of thanks that for a little while robbed his eyes of their increasingly pathetic expression. He was apparently not afraid of death, but being now much more comfortable and better fed than for a long time thought it a pity to have to die so soon. He was very appreciative and invariably respectful.

“Mr. Hickey,” he said after a spasm that left him panting, “when a man is fixed like I am he does a pile of thinking, and what strikes me is that you’ve never asked one single question.”

“I guess there isn’t much to ask, Kelly.”

“Well, there’s Bulldog, my late partner: he’s been right here beside me most of the day looking kind of neglected.”

“What happened to Bulldog after that Baird business?”

“Got shot himself,” said The Rake reflectively, “I’ll tell you about it. Mr. Hickey, that Baird business—I’m speaking now of the game and not what came after—broke my nerve, I never struck anything just like it: I was never any good afterwards, and sort of lost control of my fingers, so without that I didn’t know any more than the next man. No, sir, I went right down and there’s no use denying it. I certainly misjudged Jim Baird, and that’s what shook me, but I didn’t approve of Bulldog’s way of getting even.”

“Who shot him?” asked John with interest.

“I was coming to that part of it. He slid over the line all right, but Sam Steele wouldn’t drop it. The Canadian Government got vexed, and sent over evidence and had him arrested. That was in St. Paul and they certainly had the goods on him. Well, sir, he made the jail and darned if some St. Paul association—I guess it was the Young Men’s Christian—claimed him for a member in good standing and allowed he was a citizen of the U.S.A. and they were not going to have him hung to oblige any Canadian police, so by heck he was acquitted right away and a brakeman on the N.P. near Montana shot him two months afterwards, being quicker on the draw. Bulldog carried a gun so he’d have been plugged sooner or later.”

“He did kill Baird, didn’t he?”

“Sure he did, but was too darned clumsy. Say, Mr. Hickey——?”

“Yes?”

"Talking like this takes me back to Yale. I liked that place better than most: 'twas sociable and kind of mixed and you knew where you stood all the time." Here he paused for a moment, then with the least shade of uncertainty, "Stop me right now if I'm getting too personal, but I was a friend of Molly Kelly's—maybe her best one."

John stiffened. "Friend of yours!"

"Sure she was, and before that too: I knew her down in Sacramento. I won't say another word if you don't want it, but I heard about that will of hers: we all did."

"Go on, Kelly, it's all right."

"Yes, sir, we were pretty close if I do say so. I never went there on—well—business, but used to drop in of a morning and we'd have some sarsaparilla together: she'd taste it and laugh and say she was darned if she'd drink it for anyone but me. Mr. Hickey, I'm telling you she was a fine woman: why she liked me I don't know, but she did and now it's all over I might as well say that she talked quite a lot about you."

"Not to you!" creaked John, doubting his ears.

"Yes, sir, to me—to her old pal, Kelly the Rake: we understood each other all right. I guess she was lonely and locked up and felt kind of safe, and by God! she was safe. She'd sit there with her eyes all soft, forgetting about the sarsa and look round as though looking for someone and one of the girls would put her head in and see that face and just fade away. She said all she wanted money for was you. Maybe I'm talking too much."

"Go on, Kelly."

"She told me if I breathed a word she'd have me run out of Yale, and meant it, so I kept my trap shut. She was always afraid she'd give herself away and you'd find out."

"Did anyone else know?" asked John with difficulty.

"None that I ever heard of—not in Yale anyway."

"Did she,"—here came a pause while John steadied the shake in his voice—"did she mention my father?"

The sick man regarded him with surprise.

"Why, Mr. Hickey, that was the whole thing: and if you'd been your father's son—what I mean is if her husband had been your father—she wouldn't have been so darned sorry and ashamed. I thought you'd tumble to that when you read the will."

"I see." John got up and stood gazing into blackness that shrouded the Selkirks, his bulk obscuring the window, his heart beating violently, pounding, pounding: his mouth felt dry. Why had he picked up this dying man? Then in an unnatural tone:

"What did she say about my real father? Who was he?"

"For God's sake! Don't you know?"

"If I did I wouldn't ask you."

"Her husband never spoke of it—he never dropped anything?"

"Not one word," grunted John, "go on, out with it."

"Well, Mr. Hickey, your father was a big, yellow-haired Dane with blue eyes: he had a job under Onderonk at Frisco."

"His name?" breathed John.

"Jan Jurgenson—that's why she called you John."

"Is—is my father alive now?" asked John thickly.

"No, Mr. Hickey, he ain't; he passed in his checks during those Dennis Carney riots, and about that time Molly had the last difference with her husband and pulled out."

"He knew?"

"Sure he knew: she wanted to take you along, but he wouldn't stand for that. She told me he tumbled to where you came from the minute he looked in the cradle: seems you were a husky little cuss with hair nearly white, and he fell for you there and then. That's the straight goods. I've been kind of sloppy with the pasteboards once in a while, but I've never lied to a white man yet. . . ."

"Anything else, Kelly?"

"I guess you know the rest yourself. It's sort of unnatural to be lying here telling a friend who his own father was, but—well—I'm taking a long trip pretty soon, so it's my last chance. Sort of upsetting, ain't it?" he added sympathetically.

John nodded.

"At the same time, Mr. Hickey, ain't it the case that now it don't matter nearly as much as it might a while ago? What I mean is that you've made good; nobody's going to worry about who your pa was—or your ma—if you're a roadmaster while if you'd known it three years ago you'd have jumped the rails. If it's taking no liberty, Mr. Hickey, I'd say you've shed all that and risen straight up out of it. It's a cold fact that I used to look right down on you in Yale, and now I'm looking the other way. No, sir, you don't have to worry about where you came from near as much as I do where I'm heading for."

"You're all right, Kelly: don't lose any sleep over that."

Again the little smile and slow gesture of wasted hand.

"Now I'm passing in my checks I don't feel like acting up to schedule like in the books—not in any sense. I'm not forgiving anyone or apologizing or sending messages either, but just sort of vexed that I didn't make more of my chances. I'm

not meaning cards—no sir, I guess I was the best man west of the Mississippi with cards—but didn't make the acquaintance I liked most. There were a lot of things I wanted to argue with Doc. Hanington and Hagan and the Judge back in Yale, and used to look at them and just hunger for a talk: I wanted to swap ideas with bigger men than myself and hoist myself with my own suspenders, but kind of hung back, and that's where I made the mistake. If I hadn't, I guess I wouldn't be here right now, but just the same I'm certainly obliged to you. Gosh, Mr. Hickey, I feel tired to-night; and, say, my front name is George. I was born in Idaho—but don't just remember when."

He died before sunrise, and John buried him in the plot kept by the company for those who would remain guarding Rogers Pass for all time, killed mostly in rockslides or avalanches. It was something of a relief to put George instead of The Rake on the cross, though the name looked like that of a stranger.

A week later came a letter from Field.

DEAR SIR,

I guess what I have to say will surprise you, and in answer to yours that I found here when I got back from the States. I have to say that I changed my mind while in the States and got married over there to Mr. Duncan who keeps books for the G.N. in Helena, so I've just come here to fetch my things and leave for home in Helena to-night, and it's a nice house with a porch and bathroom. Mr. Duncan, my husband, gets a hundred and fifty a month with good chance for a raise.

I might here say that I wouldn't have come up to the pass anyway. The last time I was with you, you reckoned I'd robbed you, and threw me down for that Miss Moody, hospital nurse, and no living man gets the chance to throw me down more than once. Some men think they've just got to stick up a finger and say "*Here*", but I'm not like that. Well, perhaps there's no real harm done and Mr. Duncan is just about your size and I guess as strong too, so here's good-bye for ever. Coldwater sends regards.

MRS. NELL DUNCAN (*last month* NELL REGAN).

It wasn't so bad while it lasted.

Stuffing this into the stove, he felt foolish and extraordinarily alone. He had exhausted his feminine acquaintance. The social circle closed, leaving him outside.

He was aroused from chaotic dreams by a hammering at the door.

"Mr. Hickey?"

"Come in! What is it?"

"Operator wants you right away."

John, cursing, put on his oilskins and tramped across to the telegraph office, leaning forward against a wild wind. The night was thick, streaked with rain, the peaks invisible, shrouded in driving gusts, and he could distinguish only a spot of

yellow light. He found the operator tapping, tapping, and the young man turned an anxious face.

“Something’s cut loose east of here: I can’t get through. I’ve tested my batteries—they’re all right. Look!”

“How long?” snapped John, watching the vicious spark.

“Last fifteen minutes; I was talking to Field then—now the wire’s dead.” He continued to tap mechanically with little pauses during which the receiver lay motionless. “Not a damn thing getting through; they’ll be trying to get me now.”

“When did No. 1 go west?”

“She didn’t—she’s late—she left Beavermouth eighteen minutes ago—I got that—then nothing.”

“My God!” breathed John, and flung himself out.

The platform was coated with a skin of wet ice, the weight of wind had the power of a strong man, and rain driving from speeding caverns of upper air mingled with sleet and snow. The yard signal a hundred feet away had been blotted out.

“Bad rail to-night,” grunted John, plunging across the track to the shed that housed his velocipede. The lock jammed when he pushed in the key, so he drove his knee through and wrenched open the door. With fingers that shook a little, he lit a lantern, lashed it firmly, set the velocipede on the main line and put his back into his work.

A bad rail. A hundred yards out he pushed on the brake and skidded another fifty, so if the weather held the same farther down it was probable that No. 1 would lose still more time. Minutes were priceless.

He could see nothing except in moments when the wind slackened a little and the snow fell vertically, and then only two dark walls, the palisades of timber on either side. By the feel of the track, by the hollow throaty rumble when he passed over culverts, by the poised emptiness all around when he crossed a trestle, he knew exactly where he was, but nothing more, while with strained eyes he peered ahead, but the snow driving in almost horizontal lines shut out the world, hissing against the hot globe of his lantern. No engine headlight could pierce that veil, and all hung on the judgment of the driver.

A mile farther the track lay on a narrow shelf blasted in solid rock; on his left the sheer rock face; on his right the two-thousand foot drop to the Beaver; somewhere ahead No. 1, beyond a long succession of downward-swooping curves.

Ten minutes since he started, and no headlight in sight.

He was in a queer mood, not averse from this combat with the upper gods; he

had no recognizable sense of fear or even uncertainty; he was simply on the job and vaguely thankful that something should turn up, even an avalanche, to switch his thought into a practical sensible channel, there being at this moment just three things in the whole world—No. 1, himself, and something lying across the track, something big enough to have swept away telegraph posts and wires.

Clearing the sidehill cut, he caught the faint bellow of a distant whistle: wiping the sleet from his eyes, he rattled on, saw a dark mass suddenly in front and felt a violent shock. Then—nothing.

Presently, close to his face he became aware of a small light that described dizzy circles till slowly it steadied, when he made it out to be his own lantern, on its side and still burning, the globe protected by the heavy wire guard that had saved it. There was a great roaring in his ears, and when he reached for the lantern his right arm flopped, remaining bent at an angle between shoulder and elbow.

“Hell,” he murmured, “I’ve broken it.”

Capturing the lantern left-handed, and staring about, he discovered that he was surrounded by a sea of boulders stretching into the dark on either side and into obscurity ahead. He tasted something warm, sickish sweet; putting down the lantern he felt his face. It hurt.

Swaying to his feet, he moved round one big boulder to encounter others, wet, slippery with a film of forming ice. He was on top of the track, but none remained visible, only this distorted surface over which he began to struggle, a Lilliputian lost in a vast rabble of mountain wreckage. On side and belly he squirmed ahead, a mutilated human firefly swimming in a sea of stones, lifting the lantern high as one might with the left arm while the other banged and bumped.

The pain was now so intense that he began to sweat. Clenching his teeth, and precipitated into a sort of cavity or pit in this ocean of debris, he stepped on something soft: lowering the lantern, he saw it to be the torso of a man whose head and legs were flattened out of sight.

“Trackwalker,” groaned John, and squirmed on.

It seemed that he would never get through. A big slide! Poles and wires in a tangle somewhere in the gulf on his right, for when the snow ceased for an instant he could see them.

A rock rolled under foot, he pitched forward and something sharp drove against his breast, but he saved the lantern by lifting it high when falling, though the new torture just below his heart made him gasp. Now it was hard to breathe, for at every labouring inhalation there set up a rasping grind in his breast, and dizziness was overcoming him when the whistle sounded much more clearly and a blurred headlight

appeared. It might have been two miles away, until snow blotted it out.

“Come on, you damn roadmaster!” he exhorted himself. “Come on!”

Evans, working No. 371, had been secretly ill at ease since getting clearance from Field, though nothing showed on his mask-like face. A dirty night, a two per cent grade, and a bad rail, so he used his sandboxes steadily, and it was good to feel the drivers grip as he breasted the climb west of Donald. He leaned far out, hand on throttle, eyes narrowed to slits. Periodically his fireman crawled ahead to wipe snow from the headlight, when for a moment its rays would be projected against diagonal streaks of sleet and snow, till this fitful illumination died and there was cast in front of the engine only a pale gleam that lost itself without revealing anything.

The two did not speak save when a signal lamp came up, and then only to exchange a curt ‘clear road’ across the darkened cab. As the fire-box door clanged open, a red glow cast the fireman’s shadow on the fleecy surface of a trailing plume of steam: it overhung the train, the phantom reflection of a toiling spirit who laboured that others might sleep in safety.

Evans sat rigid, tense, feeling the weight of his load, pulling the whistle cord every sixty seconds, while the roar of wind drowned all except the cylinders exhausting through the stack. Like every other driver on the road that night—and every night—he knew he was not alone, the darkness through which he plunged being peopled with invisible guardians: he read this in the trackwalkers’ and bridge tenders’ lanterns all the way up from the Columbia; other men sat at a wire measuring his progress; if he slowed a little he got a thrust from the pusher engine that was jamming its tubular boiler-head against the rear platform of the last sleeper, while another driver gripped another throttle, keeping similar watch. But what neither could know that just west of Stony Creek a hundred thousand tons of boulders and loose rock had travelled a mile from their original resting-place.

A white world when he saw any of it, white yet darkened by snow whose dancing flakes were now becoming larger, softer and more downy, which presaged milder weather till there came the real snows of the Pass which on the Upper Illecillewaet might reach a depth of thirty feet. That winter he was booked to work No. 371 across the Selkirks from Field to Revelstoke, so he would find a lot of it.

He was thinking about this with the section of his brain that operated independently of everything else, and hoping for one of the new 80-ton six-coupled engines the company would put on next year, when, rounding a curve, he saw or thought he saw, a faint glimmer immediately ahead. It was stationary, it seemed to be in the middle of the track, and behind it something that certainly was not snow.

In a flash he shut off steam. Half a second later he gave three sharp blasts,

jerked open the throttle and threw 371 straight into reverse, hurling her groaning weight against the forward thrust of the train. She jumped, shuddered, clawing at the rails with a mechanical protest from every straining member, sparks streaming from her whirring drivers. She stopped. Evans, with one hard glance at his fireman, swung himself to earth and walked forward. Ten feet from the pilot sat a great boulder straddling the track, outlier of a tumbled river of rock that submerged the rails, its boundaries lost in darkness. The headlight faintly illumined their glazed surface.

Half-way between boulder and pilot, nearly touching the wheels, was the body of a man, a big man in oilskins, broken and bloody, his left hand grasping the hoop of a burning lantern: he lay there at the feet of the new Lord of the Mountain, inert, insensible—yet triumphant—a silent servant of the line.

The company hospital for railwaymen at Field stood on a slope above the track overlooking the Kicking Horse; from its windows one commanded a view of the station, the yards and roundhouses, and the voice of the line being the one most familiar and eloquent to its servants, that sound was welcome in these quiet wards. Should No. 2 be late the fact was noted and possible reasons discussed with pointed terseness: when the long-drawn hoot of No. 1 floated down as she coasted through the reverse curves on the flanks of Big Hill, the men between the white sheets would nod and say what pair was driving and firing her: did storms break over the Great Divide, or snow choke the labouring ploughs in Rogers Pass, these hard-fisted, but for a little space impotent, servants of the line knew exactly what it meant.

In such a communicative circle Big John relaxed his maimed body and felt at home in spite of suffering: one of the fractured ribs that scored his lung had been put back into place, but it still protested and would for some time continue to protest whenever he forgot and breathed deeply. His right arm burned like fire, but he hoped it might come out of its plaster casing in three weeks—with care. The deep gashes in his face stung whenever he opened his mouth, and would certainly leave scars, but that was a minor point and did not matter. What really pleased and solaced him was that here he had been received into the company of the elect as the man who had saved No. 1.

A good deal about it was printed in a Calgary paper that had just reached Field from the east, and Hell's Bells, on his way to inspect the damage, came into the ward to say thank you. He sat on the edge of a chair by John's bed for a few moments, grey eyes twinkling, jaws working overtime while he inspected the spotless floor with growing discomfort; he shot out a few staccato words that were, coming from him, exceedingly complimentary, then as though he had said too much,

asked John if he happened to be the damned fool who had proposed to meet his payroll with his own money just before the strike. When John admitted this, he snorted, tugged at his wide-winged whiskers, and dashed off grinning, whereupon one heard the whistle of the shunting engine that had been commandeered to run him up to the scene of the slide.

It was queer to see one's own name in print when the nurse showed him the Calgary paper before she settled down to read it aloud, and while he listened, puzzling not a little over the weakness that held him where he lay, there presented itself the picture of another nurse in the same kind of apron and white cap, a nurse about the same height as this one and with the same way of holding her shoulders, so that when she looked at him, smiling, and said, "Mr. Hickey, what does it feel like to be a hero?" he only blinked at a dissolving vision. This girl's eyes were blue, not hazel. And one night when all was silent in the ward and along the line, with only the voice of the Kicking Horse rising in ceaseless babble from its flat gravelly bed, he could not sleep. He felt tired and lonely.

He heard No. 1 come in; heard the Calgary engine roll on into the roundhouse, and No. 371 slide up and couple. That would be Evans again. The last time he had seen Evans on duty was when he came to himself on the floor of a baggage car with Evans and the conductor bending over him while another man jabbed his good arm with a needle. Then a hoot from the pusher engine and No. 1 began to back down the grade towards Beavermouth. After that he lost interest.

He now knew that the slide was a big one and it would require a week to clear the track: meantime it had been bridged by a sort of long plank-walk on stilts, and passengers, being taken that far, walked across to another train that took them on to the coast. Steam shovels were at work on the small stuff, but the big boulders would have to be block-holed and blasted. John visioned it all, and longed to be there: it was his section of the road.

This night, soon after No. 1 pulled in, a nurse brought him a drink of water with something in it to make him sleep. The lamps in the ward had been turned low, and he was now so used to these white-clad noiseless figures who moved with such quick certitude that he hardly looked at her, but drank and turned on his left side. In a soft tone she asked whether he was comfortable, and something in her voice—he could not tell what—made him wince and feel lonelier than ever: so he only nodded, and presently drifted into a dream in which he did meet Mary, and told her all about himself, and who he was and was not, and to his vast astonishment found that she, like Kelly the Rake, had known it all the time and that it made no difference whatever.

Now the mysterious sixth sense that sometimes asserts itself midway in the sea of slumber warned him that this was only a dream, but it made him happier than ever before, so with all trouble put away he clung to its dissolving shreds as long as he might, and when morning came lay with his eyes shut, unwilling to face cold realities. Finally, when he did open them, the nurse was still there sitting with her hands folded, and her eyes were not blue but hazel. So he stared and stared.

"Well, John," she said with a delicious smile. "How are you?"

He lay quite still, lids narrowing, heart thumping. This was not a dream. "I'm—I'm——" he gave his head an incredulous shake. "How did you get here, miss?"

"There's only one line through the mountains, so I took that. Oh!—I'm so sorry!"

He had grinned—and winced. It was quite extraordinary, but he felt that he knew this girl extremely well, though she was still decidedly unreal, so for a moment his agate eyes remained fixed on her, reflecting an infinity of things of which he was quite unaware.

"You're held up by that slide," said he after a long pause. "You'll have to stick here unless you walk across: it's a big one."

"Yes," she admitted. "The slide did hold me up, but I'm not walking across."

"Then you'll wait for a while?" he asked hopefully.

"I will, John."

She kept watching him with an expression he could not interpret, hands now a little restless, lips quivering a little, mouth half smiling, half tender, then put her head on one side in a bird-like motion that he remembered vividly, and remained there as though she had joined the hospital staff and was on duty. All this time the hazel eyes never left his face. He thought she looked tired and white—but somehow happy.

"You must have started from Montreal just before that stuff came down, miss."

"No, just after it came down. You see," she added in a small voice, "it was the slide that brought me."

"Eh!"

"I'll—I'll explain presently. How much rock do you suppose there is in it?"

"Gosh, I don't know—maybe a hundred thousand tons: I never rightly saw it; I just kind of felt it."

"So I gather. Well, then, it took a hundred thousand tons of rock to bring one small nurse to Field: now do you understand?"

"You're here to see me?" he said under his breath.

"I don't know another soul in Field except a man called Coldwater something I met at the station, so it must be you. Oh, my dear, my dear, can't you see? Will this

tell you?"

Stooping swiftly, she put her lips to his, warm lips, soft, with a faintly throbbing pulse in them that made him dizzy till a great hand went out feeling for her shoulder and began to stroke it gently. This, the second time he had ever touched her, left him confused and stole away all speech till the hand drew back and he lay there gazing at her with exaltation creeping through his big maimed body. He tried to say something, but could not.

"Do you understand now, John?" said she, winking very fast, her cheeks pink. He could only nod.

"Why didn't you answer my letter? I wanted you to come to Montreal: I thought you'd be glad if you came: couldn't you see what I meant?"

"I did answer it: I wrote right away. You said you wanted to know all about everything, so I put it all in; it was pretty bad news—and——"

He broke off, smitten with crowding fear: she knew nothing—nothing about him or who he was and was not, and here she was in ignorance telling him that she loved him—he—the son of Jan Jurgensen and Molly Kelly. He set his teeth and groaned.

"Your arm, John?"

"No," he said grimly, "the arm's all right—that letter—you didn't get it?"

She shook her head.

"I haven't heard from you for months. Three days ago I learned about the slide, and left Montreal in two hours: I just caught No. 1. Was it a special letter?"

"It had something I was bound to tell you."

"About us?"

"No—me!" He made a desperate gesture, "Listen, miss, you couldn't know and neither could I. I told you that——"

He got this far only to be silenced by a small, but very strong white hand laid on his lips, while again the hazel eyes held that strange look, half smiling, half tender; then again she leaned forward and with her cheek close to his as though they had the ward to themselves, she said:

"Oh, my dear, you have told me—told me everything. This morning as soon as I got here I put on my uniform and came into the ward—you see, being rather an important person in the nursing line from Montreal that was easily arranged—and I took over your case. Of course, you didn't recognize me. I gave you a drink, and nearly spilled it. Then you went to sleep, and talked in your sleep until I could hardly bear it, and nearly woke you. You were talking in your dreams to me, and didn't know it; so, John, dear John, I know it all now and it doesn't matter."

"What's that?" he stammered.

"How could it matter? You don't know me yet, and perhaps never will—quite: I'd rather like to have it that way, because I love you. Four years ago—do you remember the hospital in Yale when you came to have your face bandaged—I felt something for you then. There was no reason for it—but I did: I tried to beat it down, and couldn't. When you left Yale I was glad and sorry. Molly had talked it over with me without telling who she was: news of you came along the line, and I heard you were climbing higher, which made me happy, but still I couldn't let you know what I felt. On that trip to the Lake of Little Fishes, I loved being on your shoulder, but dared not let myself go: I wanted you to live just for the work and go on climbing. I sent you *Lorna Doone* because I liked to think of you as John Ridd and myself as Lorna, and now it has all come about and you have stormed your castle and Lorna is nursing you. And John, I'm making love to my patient in the most unprofessional fashion! What will matron think of us Montreal nurses?"

She sat up, her lids fluttering, straightening her shoulders, while the agate eyes fixed on her in a straight unwinking gaze. This thing might be true, but he could not quite fathom it yet. Assuming, however, that it was true, he felt not any passion of love, but a profundity of secret worship, and his mind became occupied with thoughts of what he might do in return: like one suddenly endowed with great and unexpected treasure, he felt not possessive but protective, and engulfed the small hand in his great grasp.

"I can't get used to it," he confessed. "I've thought about it a lot, I've wanted it a lot, but when I knew about myself I gave it up. Then I wrote and told you, and said I'd understand if you didn't answer. Kelly the Rake had just told me one-half of it, and I'd known the other for months. Well, there wasn't any answer."

"Kelly—from Yale?"

"He died in my shack not long ago, down and out: he knew right along, but kept it to himself because she asked him. Kelly was all right—some of him." He looked at her wonderingly, and took a long, long breath, unconscious of the pain it gave. "Is—is that part of it all done with?"

"All done with for all time," she said gently, "and you've moved far beyond it. It's strange to look back and see how everything counts in some way, even the little things: perhaps they count most."

"I've often thought about that, too," he nodded, "but 'twas the line that did it: we were all in the grip of it, and it got me as soon as I left Yale. It's the line that makes or breaks you: I began to feel that it was somehow alive, and then I set my heart on being a roadmaster. Now I'm wondering about something after we get married."

"Wondering already?"

"You mightn't be suited with the life."

"I'll be perfectly suited with you."

"But I'm sticking to the line, miss."

"John," said she with a swift and brilliant smile, "unless you can get some better word for me than that, you can stick to your old line—but I won't."

Twenty years later the Pacific Express, crack train of the line, weighed a thousand tons, its locomotive two hundred; from headlight to taillight it was the very last word in rolling stock, a modern hotel on wheels, glistening like a battleship. At the rear came the observation car, a glass-walled lounge with cushioned springs, easy chairs and a shaded platform where one could sit and watch the twin ribbon of track streaming back—back, while the rail joints clicked their rhythmic fugue.

On the platform were a large fat man and a boy of about fourteen. The man, steeped in physical and mental torpor that follows too much food with too little exercise, was drowsing over a paper, while the boy had been silent for an hour, eyes very wide open, the expression on his small face constantly changing.

Crossing the Columbia, the train now climbed the Selkirks in a smooth upward rush, devouring distance and height in a surge of unfaltering power: from curve to curve it swung, trailing its polished length in mid-air over spidery bridges, burrowing ever deeper into the heart of the eternal ranges. This was the same track, yet not the same, for the road had been stroked, straightened, pruned, subjected to every artifice of the engineer: a thousand things had been done to it since those first English rails were spiked into place.

The boy, whose eyes held a sort of wonder, stared and stared until he could contain himself no longer.

"Dad?"

"Yes, son?"

"Was there anyone here when this road was begun?"

"I doubt it—maybe an Indian or two."

"Then who found the way; I mean who said it was to go just here and nowhere else?"

"I suppose the man who located it."

"Who was that?"

"You can search me."

"He must have had a terribly hard time of it."

"Perhaps he did, but I reckon he was pretty well paid."

The boy, unconvinced, looked disappointed: he felt very small in this setting, but something had reached him from the wilderness, and his young soul responded in a way that made him happy and sad at the same time: he experienced a sort of hunger, wanting to get out of the train, climb high, sit there and watch the train out of sight.

"It would be nice to stay here a while," said he half aloud.

"Here?"

"I mean camp just by ourselves, and explore, and—well—do a lot of things: I wouldn't mind working ever so hard."

"No, thanks, not in my line. What makes you so romantic?"

"Just what is romantic?"

"Well, taking pretend things for real ones."

"Isn't all this real?"

His father laughed. "It doesn't matter much either way: want to see this comic strip?"

"No thanks, dad."

A little silence while the train slid from lip to lip of a deep ravine on a steel arch that had the curve of a woman's eyebrow: far below a rock-torn stream jammed itself between vertical walls.

"Dad, how did the first man get across there?"

"Darned if I know."

"But someone had to get across to measure, hadn't they?"

"Don't want to be an engineer yourself, do you?"

"I'd love to—if I was good enough."

"Forget it: tough work and small pay: there's a better job in the office waiting for you."

The lad bit his lip as though something inside him had been hurt, then continued doggedly:

"About that measuring, they had to be sure that the bridge was just exactly the right length, hadn't they?"

"Certainly, but you'll have to ask someone else about that: what difference does it make anyway, now?"

"It must have meant a lot to the engineer. I wonder if anyone got killed when the road was being built?"

"Sure—lots of 'em."

The young eyes, large and now soft, searched the phlegmatic face with a touch of desperation, and looked away, far away where crystal summits soared to a stainless sky, and dwindling verdure lay like a garment on their tilted flanks. Crossing

another bridge, the Express roared into a rock cut. It differed in no way from hundreds of other cuts, but here had glinted the skull of Apau, the Weasel; here the lean surveyor read his aneroid; from a nearby spur John Williams had hurtled into space; here the Lord of the Mountain went lurching to his death, and close at hand slept Kelly the Rake.

“Dad, you see those three mountains with sharp tops—they’re called Macdonald, Stephen and Donald—why was that?”

“Well, son, Macdonald was a pretty smart politician when the line was built, and the others are two millionaires who made a lot of easy money out of it.”

“Oh!”

Beside the line was a section house where four men stood with the handcar they had lifted clear. The boy waved, and they gave him the railway man’s salute.

“Dad!” said he excitedly, “did you see those fellows?”

“Yes.”

“I wonder if they worked here when the road was started?”

“It’s not likely.”

“They could tell me an awful lot if they did.”

“I guess the first lot are all scattered by now.”

“Just when was it they blew up all these rocks and cut down all the trees and did—oh—everything?”

“I can’t rightly say, but quite a while before you were born.”

“Dad?”

“Yes—you human interrogation mark?”

“You really don’t care very much about it all, do you? What I mean is that if you were just a little interested you’d know more.”

“I guess that’s so,” said his father lazily, “but right now there are two things I do know: one is I’ve had too much lunch.”

The boy did not smile. “And the other?” he asked in a dull tone.

“The other,”—here the fat man took out his watch—“the other is that the place we’ve just passed is called ‘Rogers’, and, according to the time-table, we’re ten minutes late.”

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Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Great Divide* by Alan Sullivan]