THE CRIMSON WEST

ALEX. PHILIP

Title: The Crimson West
Date of first publication: 1925
Author: Alex. Philip (1882-1968)
Date first posted: Jan. 1, 2021
Date last updated: Jan. 1, 2021
Faded Page eBook #20210101

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

THE CRIMSON WEST

BY

ALEX. PHILIP

**There in the East we dreamed our dreams of
the things we hoped to do,
And here in the West, the crimson West, the
dreams of the East come true.**

—Donald Malloch

THOMAS ALLEN, PUBLISHER, TORONTO

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS
PAULTON, SOMERSET, ENGLAND

To

Those Fortunates Who First Saw The Light Of Day
In This Glorious Country, And With Whom Rests
The Future Prosperity Of The Land of Their Birth—
THE NATIVE SONS OF CANADA—This Book is
respectfully dedicated

THE CRIMSON WEST

CHAPTER I

JANGLING his keys on their big ring, the sheriff led John McLean down several steps, then through a long, narrow hall to the rear of the jail. From a distant corridor came the sound of a raucous voice attempting to sing one of the popular ragtimes of the day.

"Some fellow's still got a 'hang-over,' " observed the sheriff as he paused before a cell, consulted a number, then searched for the key. As the door swung open a sleepy voice was raised in mock solemnity.

"What ho, varlet! Why dost thou open the dungeon door? Has the king granted a reprieve?" His eyes blinking, the inmate stepped into the bright light of the hall. A dull red suffused his pale face as he saw the tall figure behind the sheriff.

"Hello, Dad! Nice morning," he smiled in a weak attempt at joviality, but the smile faded as he sensed a change in his father.

"My son arrested in a low gambling den!" the father said bitterly. "Donald, you have disgraced the family name. Your drinking carousals and gambling can have but one end. I have been too easy with you. For your own good I'm going to turn you loose. Until such time as you can return to me rid of your bad habits, and have proven yourself a man, you are not a son of mine. I—I'm done with you."

Donald's father turned abruptly on his heel and strode swiftly down the passage. It had been a tremendous test of his will power to make this short speech, and to resist the almost overmastering desire to take his boy in his arms.

The young man stood with mouth agape, a stupefied look in his eyes, and stared after the retreating form of his parent. The sheriff broke the silence. "We'll go upstairs, Don!"

On the upper floor the desk sergeant handed the released prisoner his watch and money, taken from him, as is the custom, the night before. The sheriff motioned to a seat.

"Sit down. I want to talk with you."

Donald listlessly obeyed.

"Sorry, boy, but I had to do it," the sheriff said in a kindly voice.

"It's all right, Jim. There's no hard feelings."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," Donald admitted dully.

"How much money have you got?"

Donald stood up and drew from his pocket a few crumpled bills and some loose change, then threw out his arms in an eloquent gesture. As he stood with the slanting rays of a late December sun shining on his black hair, he presented a wonderful specimen of man. Six feet in height, of a deceptive slenderness, his rather tight-fitting grey suit set off the graceful lines of a supple body. His shoulders were wide, with the gentle slope that denotes agility as well as strength. His fine white skin and long black lashes would have given his features an effeminate touch but for the manly mould of his face, with its square jaw, broad forehead, and deep, wide-set eyes.

The sheriff's appraising eyes glowed with admiration as they rested on the young man. To the casual eye Donald appeared of slight build, but his old friend knew of the steel-like muscles of those arms and the strength of the long, straight legs.

The mind of the older man flashed back to a football game in Donald's High School days, with the State championship at stake. Donald had been sent into the game at the eleventh hour, and with defeat staring the home team in the face he had torn through the opposing lines like a madman for agonizing gains until his dark head flashed across the line to victory.

Donald came embarrassedly to his feet.

"Well, I guess I'll be moving."

"Here, boy, take this," the sheriff said awkwardly, thrusting a roll of bills into Donald's hand.

The young man's face flushed. "It's awfully good of you, Jim, but I ____"

"It's all right, Don," interrupted the older man, summoning a smile. "I'm just giving you a loan."

Donald looked at him soberly. "I'll pay you back when—I—I—earn it."

His face very serious, the sheriff placed a hand on Donald's shoulder.

"Now, listen, Don. Your father and I talked here in the office for an hour before he bailed you out, and we agreed that the best thing was to let you go on your own. No, I am not going to give you a lecture, for you are not wholly to blame. Having a rich father is not the best thing for a young fellow, but because you got fired out of college should not make a husky boy

like you lose his grip. You just step out and buck the line like you do in football and you'll sure make a touchdown." He gripped Donald's hand. "Good-bye and good luck, Donnie!" he added feelingly.

Donald crossed the street to the Hancock House and sank moodily to a chair in the corner of the lobby. His confinement in the jail and the preceding festivities had robbed him of a night's rest, and he suddenly realized that he was very tired and sleepy. Forgetting the change in his circumstances, he engaged an expensive room on the first floor and immediately went to bed.

Upon awakening Donald switched on the light and lay for awhile trying to adjust himself to this new situation. Serious meditation, however, brought him no nearer a solution of his problem. A cold bath, followed by a brisk rub down and clean linen, removed all the remaining traces of his night of wild revelry.

The news of John McLean's break with his son spread rapidly through the small New England city. On his way to the desk to order his baggage to be sent to the dock Donald was beset by several friends who were loud in voicing their sympathy. Extricating himself as quickly as possible, he made his way to the elevator. Quick steps sounded behind him, and, turning, he looked into the smiling face of his boxing instructor, Spike Ryan.

"Hello, Kid, how they comin'?" grinned Spike.

"Come upstairs with me, Spike."

Once inside the room, Donald turned to his visitor. "If you start any of this sympathy stuff I'll hand you that famous 'one-two' punch you taught me."

"Sympathy be damned," chuckled Spike. "Dis is your lucky day. I come here to congratulate you, to give you de glad hand."

"Why all the joy? Most of my friends seem to think it is my funeral."

"Say, Donnie," Spike said earnestly, "I bin watchin' ya pretty close for de past year, an' ya sure bin ridin' for a fall. Another year of de way ya bin hittin' her up an' y'd have taken de count of ten an' be sittin' wid de stew-bums. Ya bin fightin' an exhibition wid life wid soft twelve-ounce gloves, an' de both of ya fightin' under wraps an' pullin' y'r punches. From now on de fight will be on de square an' to a finish wid bare knuckles. De guy in de other corner will hand ya some awful jolts, an' y'll have to do some pretty fast work wid y'r dukes an' pins to keep away from de slumber swat. But, Donnie, ya got de goods in ya. Nearly four years in an engineerin' course in

de college gives ya a better start than most of us guys. I'm backin' ya to win."

He seized Donald's hand, and his battered face filled with tenderness as he looked up at his friend. "Good luck, boy. Keep a stiff upper lip, an' don't forget that old John Barleycorn's a bum second." At the door he turned: "How ya fixed for kale, Donnie?"

"You get out!" smiled Donald.

Spike grinned as though pleased at the rebuff, and closed the door.

For some time after Spike's departure Donald sat lost in meditation. The philosophy of the ex-pugilist, presented in the vernacular of the prize-ring, had affected him deeply. "Ya bin fightin' an exhibition wid life, but from now on de fight is on de square," Spike had said. True enough, he thought, life had been soft and easy with him. But now it was going to be "on de square." His strong mouth set in a straight line, and involuntarily he squared his shoulders.

Donald left the hotel by the side door to avoid meeting several friends who had gathered in the lobby. He had an hour to wait for the sailing of the boat for Bangor. Unconsciously he walked towards the hill. An overwhelming sense of loneliness swept over him as he stood before his home, looming huge and white in the bright starlight of the winter night.

At the first sound of his master's step on the pavement a big collie dog rushed forth and flung itself bodily on the young man, whimpering in sheer joy. Standing on hindlegs with paws on his chest, he tried to lick Donald's face. The noise was apparently heard within the house, for a shade was raised and Donald's mother peered out into the night. Silencing the dog's joyous whines as best he could, Donald crouched low behind the hedge until the blind was lowered.

"Good-bye, old pal," Donald whispered, his arms about the collie's shaggy neck. The dog turned slowly and unwillingly toward the house.

In the meantime, within the house, John McLean and his wife were discussing the possible result of the father's seeming severity.

"Donald is a great trial to us now, John," said the mother, "but we must not forget the happiness he has brought us in the past." She gazed long and lovingly at a photograph of her son as a child; then, with head bowed, her lips moved in silent prayer.

Upon his arrival at the wharf Donald found his baggage, destroyed the pass he had been in the habit of using, as his father was owner of the steamboat line, and bought a ticket to Bangor.

Reaching Bangor, he chose less expensive quarters than was his custom, locating at the Penobscot, on Exchange Street. In no mood for sleep, he decided to take a stroll. Outside an all-night restaurant was a long string of cars, and from within came the sound of happy laughter.

A feeling of loneliness, coupled with a slight hunger induced him to enter. A big man sitting at the counter, attacking vigorously a T-bone steak, was the centre of interest, as evidenced by the cluster of taxi-drivers and other night-lunchers about him. He wore a wide-brimmed hat, high leather boots, corduroy trousers, a blue flannel shirt, and a red-mackinaw coat hung on the wall behind him. Blond, sun-washed hair stood up from his head aggressively, and his steely blue eyes were set in a face tanned a brick red.

"Yes, sir," spoke the blond giant between mouthfuls, "she's a he-man's country, she is. None of your bum chow that I used to git here in these Eastern loggin' camps, sow-belly and beans three times a day, and workin' for forty dollars a month from daylight until dark. No, siree! Me for the Coast with its four bucks a day. And talk about grub! Say, there ain't any hotel that puts up better scoffins than we git in the loggin' camps in good old B.C."

He looked around at his audience and, convinced that they were interested, he continued: "Yes, sir! British Columbia for mine. Say! What'd you think of three fir logs that makes a carload? Of cedars ten feet through? Of alders that you can't git your arms round? Some different than them toothpicks you got out there," jerking his thumb contemptuously toward the Penobscot River. "And minerals," he went on, "the mountains are filled with 'em—miles and miles that ain't never bin prospected. Prospectors comin' in every day with new strikes. And talk about fish! I seen the fish so thick they choked the rivers; you could darn near walk on their backs. That's the country, fellers. That's the place for men with git-up-and-git." He finished his repast with a gulp of coffee, fished a sack of tobacco and brown paper from his pocket, and rolled a cigarette. "A brand new country," he ran on, his eyes shining with enthusiasm, "that ain't half explored yet, and richer'n a pail of cream. How much do I owe you, boy?" he asked as he drew out a wad of bank-notes, peeled a bill from the outside of the fat roll and threw it carelessly on the counter.

"Keep the change," he said with a lordly air, then swaggered through the door. Several of the taxi-drivers followed, loudly importuning him to ride.

Donald finished his lunch and sat for a time smoking.

"That guy was a nut to flash his poke in front of that gang," observed the waiter. "Guess he's big enough to take care of himself," he added.

As Donald stepped out of the restaurant he saw the big man across the street with four of his former audience. From the shadow of a doorway he saw the party enter a ramshackle building, after hearing one of them promise to get the Westerner a drink in spite of prohibition. Donald decided to walk by the place, and was startled by the sound of crashing glass and indications of a struggle.

"You will, will you?" he heard the unmistakable voice of the big Westerner.

With a bound Donald was at the door. He found the Westerner badly battered, but holding three men at bay. The fourth lay in a crumpled heap in the corner.

Only one of the men noticed Donald's entrance. He was a big, burly brute, with the swarthy features of the Southern European, and he came straight for the intruder, crouching low. Donald's left hand caught him on the eye, and as his head flew back Donald crossed viciously with his right. The blow landed with an impact that sounded like a cleaver sinking into a meat block, and the man dropped as though shot.

A rat-faced man, standing near a side door with a bottle in his hand, shouted a warning as Donald sprang to the Westerner's assistance. Both men turned their heads. The ham-like fist of the big blond giant struck the larger of the two men such a terrific blow on the side of the head that the recipient whirled completely around and sank dazedly to the floor.

"Duck!" yelled Donald, as he saw the little man's arm go back. The Westerner dropped, and not a second too soon. The bottle whizzed over his head, bringing a shower of plaster from the wall where it struck. With a curse the big man turned, but the bottle-thrower had disappeared through the side door. The remaining thug, a tall, cadaverous looking youth, took one wild look around, then bolted through the front door.

The Westerner, gasping and rather pale, seized Donald's hand in his huge paw. "Pardner, you saved me from a hell of a lickin'! 'Bout two minutes more and. . . ."

"Grab your coat and hat and we'll get out of here before the police come," interrupted Donald.

They went through the alley to Hammond Street, then down Exchange Street.

"Better come up to my room and have those cuts attended to," suggested Donald.

The Westerner touched gingerly the rapidly swelling lump over his ear. "You know," he observed, "those fellers never intended to start a rough-house. The little dip was pretty slick, but I caught him with his hand in my pocket, and when they saw that they had a fight on their hands, they tried to lay me out with a billy. Should have seen the funny look on that little rat's face when he lammed me with that loaded stick and I didn't go down. Guess this old bean of mine must run pretty heavy to bone," he finished with a chuckle. He looked at Donald curiously. "You sure handed it to that big dago quick. How did you horn in on the row anyway?"

Donald told of being in the lunch-room when he had displayed his money, and of the waiter's subsequent remarks.

"Huh!" snorted the big man disgustedly, "guess I need a guardeen."

With the assistance of the obliging night-clerk, who furnished antiseptic and court-plaster, they patched the hurts of the much-bruised Westerner.

When the clerk left the room the big man turned to Donald. "My name's Jack Gillis. What's yours?"

"Donald McLean."

"Damn good name," he averred, looking Donald over critically.

"I bin visitin' my old home in Nova Scotia," he ran on. "Come down here to visit my sister. I'm gittin' homesick for the Pacific Slope, and I'm goin' to hit for B.C. to-morrow mornin'."

"I'm on my way to Vancouver," said Donald.

The effect of this statement on Gillis was electric. "Do you belong in B.C.?" he questioned excitedly.

Donald told him how his glowing description of that land of promise had induced him to go West, and that this would be his first visit to the Coast.

"Well," observed Gillis, "if I've been the means of addin' a man like you to the population of B.C., then Jack Gillis has done some good."

"That's a real compliment," smiled Donald.

"I'm goin' on the mornin' train," remarked Gillis. "I'd like to have you travel with me."

Donald nodded.

Gillis rose with an embarrassed air. "Here I am talkin' 'bout you and I travellin' together. I guess you're one of them tourist fellers, and I don't suppose you want to go along with a roughneck like me."

Donald liked this big, bluff Westerner, with his honest face and simple manner. He reached in his pocket and took out the money the sheriff had given him.

"You see that? Well, before this money is gone I'll have to find a job. And it's borrowed money, too."

Gillis studied him carefully. "Well, you got my goat in a way, but there is one thing I do know, and that is that you ain't no slicker. I'm 'bout twice your age, and I knows a good face when I sees it. I'll meet you to-morrow mornin' at the station. I'm goin' to start callin' you Donald right now. And what's more, Jack Gillis is your friend from now until hell freezes over. Good-night, Donald."

CHAPTER II

TWO days later Donald and the Westerner boarded a C.P.R. train in Montreal for the West. They were no sooner comfortably seated in their section of a tourist sleeper than they began rushing westward through the winter evening.

The days that followed were full of interest to Donald. The train roared West, running on time like a clock. They tore through towns and farming settlements and plunged into forests and hills in the northern part of Ontario. The hills dwindled when they reached Manitoba, and in Alberta Donald felt as if he were sailing over a vast sea of land.

"We'll see them old Rocky Mount'ns pretty soon," said Gillis happily. "You'll like B.C., Donald. And after you bin there awhile all hell won't pry you loose. I know, 'cause I broke away from her twice, but I always drift back. I ain't got the eddication to tell you the funny feelin' I have when I'm comin' back to her. When I see them big mount'ns loomin' up I feel sort of scrumptious inside, like I wanted to smile at everybody, and I have a hard time to keep from lettin' out a yell."

"Your power of expression needs no apology," laughed Donald.

"Forgot to tell you that I ain't goin' right through to the Coast. The Company I work for has a mill at Revelstoke that needs fixin' up. The job'll probably last 'till spring. You better stay off with me, 'cause you'll find things on the Coast pretty quiet this winter."

Gillis had played the part of host from the start, and Donald knew that if he accepted the invitation to stop off at the interior town, Gillis would insist on treating him as his guest. He felt that his new friend could not afford to practise this lavish generosity.

Donald shook his head regretfully. "I think I'll go through to Vancouver."

Gillis arose with visible reluctance as the train drew into Revelstoke. "Well, I got to leave you, pardner."

Donald had developed a sincere friendship for the man. There was a great deal of tenderness beneath the rough exterior of this Western logger.

"I'm pretty lucky in finding a friend like you," Donald said feelingly as they shook hands.

"That's all right, my boy," Gillis replied awkwardly. "I like you, and I'll sure look you up when I hit the Coast. So-long."

The sun was shining brightly as the train rushed along the edge of Burrard Inlet toward Vancouver. The lawns were a bright green, and the breeze blowing in the car-window was soft and balmy. Across the Inlet, that sparkled in the sunlight, were huge mountain-peaks, their tops covered with snow. The homecoming passengers were smiling happily, while a look of eager interest shone on the faces of those who were strangers to the Coast.

Donald paused for a moment on the corner of Granville Street while the cosmopolitan crowd flowed past him. Stolid-faced Klootchmen, dressed in flamboyant colours, with baskets of clams on their backs, rubbed shoulders with the haughty, turbanned Hindu. The little brown-faced Jap darted here and there amongst the crowd. A Chinaman came swiftly around the corner of an alley, moving with a peculiar trot, a pole across his shoulders, from each end of which dangled a basket filled with fish and vegetables. Another Chinaman, with a face of true Oriental impassiveness, riding a bicycle down the street, a clay pipe jutting from his mouth, was extremely incongruous. The wide, well-paved streets and the city's general air of modernity were impressive. In common with many other Easterners, Donald had pictured Vancouver as a rough Western town.

Donald engaged an inexpensive room and at once began a search for employment. Many of the mining and logging camps were closed for the winter, and work was scarce. He applied to all the engineering firms in the city, but their answers were invariably the same: "Nothing doing until spring."

Days passed, and as late winter merged into spring there was a stir throughout the city. Men who had spent the winter in idleness were "going out" again. Loggers in their characteristic blanket shirts hanging loose outside their trousers, could be seen on all sides saying good-bye to their friends.

One morning Donald counted his rapidly dwindling cash and found that he would have barely enough to tide him over the week-end.

With all his assets in the way of clothes and jewelry in a pawnshop, he could not stave off the inevitable, and there came a day when he had not even the price of a meal. Too proud to ask for a loan, he went without breakfast and lunch.

At the logger's employment agency he was told the same old story: "Only men of experience wanted. But," the agent added hopefully, "men are going to be scarce this summer, and they will be taking on everything before

long." Donald made the rounds of the engineering firms where he had applied for a position, but without success. Force of habit led him back to the employment agency, where he sank disconsolately to a bench.

A diminutive man with blond hair, bright blue eyes under shaggy brows, and his head set at a cocky angle, entered briskly and approached the wicket. "S'y, do you know where I can find an 'eavyweight that can box a bit?" he said to the agent.

"How about those two I sent you yesterday, Andy?"

The one addressed as Andy made a gesture of disgust. "Those two blighters were as 'eavy as cows. They didn't know their right 'and from their left. I don't want any 'uman punchin' bags, I want a man that 'as a little speed. Blime me, if I was in Austrylia I could get a 'arf a dozen in 'arf a minute."

"I'm your man," said Donald stepping forward.

The small man turned. The keen eyes under the bushy, light-coloured eyebrows studied Donald carefully. "Can you box?"

"I can."

"Good! Come with me."

Donald followed the sturdy little Australian. For a few blocks they walked in silence.

" 'Ad your dinner?" queried the Australian.

"No."

"We'll 'ave a bite in 'ere."

They turned into "Old Joe's" restaurant.

"Sounds good to me," observed Donald with a pleased smile.

"Been missin' a few meals, 'ave you? Order what you want," said the Australian, as they sat down to a table.

"I'll warn you that I'm hungry," cautioned Donald.

" 'Op to it, me lad; about all we get in this blinkin' world is what we eat. What's your name?"

"Donald McLean."

"Mine's Andy Pettray."

Then Andy delivered himself of the following information: "I'm the manager of Bill Hagin, the Austrylian 'eavyweight. We are to fight Slugger Garrieau, the Canadian champion, in about two weeks. The Slugger is well

named, as 'e is an 'eavy 'itter and it tykes a good boxer to beat 'im. I want an 'eavy man that can speed Bill up a bit, and I've 'unted this town over, but I can't find one. Now, if you can deliver the goods, you will be worth three dollars a day and your eats. What do you s'y?"

"I say 'yes,' " was the decided answer.

Andy dug into his pocket. " 'Ere's three dollars to bind the bargain."

"Better wait until I earn it," suggested Donald.

"That's all right, me lad; you'll be needin' it to eat on. I ain't worryin'.

"Come to the gymnasium at the corner of Robson and Granville at two o'clock to-morrow," advised Andy as they stepped outside.

"I'll be there, and I want to thank you for your kindness."

"Forget it," smiled Andy. "I've been flat many a time myself."

"Half-an-hour ago I was broke and hungry," mused Donald, "and now I am well fed and have three dollars in my pocket. Great old world this." He chuckled happily as he swung down sun-splashed Cordova Street with a buoyant stride.

The next day, dressed in light clothing and a pair of running-shoes, Donald went around Stanley Park. Wishing to condition himself, he ran the greater part of the way.

Spring comes early in Vancouver as compared with the East. In January the buds are bursting in Stanley Park. The balmy sea air, scented with earthy odours from the deep woods, seemed to Donald to possess magic properties. The blood sang in his veins. Overhead, big white seagulls screamed and soared; squirrels retreated in chattering fright as he raced down the road, and over all was the sound of the booming surf. The wind rushed past his ears, and he shouted aloud from sheer exuberance of spirits and the joy of living.

Donald covered the distance from English Bay to Granville Street at a jogging trot. The air of the gymnasium seemed close after being in the open. The big Australian fighter was in the ring with one of his sparring partners. The slap of gloves was like music to Donald's ears.

"Just in time," welcomed Andy as he led him to the dressing-room, where he quickly shifted to fighting togs and then walked over to the ring.

A crowd of boxing-fans sat by the ringside watching the big fellow work out. Donald's entrance caused a stir. His lithe, muscular body was the attraction of all eyes.

" 'Op in," commanded Andy.

While an attendant was putting on his gloves, Donald studied the big man he was to help train. He would weigh at least two hundred pounds. His shoulders were enormously broad and square, and the muscles of his arms stood out in knobs and bunches. His face was a pasty colour, as though his training had been done inside. His jaw was square and strong, his eyes a mild blue, and his nose looked as though it had stopped many a solid punch. "Strong but slow," Donald decided.

When Andy introduced him Hagin merely grunted. To the fighter Donald was simply one more punching-bag.

Donald turned to Andy. "What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Oh, knock the blighter out of the ring," rejoined Andy, with just a touch of sarcasm.

"Do you mean that?" queried Donald quickly.

Andy nodded.

Hagin came to the centre of the ring, assuming an awkward crouch, his arms wound about his face. Donald circled him warily. The big man feinted with his left. Donald danced within range, and the Australian let loose a terrific right swing that would have felled an ox. Donald side-stepped, jabbed his left twice to his opponent's face, and his right missed Hagin's jaw by the fraction of an inch. A surprised look came over the big man's face. A murmur of applause came from the audience.

"Strike me pink! What a left 'and!" ejaculated Andy. Hagin scowled and tried to bring the fighting to close quarters, but was easily avoided by his lighter opponent.

Donald now took the aggressive. His left found weak spots in the big man's defence, and repeatedly he sent in stinging jabs that drove his adversary's head back with a snap. Try as he might, Hagin could not get away from that whizzing left. It is a bitter pill to be bested by one's sparring partner. So far the Australian had been given a boxing lesson. He forced Donald into a corner and made for him savagely. Donald ducked under the flail-like swings, and shot a left upper-cut to Hagin's jaw. The latter staggered weakly to the ropes. Donald was after him like a flash. Just then he saw Andy gesticulating wildly and shaking his head. Hagin lunged forward and Donald fell into a clinch. The gong rang.

"What's the trouble, Andy?" asked Donald as he reached his corner.

"Strike me lucky!" whispered Andy hoarsely, "you're punchin' me meal-ticket. You're makin' a blinkin' boob out of me 'eavyweight."

"You told me to knock him out of the ring," reminded Donald.

"Sure I did. But 'ow the 'ell did I know that you were a blinkin' cyclone? Strike me blind, a left 'and like that I 'aven't seen since I 'andled Young Griffo."

"What shall I do the next round?"

"Tyke a punch and go down—'urt your 'and—anything to quit. But for 'eaven's sake don't mess up me 'eavyweight any more! If the public ever 'ears of this our big fight is all off!"

In the next round Donald dropped to the floor as they broke from a clinch in the centre of the ring. He rose to one knee, holding his hand and making a wry face.

"Too bad," sympathized Andy as he ordered him to the dressing-room.

As Donald stepped from the ring he was intercepted by a curly-haired youth whose brown eyes sparkled with enthusiasm. "By golly, I want to know you. My name's Douglas Rennie. My, but that was a wonderfully fast exhibition you gave us!" he ejaculated, gazing at Donald with undisguised admiration.

Donald flushed. "I appeared fast," he explained modestly, "as I was against a very slow opponent. I know nothing of Garrieau, but he won't have to be very clever to beat the Australian."

"Garrieau is fast and carries a knockout in either hand."

"I'm sorry for Andy's man if that is the case, as any king of a left will beat Hagin. Come to the dressing-room," invited Donald.

A moment later Andy entered and sank dejectedly to a locker seat.

"You look rather blue, Andy," observed Donald.

"I am. All 'ell's a poppin'," admitted Andy.

"What's wrong?"

"I've lost me 'eavyweight. 'E's quit."

"Why?"

"Said I framed on 'im by sending you in this afternoon. Said I 'urt 'is pride."

"Pride!" echoed Douglas sarcastically. "You've been treating him too well. I never thought much of him as a fighter. You're too good a trainer to be wasting your time on third-raters."

"Maybe you are right," conceded Andy, "but look what a blinkin' mess I'm in now! 'Ere I am in the 'ole three hundred bones for training expenses, and I've put up a forfeit with the promoters for appearance. I'll lose the 'ole

lot." He threw out his arms with an air of resignation and sank back in his seat.

Little Andy presented a pitiful figure as he sat hunched in the corner—his jaunty manner gone; his blond head, usually held at a saucy angle, sunk on his chest. Gloom, deep, impenetrable gloom, enveloped this bright spirit from the Antipodes.

Donald knew now that for all Andy's munificent manner of yesterday, the three dollars to "eat on" and the sorely needed dinner he had bought had come from a generous heart, but a depleted purse. Here was his benefactor in trouble. How could he help him? He crossed the room, sat down beside Andy, and placed his hand on the little man's arm.

"Andy, take me on. I'll fight Garrieau for you."

Andy came to his feet with a jump and seized Donald by the shoulders. "If you'll do that, me lad, I'll be your pal for life. Strike me pink, did you 'ear that? I've got a real fighter at last! 'Ooray!" The little fellow was in ecstasies. "We'll clean Garrieau up," he went on excitedly, "and then I'll tyke you to the Stytes, and then to Austrylia, and. . . ."

"Hold on," interrupted Donald laughingly, "looks like you intend making a professional pug out of me. I'm doing this to help you, Andy, and," flushing in spite of himself, "I'm broke."

Andy glanced over Donald's tall figure with a professional eye. "You 'ave a week to get fit, and 'as you 'aven't 'ardly any weight to tyke off, you should be top 'ole in that time."

"May I work out with you?" asked Douglas eagerly.

"Glad to have you," replied Donald.

A few minutes later the young men stepped to the street. Douglas seemed loth to go.

"Will you come to my home for dinner?" he invited.

Donald hesitated. It seemed ages since he had entered a private house. He glanced down at his only suit, which was rather seedy, then looked up, to find the usually roguish eyes of his companion fixed upon him seriously.

"Thanks, old man. I hope I may have the pleasure at some time, but I can't do it now."

"You said you were broke," began Douglas, hesitatingly, "can—I——"

"No, no, I'll see you to-morrow," interrupted Donald, turning abruptly and walking swiftly down Granville Street.

Douglas stood watching him until he disappeared. “A mighty good sport,” he said softly.

Fresh from his exercises and shower, his cheeks red, his dark eyes shining with the clear glow of health, his step springy and free, Donald was a picture of rugged health and strength. But for all this apparent outward brightness, inwardly he felt rebellious. Douglas’s invitation had brought a great longing for the comforts of his past life. Why should he assume the rôle of a pugilist to eke out an existence? Why wear shabby clothes and even know the pangs of hunger? Was it necessary? He had but to wire his father that he was destitute and plenty of money would be forthcoming.

A big steak at “Old Joe’s” furnished him a hearty meal. As he selected the money from his meagre supply of cash to pay his check, Old Joe bent his grizzled head forward. “Are ye gittin’ short, son?” he asked. “Don’t go hungry; come in any time.”

“Thanks, Joe.”

Donald was in a dark mood. He heard the sound of happy laughter coming from a saloon on the corner. There behind those swinging doors was momentary recess from worldly cares. He stood in the door of the restaurant and looked across the Inlet at the twin peaks, known as the “Lions,” which guard the entrance to Vancouver’s harbour. The sun was setting in a mass of fleecy clouds; the clouds became a luminous gauze, and a golden splendour spread over the water. The mountains were suffused in violet, while the snow-fields took on a faint stain of rose. Donald’s face glowed as he watched.

“Some country!” he breathed. He turned to catch a friendly smile from Old Joe as he worked over his range. “And some people!” he added fervently.

Once more he turned to the mountains. The glow had vanished and the Lions stood in bold relief against the clear sky. The massive snow-capped peaks seemed to impart a new strength to his being. “I’ll not quit. I’m going to make good,” he said grimly.

CHAPTER III

WHILE on his daily run around Stanley Park the next afternoon Donald was attracted by a horse and rider standing on Prospect Point. The rider was interested in a huge white liner ploughing her way through the Narrows, bucking a head tide. The horse, a noble animal, with full mane and tail, was restive, rocking and prancing in his eagerness to be off.

When Donald lifted his eyes to the rider he saw a beautiful, haughty face with skin of a milky whiteness, a heavy mass of dark brown hair, neatly coiffed under a trim riding hat, and a pair of wonderful brown eyes that suddenly grew cold.

A shower of dirt and pebbles stung Donald's face as the horse was swung about as though on a pivot and with its rider was off like the wind.

"A thoroughbred," he exclaimed, as he watched the rider until she turned a corner in the drive. "Two of them! And she thinks I am a low-down masher," he added ruefully.

That afternoon he went through fifteen rounds of boxing, finishing strong and fresh to tackle pulleys and punching-bag.

Andy was joyful. "It will never go twenty rounds, me lad. That straight left of yours alone would stop 'im in 'arf that time."

"This is my last day of road-work," remarked Donald to his friend on Friday afternoon, as he slipped on his running-shoes.

As he and Douglas neared Prospect Point Donald's thoughts turned to the girl of yesterday. "She was haughty as a princess." Unwittingly he had spoken his musings aloud.

"What's that?" queried his companion.

"I was talking to myself," laughed Donald.

"Bad sign! You are either in love or old age has overtaken you. Too bad!" Douglas wagged his head sadly.

"I may as well tell you," confided Donald; "I saw a Greek goddess mounted on an Arabian charger here yesterday."

Douglas threw out his hands tragically. "Donald, my poor friend! I am afraid that I hit you too hard in that last round," he said in a voice of mock compassion.

Donald stopped short. “Look!” he cried, pointing excitedly, “there she is!”

The girl sat gracefully erect on the big horse, gazing down at the rushing tide.

“I’ll be jiggered!” exclaimed Douglas.

“Don’t blame you, but isn’t she a peach?” said Donald admiringly.

Douglas burst out laughing. “Do you know who that is?” he asked with a peculiar inflection.

“I told you—a Greek goddess, mount——”

“That’s my sister Janet,” interrupted Douglas.

Donald’s mouth opened. He stared at his friend. “Your *what*?” he exploded.

“Oh, I forgot! Poor fellow!” said Douglas, solicitously, as his face assumed a mournful expression. “I’ll certainly have to pull my punches hereafter.” He leaned toward Donald and placed his lips close to his ear. “S-i-s-t-e-r,” he spelled slowly. “Does the old bean grasp it?”

“Cut the comedy,” growled Donald as he jerked Douglas to the side of the road out of sight of the equestrienne. “Good heavens! Your sister!” he groaned, “and she thinks I am a masher.”

“Why should she think that of you?”

Donald told him of yesterday’s occurrence.

“This is great!” chuckled Douglas. “Come and meet my sister, Donald. I’ll tell her that you can’t help flirting, and that will fix things up all right. I’ll call her.” He grinned facetiously.

“Don’t you dare! You——” Donald warned.

Douglas avoided Donald’s wild clutch, ran to the centre of the road and waved his arm.

“Oh, Janet!” he shouted.

Donald shook an angry fist at his tormentor and sprang to the shelter of the trees. There was a thud of hoofs, a spattering of gravel, and the sound of creaking leather.

“What in the world are you doing here in that dress, Doug?” asked Janet.

“Janet,” said her brother in a low, mysterious voice, “I’ve got the fellow that tried to flirt with you yesterday; he’s in there.” He pointed to the bush. “The poor fellow is a confirmed flirt; has it in its worst form. I beg of you,

Sister, be lenient, be merciful. He thinks you are a Greek goddess." He tapped his forehead significantly.

Donald cursed the irrepressible youth's sense of humour. If he could have reached the humorist at that moment he would have pitched him into the Inlet without compunction.

Janet eyed her brother with disapproval. "What are you talking about, Doug? Have you taken leave of your senses entirely?"

"I will bring forth the erring knight for you to censure," rejoined her brother, bowing low in exaggerated deference. "Ho!" he shouted, "leave thy woodsy bower, Sir Don, the goddess awaits thee."

Seething inwardly, Donald tried to appear dignified as he stepped to the road, but the attempt was a dismal failure. How could one approach anything like dignity when dressed in a pair of running trunks, a torn and frayed jersey, socks turned down over a pair of dirty tennis shoes, and without hat or coat? All this added to the fact that he faced a battery of two big brown eyes, possessed by a lovely girl immaculately dressed, who thought him a masher. The greatest actor in the world would fail to register dignity under such conditions. He had a confused remembrance of a jumble of words that went for a formal introduction. He felt his face hot, and knew he was blushing furiously, which did not add to his composure.

The girl looked down curiously, but not without interest, at the embarrassed young man.

Donald finally mustered courage to glance up at the face above him. The deep brown eyes regarding him held just a trace of humour. The full red lips were parted to show a flash of white, even teeth.

"It is a pleasure to meet you even under such inauspicious circumstances," stammered Donald. He turned to glare at the grinning cause of his discomfiture. "I would suggest, Miss Rennie, that you have a doctor waiting at your home, as I intend to commit mayhem on the person of your brother as soon as you have gone."

Janet laughed. "I will go now to give you the chance." With a playful flick of her whip toward Douglas, she was off like an arrow.

Donald turned to his friend. "I hope that you are satisfied now that you have made an ass out of me."

"Quite happy, old dear. I didn't find it a hard job."

Donald laughed. "I'll race you to the gym."

As the bout was to take place on Monday, this was to be the last day of training. The fans who had flocked to see Donald in his work-outs admitted that he had wonderful speed, but would be unable to stay the twenty rounds with the formidable Garrieau. The verdict of the knowing ones was that it would take more than a snappy left hand to lift the laurels from the champion who possessed the virtue of the terrible punch.

To the boxer training is a trying ordeal. The daily grind of road-work, bag-punching, rope-skipping and pulley work becomes monotonous. The nerves become frayed, and if the weight has to be materially reduced the boxer develops a bad temper and is anything but a cheerful companion.

As Donald prepared for bed that night he thought with relief that the morrow would be a day of rest. “I’ll be glad when it’s over,” he mused. His meditations were interrupted by a rapping on the door. In answer to his invitation to come in, the door opened and a small man of unprepossessing appearance entered.

The visitor was indeed a most repulsive man, of uncertain age, and with skin of a sickly yellow. One eye was sightless, which he ascribed to an accident during a football game. Those familiar with his shady past averred that it was caused by the vigorous application of an adversary’s thumb during a bar-room brawl.

“I’m Garrieau’s manager,” he said importantly.

“What do you want?” demanded Donald shortly.

“Now, see here, Kid. We’ve got a dead cinch to cop de change. It’s dis way. Youse is a amachoor widout a chance in de woild to beat de Slugger. Get me? Well, dere ain’t a bit of sense of de Slugger beatin’ you up for nuttin’, so we frames de bout. De heavy bettin’ will be on de Slugger, so we fixes it for de Slugger to take de big flop. Get me? We let’s it go ’till about de tent’ round, so’s to give de fans a run for dere money. We gets all de money dat we can beg, borrow and steal and puts it on you to win. We puts up a slam-bang fight. You can take de drop a couple of times, and den down goes de Slugger. De fans will just eat it up. De tent’ round will find you stannin’ toe to toe, den de last minute you sends home de fake sleep-punch. De boobs will t’ink it’s on de square. Den in a mont’ we gets a return fight, and we pulls off de ‘grudge stuff’ and we packs de house. Of course, we have to win den, and all our money will be placed on de Slugger. Dat means dat we cop de change twice. Get me?” His ugly lips parted in what he intended as an ingratiating smile. “You come up to de club to-morrow and we rehearses de whole t’ing. Get me?”

Donald's face turned pale with rage. "I 'get you,' you damned little rat!" he rasped. Seizing the surprised Pursell by the collar, he jerked him to his feet, dragged him to the door, and threw him out with such force that he struck the wall with a thump and fell in a heap on the floor.

Pursell rose with a snarl that showed his yellow teeth. A look of bestial hate shot from the one gleaming orb. "We'll kill you Monday, you——" The air was filled with the vilest objurgations.

Closing the door, Donald walked to the windows and opened them wide, as though to rid the room of the air his visitor had breathed. "I never dreamed there was so much rottenness in the shape of a human being," he said disgustedly.

At the same hour, at the other side of the city, Douglas was also entertaining a visitor, but of a very different type. He had just entered his room when he heard his sister's voice.

"May I come in a minute, Doug?" Janet came to the point quickly. "Who is this Mr. McLean who was with you to-day?"

"Oh, that was—er—Donald McLean," he answered evasively.

"You know what I mean. Who is he? What is he? Where does he come from?"

"I'll look him up in Bradstreet's."

"Do be serious, Doug."

"Is it a serious matter, Sis?"

"I think he is interesting," she replied hesitatingly.

"So do I. I liked him the first time I saw him," said Douglas warmly.

"Well, you haven't answered my questions yet," persisted Janet.

For all his fluency of speech Douglas was for the moment nonplussed. "Let's see—er—what was the first question?" He was sparring for time.

"Don't quibble, Doug. Where did you meet him?"

"I met him a long time ago, through an intimate friend by the name of Pettray. McLean is his partner. Firm name McLean and Pettray."

"What is their business?"

"Oh—er—glove business."

There was an interval of silence. "I'm not a bad little liar," thought Douglas. "I wonder if she's finished." He yawned strenuously and stretched his arms. "My! I'm sleepy," he said.

Janet rose slowly and moved toward the door. “Are you going to ask him out some time?” she inquired.

“Sure thing!”

At the door she turned. “Will you let me know when he is coming?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Good-night, Doug.”

“Good-night, Sis.”

Douglas stood for a while staring into nothingness. “I don’t blame her,” he said aloud. “I don’t know anything about him, but I’ll bet he is a real man.”

CHAPTER IV

THE arena and the grand-stand were packed, the S.R.O. sign having been hung out at two o'clock. The cosmopolitan crowd sat in solid ranks, tier upon tier, from the select ringside seats to the topmost rail. Judges, lawyers, doctors and bankers sat with labourers, miners, loggers, bartenders, and bootblacks. Men of the underworld sat side by side with men that make and administer our laws. There was a sprinkling of Japs, Chinamen and negroes. The turbanned Hindu made bright splotches of colour here and there in the vast sea of faces. Of class distinction there was none; all welded as one in the love of the boxing game.

The preliminaries were over, and the vast crowd had settled in their seats. Suddenly there was a stir, a craning of necks. Down the aisle on the west side of the arena came Donald, followed by Andy and the two seconds, the latter carrying buckets, sponges, towels and bottles. Donald wore a dark-coloured bathrobe thrown over his shoulders. There was a murmur of applause that swelled to a tumult as he clambered through the ropes. He seemed cool as Andy piloted him to his corner, but as he sat down and stretched out his long legs, he appeared ill at ease.

Although the crowd had given him a handsome welcome, prophecies were shouted down from the top seats that he would not last very long with the formidable champion. Donald was palpably nervous, as evidenced in the quick turning of his head and the shuffling of his feet. He looked slight and frail as he leaned forward in his chair, the black bathrobe accentuating the paleness of his face. A feeling of friendlessness came over him as he gazed at the huge, strange crowd who were loudly predicting his defeat.

A well-known judge, wearing glasses and a big black hat, turned to his companion. "It's a hanged shame, Tom, to match that slim boy with a brute like Garrieau."

The one addressed was one of the City's leading dentists and an ardent boxing fan. "Don't you believe it, Bill," he returned. "Just wait until you see this boy strip."

"Here he comes!"

A roar of applause greeted the champion as he came down the east aisle bowing right and left in answer to their plaudits. His dark, massive body seemed fairly to shine as he leaped to the ring with easy grace and stripped off his robe. He stood in his corner with hands on the ropes, shuffling his

feet in the resin, still smiling and glancing about the arena. Evidently he loved the limelight.

In appearance the champion very much resembled the ape. His bullet-like head was close cropped. The small piggish eyes were deep set under overhanging, beetling brows, and the nose was flat like a negro's. His lips were thick, with a repulsive twist that gave his face a sinister look. His massive jaw was purposely left unshaved to rasp the tender skin of his opponent's shoulders in the clinches. His enormous barrel-shaped chest was covered with a thick growth of hair. His shoulders were broad and his disproportionately long arms, heavily muscled, terminated in two thick ham-like hands. He gazed confidently across at Donald's corner.

A pasteboard box containing the gloves was tossed to the centre of the ring. There was a stir as the announcer pushed his way through the ropes. Andy crossed the ring to examine the champion's hands for tape and to test thoroughly the new gloves for any trace of sewed in shot or lotion that would cause the eyes to smart. One of Garrieau's seconds was making a similar examination in Donald's corner.

A big man in a wide-brimmed hat, with a mackinaw coat over his arm, came walking down the steps of the arena. The look of astonishment on his face gradually gave place to one of joy. He ran to the ringside.

"Donald!" he shouted joyously, as he sprang through the ropes. With a thrill of pleasure Donald held out his hand to Jack Gillis. The big man's face was beaming. "Just got in," he said. "Bin lookin' all over town for you! I come to the fight and—holy mackerel!—here you are one of the fighters!"

Andy noted the glad look in Donald's eyes and he spoke sharply to Donald's seconds, who were for ordering the boisterous visitor out of the ring. The word "pyschology" was foreign to Andy, but he knew that Donald's mind had for a moment drifted away from the fight. Donald was surprised to see Douglas greet Gillis warmly as the big man left the ring.

"I have two good friends in the audience, anyway," whispered Donald to himself.

Andy leaned over him, talking in a low voice, giving him comfort and advice. "E'll try right along, Donnie, to get your goat by cursing and using vile language, but don't listen to 'im, and don't lose your temper. 'E fights with 'is chin tucked in the 'ollow of 'is left shoulder and 'is neck muscles rigid. It's mighty 'ard to land on 'is jaw with a right. Now the first round," Andy went on, "you just jab 'im light with your left; don't 'it 'ard, just a good snappy punch. 'E'll think you 'ave no sting in it, and the next round 'e'll get careless and let you 'it 'im so's to get in a punch. Of course, if you

see a good opening, let fly with all you 'ave, but 'e won't open up until 'e tries you out a bit. Watch the dirty blighter in the clinches; 'e'll foul you if 'e gets a chance. Another thing: this is to be twenty rounds, so tyke your time. Now is everything clear to you, Donnie?"

"Yes, Andy."

Andy patted Donald's bare shoulder affectionately.

The contestants stood in their corners as they were introduced. The referee beckoned them to the centre of the ring for instructions. As Donald slipped the enveloping bathrobe from his shoulders and stepped forward, a murmur of admiration swelled from the crowd. His lean loins and broad shoulders showed to advantage in the bright light. The long, flowing muscles rippled under his skin when he moved, like those of a panther. Loud applause came from all over the arena. Garrieau, thinking the ovation was for himself, turned and ducked his head with a motion that was intended for a bow.

A rough voice near the top shouted: "Aw! that wasn't for you, you big stiff!"

The judge and the dentist turned and looked at each other. The eyes of the latter seemed to say, "I told you so." The judge smiled and nodded.

A fat man, who could not have been more than thirty-five years of age, yet with rolls of fat at his waist-line, a bulbous nose and florid face, bit savagely on a big cigar. "By gad!" he ejaculated, "that man is perfect." There was a look of admiration and envy in his red-rimmed eyes. Thus do men admire the strong, well-kept body of the athlete, even though their own physical self has degenerated to mere paste.

"Two to one that Garrieau wins inside of ten rounds!" shouted a voice. Douglas covered the bet at once.

"Now, men," instructed the referee briskly, "this is to be for twenty rounds. You are to fight clean breaks. You can hit with one arm free, but you cannot hold with one and hit with the other. When I say 'Break' I want you to break at once and step back. Do you understand fully? Good! To your corners."

Donald glanced at his friends, who sat with their eyes upon him. He felt Andy's hand upon him gently stroking his arm, yet he could not suppress the trembling in his limbs.

"Everything's all right, Donnie," whispered Andy softly.

The gong rang.

Garrieau assumed the crouch Andy had predicted, his chin resting in the hollow of his shoulder, his eyes seeming to retreat into his skull under the overhanging brows. This was the champion's famous "fighting face."

"Pretty boy, ain't yer?" he scoffed. "I'm goin' to knock dose pretty teet' down yer throat, you——" he cursed.

Donald snapped a light left to the ugly face and danced out of range. The champion's thick lips parted in a fiendish grin. "My, mamma's nice boy has a terrible punch!" he derided.

Donald continued his dazzling footwork, keeping the champion in pursuit and contending himself with occasional left-hand jabs that kept his opponent's head rocking. He shot glances at intervals to his corner for instructions from Andy, who nodded his head in approval of his tactics.

The round finished in the challenger's favour by a wide margin on points. The champion had not landed a single effective blow during the round.

The action of the first round caused Donald to forget his nervousness. Andy crowded between his knees and gently massaged his body, all the while speaking words of commendation and counsel.

"Now that you find that you can reach 'im easily with your left, watch me for signals. If I see that 'e's openin' up, I'll give you the sign to shoot your left with all you 'ave. If he swings again with 'is left, try for 'is bread basket. You understand me, Donnie?"

"Easiest thing I've picked yet," chuckled the champion as he came to his corner.

"He may be stalling," cautioned his evil-faced manager.

"Huh!" grunted the champion. "I can take all he has in dat left and never feel it. I'm goin' to open up on him de last part of de next round."

The gong rang for the second round.

Donald caught a glimpse of Pursell's face as he crouched in the opposite corner. Such a look of vicious hate shot from his one gleaming eye that Donald shivered.

The rough element began to boo Donald for his running tactics. Some fans feel that they are cheated out of the price of admission unless they can witness the spectacle of two boxers slugging toe to toe until one goes down. Science counts for nothing with this small minority.

"Whadda ya think this is, a marathon?" they shouted.

"Powder-puff punch!" derided another.

Garrieau suddenly tore in, letting loose a terrific right that would have stopped the bout right then if it had landed. From a clinch Donald looked to his corner. Andy went through the pantomime of shooting a straight left. Donald nodded.

"Powder-puff punch!" again shouted the disgruntled fan.

"Did ya hear that?" hissed Garrieau, twisting his mouth into an apish grin. "Yo can't hit hard enough to break an egg. I'm goin' to fix dose teet' for you now." He leered brutally as he tore after Donald, disdainful of the belittled left.

Donald stopped abruptly in his flight and shot a lightning left across to his pursuer's jaw. The champion saw it coming, but too late to block it. He threw his body into reverse, robbing the blow of a great deal of its force; yet enough was left to send him reeling back to the ropes, his head whirling and his knees wobbly. With a roar the spectators came to their feet as one man. The gong saved Garrieau.

The crowd gave Donald a deafening ovation as he walked to his corner. He looked for his friends and saw Douglas and Gillis locked in an embrace and dancing madly in the narrow aisle.

"Pretty near got 'im that time, Donnie!" cried Andy gleefully. "If you can get 'im to lift 'is jaw off 'is shoulder, send in your right." Andy's hands were shaking with excitement, while Donald was cool and collected.

"Let me go after him, Andy," he begged; "I can whip him at his own game."

"No, no!" admonished Andy, "keep on as you are. Don't try to swap punches with 'im!"

Garrieau's seconds were working over him feverishly. Pursell leaned over the heavily-breathing champion, his evil face sick with apprehension.

"What'd I tell yer?" he exclaimed. "They've stuck a ringer in on us; dat feller ain't no amachoor! If he beats ya we're both bums! Foul him dis round, for de——" he finished with a savage oath.

At the beginning of the third round Garrieau charged his elusive adversary like a mad bull. Donald easily side-stepped him and he plunged into the ropes. As he rebounded, Donald landed a left and danced safely away without reprisal.

"You can do pretty footwork," snarled the champion with a look of Simian ferocity, "but I'll get you yet, you——" There followed a burst of wild cursing. He tried to rush Donald to the ropes, feinted for the wind, and let loose a powerful right for the jaw. Paying no attention to the feint,

Donald ducked the blow and, countering, shot his left to his opponent's mid-section. The champion grunted aloud, fell into a clinch, and hung on grimly. The referee pried them apart. Again the crowd came to their feet to shout in a frenzy of excitement.

Garrieau fell into a clinch, then wrestled about until he placed his opponent between himself and the referee. He loosed his right in a terrific upper-cut that missed, but his left smashed with fearful force to Donald's groin—the most brutal foul that can be delivered. The referee did not see the blow.

Donald's nerves quivered with agony. A wave of torment and the awful nausea that follows such a blow swept through him. His face writhing with anguish, his gloved hands clutching his groin, he crashed forward on his face. His body twitched for a moment, then lay still.

The crowd came to their feet and many moved toward the exits. Another victim, they thought, to the champion's terrible punch. A number at the ringside, who had witnessed the foul blow, stood upon their seats and screamed denunciations at the referee.

The referee stood with one hand on Garrieau's massive chest. The latter was lustfully straining forward while the fatal seconds were tolled off.

The roar of the crowd came to Donald's ears like the dash of waves on a distant shore. At the count of five his body stirred. At the count of eight, his jaw sagging, his face distorted, he struggled to his knees. He saw Andy's agonised face as through a fog and heard his desperate cry of appeal.

"Up, Donnie! Up!"

At the count of nine Donald's benumbed muscles answered the call of his brain. With tremendous effort he staggered to his feet and wound his arms about his face. The crowd yelled themselves hoarse in tribute to his courage.

Garrieau was upon him with a growl like a wild beast. Donald stood in the centre of the ring reeling drunkenly. Garrieau shot a terrific right for Donald's wind that struck his weakly protecting elbows. The impact carried him to the ropes, and he fell forward to his knees. Again the referee's arm rose and fell as he counted the seconds. Again Donald tottered to his feet to meet a fusilade of short-arm jolts that pierced his guard and sent him staggering.

The gong rang. With body swaying unsteadily and legs wavering, Donald walked to his corner and sank down heavily. What a blessed relief to lie and relax! His head felt leaden and there was a ringing in his ears.

His seconds worked over him in furious haste. Andy knew all the tricks of resuscitation: the upward sweep of hand on the midriff that brings the big nerve centre to life; the quick raising of the chest that brings air to the remote corners of the lungs. With a sudden choking in his throat, the little Australian realized that this boy was very dear to him. A prayer on his lips, his hands trembling, but sure and deft, he strove to restore the shattered nerves.

The colour came slowly to Donald's cheeks and the haze cleared away as the cold water was showered upon him. He felt his strength returning. A long deep breath and he was himself again. Youth and his fine body had saved him. He looked across the ring at Garrieau, whose vulture-like manager was leaning over him with an exultant look on his face. This brute had deliberately fouled him. A cold and terrible rage swept through every fibre of Donald's being. He had demeaned himself by entering the prize-ring. This was bad enough; but to *lose* the battle!—*Never!* He looked for his friends. Their faces, he saw, were tense and full of misery.

"Andy, I'm going after him," he declared in a hard voice.

Andy was about to remonstrate, but he caught a flash of the hard light in Donald's eyes, and the words died on his lips. He hesitated. Maybe he should have let Donald take the aggressive from the start.

"Are you strong enough, Donnie?"

Donald's eyes held a dull glow. "Yes!" he gritted.

Andy patted his arm as the gong rang. "Give 'im 'ell, Donnie!" And then added reverently: "May God give 'im strength."

Donald shot from his corner as though thrown from a catapult to meet Garrieau before he was fairly out of his chair. The spectators held their breath. Was this the man who a minute before had walked staggering and beaten to his chair? When the referee pried the fighters apart after a fierce mix-up in the champion's corner, a puffed eye and a bloody face showed that Garrieau had absorbed severe punishment. Donald was everywhere, dancing in for a fierce rally and out again, always without a return.

The arena fairly rocked to the cheers of the crowd as Donald stood in the centre of the ring and exchanged punches with the champion. Head to head they stood while Donald's arms worked with such lightning speed that the champion's blows were smothered. And, marvel of marvels, the champion was giving ground. The pursued had become pursuer. The tide had turned. With his arms wound about his face the champion retreated. As he assayed a lead, Donald's fist smote his face before he could again cover up. Following

relentlessly, Donald penetrated his opponent's guard with rights and lefts until the champion's face was a smear of red.

A bedlam of sound came from the audience as they stood on their seats and roared their admiration for the challenger's wonderful exhibition. Andy, his face set, his eyes bulging clung to the corner of the ring.

Garrieau drove heavily at his elusive foe and missed. The impetus swung him to one side. For an instant his chin was without the protecting shelter of his shoulder. With a bewilderingly swift move Donald stepped forward, pivoted on his toes, and with the full weight of his powerful young body behind it, he whipped his right to the champion's unprotected jaw. Plop! Garrieau fell upon his face and sprawled like a baboon on the floor. Donald walked to his corner, thrust his gloved hands towards Andy, who stood as though paralyzed, and said; "Take them off, Andy." His voice was audible throughout the arena. The referee rushed to Donald's side and raised his arm aloft in token of victory.

With a roar the crowd came to its senses to realize that the fight was over. Pandemonium broke loose. A struggling mass of humanity surged into the ring. Every man wanted to shake hands with the new champion. Garrieau, the possessor of the "punch" they had so much admired, was forgotten. The king is dead—long live the king! Such is life, especially in the boxing game!

CHAPTER V

WITH much difficulty Donald and his friends forced their way through the cheering throng to the dressing-room. Weak and tired, Donald lay on a cot, while his handlers gently massaged his sore body. Andy moved to the cot and stood looking down on his protégé.

Donald opened his eyes. “Hello, Andy, he smiled weakly.

“Hello, Donnie,” said Andy huskily, as he patted Donald’s dark head.

Donald’s hand stole out to meet the warm clasp of his friend.

“Some little fight,” said Andy, summoning a smile.

“Not bad,” agreed Donald.

Gillis pulled his hat brim down over his eyes to hide his emotion. “I’ve a good mind to go out and give that brute another lickin’,” he growled.

One of the promoters thrust his head through the door. “Come and get your dough!” he shouted.

“Strike me lucky!” returned Andy, “those words ’ave a pleasant sound.” He picked up a small handbag and left the room. In a few moments he returned, his face beaming. He tapped the satchel. “Chuck full,” he said happily.

At the gymnasium they gathered in Andy’s room, and for the first time Donald told them of the attempted “frame-up” proposed by Garrieau’s manager. Douglas strode across the room and gripped Donald’s hand. Not a word was uttered by anyone, but the silence was more eloquent than speech.

They were all in a happy mood after the prolonged strain of the day. Andy was in particularly high spirits. “Gentlemen,” he began grandiloquently, “I ’ave before me on the tyble ’ere a most wonderful little ’andbag. All it ’ad in it this morning was a dirty collar and a shirt stud. Now,” making a dramatic gesture, “it’s the bloomin’ ’orn of plenty!” He turned the satchel upside down and a mass of bills, coins and cheques fell upon the table.

“ ’Ere, Gillis,” cried Andy, as he selected a bill, “will you go out and get some champagne, and when you goes in the bar buy a drink for the ’ouse. Bring ginger ale for Donnie; ’is manager’ll drink ’is share of the wine.”

Andy sorted the money into piles and sat quietly counting for a few minutes. “Fifteen thousand and a few odd dollars,” he announced.

"What!" ejaculated Donald. He was astounded. He had given the size of the purse little thought. "I had no idea it would be so much," he said in a surprised tone.

"Oh, the boxin' gyme is a great gyme," said Andy.

"Yes," remarked Douglas, "but after seeing that bout to-day I'm going to take up tiddly-winks instead; it's not so rough."

When the big man returned with the wine Donald turned to Douglas. "It seems that you and Gillis are old friends."

"Why, yes, Jack's been one of Dad's right-hand men for—how long, Jack?"

"About ten years," replied Gillis.

"And I'm equally interested to know how you and Jack know each other so well," said Douglas curiously.

"I met Donald on the train comin' out," answered Gillis quickly.

"Come on, boys," cried Andy, "we'll drink to the new champ—to Donnie's health." Andy held his glass aloft. "Boys, I can't make much of a speech, as I 'ave only 'ad one drink. Stand up while we drink to our Donnie. I knows that 'e's goin' to leave me, and that 'e's goin' to give up the boxin' gyme. I knows that 'e isn't in the 'abit of mixin' with the likes o' me. I knows that I'm lucky to be blackin' the boots o' a man like 'im. But when I knows that 'e went into this fight to 'elp a poor little bloke like me out of an 'ole, I'm proud, boys, I'm proud! I've seen many a fight, and I've seen many a gyme man. But strike me blind if Donnie didn't this day teach me something about sheer grit. When 'e came stumblin' to me at the end of that —that third round—I—I——" He stopped. "You know what 'appened," he continued in a husky voice. "I ask nothin' better'n to 'ave 'im for me pal. 'Ere's to the gymest man that ever stepped in shoe-leather! 'Ere's to 'im!" Andy turned away quickly to light a cigarette. His eyes were moist. The room was silent.

Donald was deeply moved by his little friend's show of feeling. Douglas broke the silence. "You got back to the Coast just in time, Jack."

"How's that?"

"Dad has started on the biggest job that he's tackled yet.

"What is it?"

"Do you remember the big tract of timber that he bought in the Cheakamus Valley?"

"Yes, he bought on my advice," answered Gillis.

“Well, he’s going to run a railroad in and build sawmills, and saw the logs right on the spot instead of shipping them to the Coast.”

“Good!” said Gillis heartily. “There’s a wonderful stand of timber in that valley.”

“But here’s the best part of it,” Douglas went on eagerly; “Dad’s going to send you in to cruise the timber around Summit Lake, and I’m to go with you. It’s a wonderful country. I was up there last summer.” He turned to Donald. “Will you go with us?”

“I’ll be glad to,” assented Donald.

“Good!” cried Douglas. “It will be fine camping with you and Jack.”

Little Andy sat patiently listening to this lively conversation, in which he had been completely ignored. He could contain himself no longer.

“I s’y,” he blurted, “am I such a blinkin’ dwarf that you’ve forgotten that I’m in this ’ere crowd? Isn’t me ’ead above the tyble? Where the ’ell do I get off on this ’ere bloomin’ picnic, I asks you?”

One look into the Australian’s seriously comic face with its heavy blond eyebrows wagging up and down set Douglas into paroxysms of laughter. “Andy,” he declared, “I’m going to take you along, even if we have to mark you ‘excess baggage.’ Can you cook?”

“Can I cook?” repeated Andy. “ ’E asks me can I cook! That’s me first name; that’s me profession. I’ve cooked on sailing ships, steamboats, in camps, in the Army, an’ I did thirty days in Sydney jail, and blime me if they didn’t make me ’ead cook. I was so good they wanted me to sty.”

“You’re hired, Andy,” said Douglas decidedly. “But isn’t it going to be pretty tough to quit the boxing game for cooking?”

“Seein’ as you ’ave asked me I’ll say that it’s a blinkin’ sight better than quittin’ it for tiddledy-winks!”

Douglas came to his feet. “I want you to meet Dad, Donald, and we’ll find out when we are to start.”

Andy patted his stomach contemplatively. “Well, with this ’ere champagne under me belt, I think I’ll start in ’ere and ’ave a drink and a fight in every bar from ’ere to Cordova Street. About meetin’ you, Donnie,” he added scratching his head reflectively, “the way I feel right now I think by to-morrow morning you’ll find me in the bridal-chamber of the Vancouver Hotel.” Saying which with straightened shoulders, his head set at a characteristic angle, he swaggered down the street and with a wave of his

hand disappeared within the swinging doors of the first saloon. In his present mood Andy envied no millionaire.

"You'll like Dad," said Douglas, as they ran up the steps of the big office building. "He's rather severe looking and pretty straight-laced, but the face he wears in the office isn't the face he wears at home." He finished with a laugh.

Robert Rennie was the sole owner of the Rennie Construction and Logging Company, one of the largest organizations of its kind on the Coast. He now rose from his chair and came around the desk, all the while studying Donald's face, which bore unmistakable traces of the afternoon's fight.

"Dad, this is Donald McLean, whom I told you about last night. I don't want to take up much of your time; just wanted you to meet Donald and find out when we can start on the trip to the mountains."

"Now that Gillis is here to go with you, you can go any time; the sooner the better, as we expect to have the railroad to the summit in a few weeks," responded his father, his eyes still on Donald.

"Thanks, Dad," said Douglas. "We can be ready to-morrow and leave the next day."

"Douglas, will you please go to Bowser's office and get some papers he promised to have ready to-day?" asked Robert Rennie.

Donald moved toward the door with Douglas.

"Sit down, Mr. McLean, and wait until Douglas comes back," invited Robert Rennie politely, as he pushed a chair toward Donald. He then closed the door of the outer office, where a girl sat pounding a typewriter.

When the older man turned his face was set in a broad smile and he crossed the room to seize the hand of his astonished visitor in a hearty grip. "Man! man!" he exclaimed, as he pumped Donald's hand vigorously, "that was a great fight to-day! When you got Garrieau with your left in the second round and that d—— gong rang, I—I—heavens, but I was excited!" He was gazing at Donald with admiration glowing in his eyes.

"You—you were there!" gasped Donald.

Robert Rennie chuckled. "Top row—nigger heaven! When that brute fouled you I think I could have shot him!"

"Mr. Rennie, I'm not a professional fighter, I—I——"

"Tut! tut!" interrupted the enthusiastic fan, "I can see that. By gad! that last round was a whirlwind. That right you landed on his jaw—I got so

excited that I fell down between the seats and skinned my shins." He rubbed his leg ruefully. "I never saw such speed as you showed in that last. . . ."

Here footsteps sounded outside, Robert Rennie moved quickly to his chair, adjusted his glasses and assumed a serious expression. "Not a word to Doug," he whispered.

"Bowser says that he told you he'd have the papers to-morrow," informed Douglas.

"Very well," answered his father.

Donald turned as he was leaving the room and saw Robert Rennie close one eye in a wise wink.

CHAPTER VI

AT the breakfast table the next morning Douglas was talking happily of their departure for Summit Lake.

"You'll have to hustle the work of timber cruising," his father admonished. "There won't be any time for play, as we expect to have the road finished in a few weeks."

"Don't worry, Dad. This is my first real job, and I am going to make good," declared Douglas stoutly.

"I hope so, Douglas. As you know, I want you to work your way up on your own merits. I'm not going to show any favouritism. We are going to put in a larger mill at Cheakamus, and one at Summit Lake, so there will be good opportunities for advancement for you and McLean if you show the right spirit.

"Is Mr. McLean going with you?" interposed Janet in a casual tone.

"Yes."

"How can he leave his business for so long?"

"He's not actively engaged in business just at present," explained Douglas glibly.

"You might ask him out to dinner to-night. I am having a few friends in for the evening."

"You bet I will."

Donald accepted Janet's invitation with alacrity. Living within the four bare walls of a room and eating in restaurants had long since palled on his taste.

"Formal or informal?" he asked.

Douglas made a deprecatory gesture. "Formal, very formal. You don't know Janet or you wouldn't ask that question. My sister is a stickler for ceremony. How are you off for 'soup and fish'?"

"I have the necessaries," smiled Donald.

Donald spent more than the usual time in dressing. He stood before the small mirror and surveyed himself with a critical eye. "Pretty soft for you," he apostrophized himself, "eating in ten-cent restaurants one day and dining

in a millionaire's home the next, and on the invitation of the most beautiful girl you have ever met."

Douglas called for him with his car and whisked him to the palatial Rennie residence on Shaughnessy Heights. The imposing evidence of wealth was written in bold headlines on the whole street of beautiful homes.

Mrs. Rennie met them at the door and greeted Donald warmly. He could not repress a start as he noted her likeness to Janet, and when she spoke her voice held the same deep tone as her daughter's. She led him to a large room flanked by two enormous bays that looked out on the Avenue. There was a spaciousness in all the rooms, a rare combination of beauty and good taste in the furnishings, that were luxurious without being ornate. Robert Rennie came forward and gave him a cheery welcome. Donald heard Janet's voice behind him and turned to gaze on a vision of loveliness.

Janet had dressed for the occasion with unusual care. A dark red evening gown of a filmy material showed to advantage the delicate contour of her form and the graceful curve of her snow-white shoulders and neck. Her lovely hair was wound in shining coils and held with a comb that sparkled with small but brilliant diamonds. Her long dark lashes drooped, and she flushed slightly as she met Donald's look of undisguised admiration.

Mrs. Rennie was an excellent hostess. Her cultured and charming personality put Donald quite at ease. It seemed ages since he had worn a dress-suit and been entertained in a home of luxury and refinement. After the coarse fare of noisy restaurants which had been his, the excellent food, the rich linen, the home-like atmosphere and the subdued voices now gave him a pleasant thrill.

The conversation during dinner was on various subjects. At times it swung perilously near to matters pertaining to Donald's personal affairs. On such occasions Douglas adroitly shifted it to other channels.

Janet studied Donald covertly. His perfect poise, his air of refinement and his evident lack of self-consciousness impressed her. "He is cultured and well-bred," she thought as she noted his well-shaped head, his powerful shoulders and his clean-cut profile.

Near the finish of dinner, while waiting for coffee to be served, there came a lull in the conversation which was finally broken by Janet. "Doug tells me that you are engaged in the glove business, Mr. McLean," she stated.

Donald shot a quick glance at Douglas, but his friend's face was hidden in his handkerchief to smother a sudden attack of coughing. In spite of

Donald's great effort at self-control, he felt a warm flush rise in his cheeks. What had Douglas divulged? Did his sister know of his participation in a boxing-match? He looked at Douglas appealingly. It was evident that he would receive no aid from that quarter, as that young man's only assistance was a prolonged coughing that effectually drowned immediate conversation, but would have to stop sooner or later for lack of breath.

At this crucial moment Robert Rennie came to his assistance. "I would like Mr. McLean to witness a sunset from our roof," he said as he rose from the table. "Let us have our coffee served there. The light will be gone if we wait longer."

As they ascended the stairs Donald gave his host a grateful look, which Mr. Rennie returned understandingly. That moment cemented an instant friendship in Donald's heart for this broad-minded Western millionaire.

From the eminence of the tiny roof garden the City, sliced with streets, lay at their feet. To the north the mountains were invested with a mystic blue haze, through which towered the snow-clad peaks. To the west lay the curving white sands of English Bay, and beyond, in the clear air of the long British Columbia twilight, they could see the strong mountainous profile of Vancouver Island.

"The topography of our City," explained Robert Rennie, "lying between Burrard Inlet and False Creek, is very much like that of New York on Manhattan Island. The narrows are deep enough for the largest ship afloat, and the Inlet—a veritable inland sea—has unlimited room for docks.

"The name 'Narrows' seems a feeble word for such a magnificent spot," observed Donald.

"Quite true," admitted Robert Rennie. "It was only yesterday that one of our public-spirited citizens suggested the name 'Lions' Gate'."

"Oh, Dad, that would be lovely!" exclaimed Janet, her eyes shining. "The 'Lions' Gate,' with the two watchful Lions looking down on all who enter. The name is most fitting."

"Yes," concurred Douglas, "Canada being one of the Lion's whelps, what more appropriate name than 'Lions' Gate,' the western gateway to the British Empire?"

"The Creator was wonderfully kind to us in His allotment of mountains," said Janet's father; "mountains that are not only valuable for their scenic beauty, but for their mineral-filled rocks and forest-clad sides. Our bays, inlets and streams are filled with fish, and our climate is so mild on the

Coast that man can live in comfort amid congenial surroundings the year round.

"Here we have the last of the Great West," continued Mr. Rennie. "With nearly four hundred thousand miles of territory, a coast line seven thousand miles in length, our population for the entire Province is less than one of the Coast cities to the south of us. Here in this vast untouched hinterland," swinging his arm to the north and east, "lies a potential wealth that will support millions, a wealth that is awaiting the magic touch of capital and settlers—capital to provide railways; farmers to till the rich valley; miners to unlock the vast hoards of gold and copper; and loggers to fell the virgin forests. Some day—and that day is not far distant—all this will come to pass, and you young folks will see a railroad from Vancouver to the Behring Sea." The speaker's face was flushed and his eyes were glowing. "Who knows," he finished dreamily, "but what the railroad I am building will be a link in the Alaskan road of the future?"

"Here is a family," thought Donald, "all native-born, who have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of the land of their birth."

Addressing Mr. Rennie, he said: "If the love that you and yours have for this Province is typical of the average citizen, I see no need to fear for the future of your country."

"Thank you," the older man replied gravely. "Our population is made up of people from all parts of the world, as our native-born are few. A cosmopolite is more or less indifferent to the future of the country in which he resides. 'Get the money' is unfortunately the slogan of many of our business men, who make no attempt to build for the future. Until such time as there is ingrained in the hearts of our citizens a true love for our Province; until such time as our cities and towns forget petty bickerings and jealousies and work together and harmoniously, then—and only then—will British Columbia become what Nature intended, the crowning jewel of the British Empire."

Janet's guests arrived in groups of two and three until about twenty of Vancouver's younger set were scattered about the large rooms. In introducing Donald to her friends Janet felt a warm glow of satisfaction as she saw the many glances of keen interest directed toward her stranger guest.

A slender girl with elaborately coiffed golden hair, looking like a white butterfly, fluttered to Janet's side and shook a reproving finger in her face. " 'Fess up now, Janet," she pouted; "how long have you been hiding this handsome man? Who is this Prince Charming?"

“Curiosity killed the cat,” was Janet’s evasive reply.

Donald had no penchant for social functions, but this lively party was a grateful respite from a whole winter of lonely evenings, and he entered into the spirit of the occasion wholeheartedly.

A game of whist and then the big rooms were cleared and they danced until a late hour. At Donald’s request Janet sang for them. Her rich contralto voice seemed to fill the room and set the air pulsing with sweet harmony. She sang a song of love and passion that seemed to bear Donald into another world. As he turned the final sheet and the last liquid note travelled through the rooms he roused himself as though from a spell. That voice! How strangely it affected him! He looked down to find Janet’s dark eyes fixed on his.

“Will you please sing again?” he implored.

“The same?” she questioned softly.

He nodded. Donald’s gaze travelled from the flying white fingers to the lovely face of the singer. As their eyes met Janet’s face flushed slightly, and at the finish of the verse she changed quickly to a rollicking song of the sea. “All join in,” she called merrily over her shoulder.

After Janet’s other guests had departed Donald, Douglas and Janet sat for an hour chatting by the large fireplace.

“May I go with you as far as Squamish to-morrow?” asked Janet.

“Certainly, Sis.”

“And when the railroad is through I will visit you,” she added.

Douglas looked at her curiously. Janet abhorred roughing it. Riding around Stanley Park and an occasional game of tennis comprised the extent of her outdoor activities. Douglas glanced at the clock and came quickly to his feet. “I’d better hustle you home, Donald,” he said, “as we have to be up early.”

The tinted shade of the hall light lent a soft radiance to the dark beauty of Janet’s face and gave to her eyes a deep and languorous glow.

“I have enjoyed every moment. Thank you so much,” Donald said earnestly.

“I’m glad,” she answered in a quiet voice.

He took her hand and held it in a strong pressure. “I’ll see you in the morning?”

“Yes,” she murmured softly.

The door closed gently and Janet heard him run down the steps to the whirring motor. She stood immovable until the sound of the car died in the distance, then walked meditatively to the fireplace, sank to a big chair and stared dreamily into the dying embers. Idly she reached for the evening paper and spread it on her knees.

"Such dignity and poise! He is wonderful!" she whispered aloud. "I must ask Douglas more about him."

She lowered her eyes to the paper, then came slowly to her feet, a look of blank amazement on her face. Smiling up at her was the face of the man of whom she had been dreaming.

"Canadian Champion

"New Canadian champion, whose spectacular defeat of Garrieau stamps him as a master of fistiana and places him in line to meet the world's top-notchers."

A pugilist! And she had proudly introduced him to her friends! Why hadn't Douglas told her? She threw herself into a chair and gave herself over to a period of gloomy contemplation.

Whistling softly, Douglas shut off the hall lights and entered the room. "Not in bed yet? You'd better——" he broke off suddenly as she turned cold eyes upon him.

"Why didn't you tell me that your friend is a pugilist?" she demanded as she thrust the offending sheet in Douglas's hand. "In the glove business!" she went on sarcastically. "That may be your idea of a joke, but I don't see anything funny about it." And without waiting for an answer she flung herself angrily from the room.

Douglas lighted a cigarette, which he smoked with short angry puffs as he walked the floor. He kicked viciously at an inoffensive footstool and sent it hurtling across the room. "Damn!" Then throwing the half-smoked cigarette in the fireplace, he switched off the light and sought his bed.

CHAPTER VII

In spite of the late hour of his retiring, Donald was up early and was the first of the party to reach the dock. Gillis and Andy arrived soon after, the latter staggering manfully under his heavy pack, a rifle swinging loosely in his hand.

Donald stepped forward as Douglas appeared. His face fell as he saw that he was alone. "Isn't your sister coming?" he asked.

Douglas avoided Donald's direct gaze. He leaned over to fumble needlessly with the straps of his duffle-bags. "She's peeved; saw your photograph in last night's paper."

"I'm sorry," said Donald, obviously distressed.

"Janet makes me tired," said Douglas irritably. "What if you did fight Garrieau? What difference does it make?"

"Your sister's view-point is different," answered Donald gloomily. "You must be curious to know more about me, Doug, yet you have never asked any questions."

"I have often wondered," admitted Douglas; "but if you wished me to know you would tell me. I don't give a hang who you are or what you are. You suit me."

"Thanks, Doug."

The shrill blast of the steamer's whistle smote their ears.

" 'Ere, you blighters!" shouted Andy from the top deck, "are you goin' on this blinkin' picnic?"

The lines were cast off, the water boiled under the steamer's stern. They backed slowly from the dock, swung about and headed for the Narrows. The scores of screaming gulls that accompanied them hovered over the deck, their keen eyes on the lookout for any bits of waste food that should fall in the steamer's wake. Boats plied in and out, every kind of craft from small fishing-boat to ocean liner.

A bright sun, beaming with all the warmth and splendour of full morning, bathed inlet and mountain in a wide shower of gold. A strong westerly wind bucked an outgoing tide, the foam of tossing wave crests flashing white in the sunlight. The tumbling combers hissed and crashed against the sturdy bow of the boat, causing her to pitch jerkily. The salt

breeze whipped a glow into the faces of the party gathered near the pilot-house and strummed noisily through the masts and superstructure. A yacht-like passenger steamer from Victoria, painted a pure white, swept past them, a smother of foam at her bow. A rakishly-built tug trudged cityward with a huge raft of logs in tow, a pillar of inky smoke streaming over her bow.

As they passed the sheer wall of Prospect Point, Donald's thought reverted to his first meeting with Janet. Douglas, who had been studying the shore through binoculars, passed the glasses to Donald and pointed to the bluff. At first he saw nothing of special interest and turned to glance at Douglas inquiringly.

"Janet," smiled Douglas.

Sure enough, he now saw a horse and rider on the highest point etched in miniature against the dark green woods. Douglas waved a handkerchief, and Donald caught a flutter of white from the dizzy promontory. His mind was filled with conjectures. Why was she there? Had she still a kindly feeling for him despite last night's exposure?

Janet could not herself have explained her reason for being there. She was up early, stole quietly to the stable, saddled her horse and rode to the Park. Riding steadily all the morning, she had battled with herself, had summoned all her courage to resist the spell this strange young man held over her, only to find that her will was impotent.

As she now waved her handkerchief she strained her eyes in a vain effort to single out Donald's tall form. Suddenly a feeling of shame for her weakness came over her. "Can't you forget him?" she asked herself irritably. "A prize-fighter!" Whirling her horse about she galloped swiftly toward the City.

The Rennie C. & L. Co. were already operating trains to Cheakamus, twelve miles from the Coast. An engine with two coaches was waiting to convey the passengers—chiefly labourers carrying blankets—to "the end of steel."

At Cheakamus the atmosphere was tense with activity. Engines shunted back and forth; the scream of a big circular saw came from a mill that was turning huge fir logs into ties; mule-skinners shouted as they backed their heavy wagons to the platform to be loaded with supplies. At both sides of the track were huge piles of ties, lumber and rails. The newly-arrived labourers hoisted their packs to their backs and set off up the road.

It was plain that this settlement was not built for permanency; it was a typical mushroom town. The rough board buildings still retained the colour of green lumber. Heaps of tin cans, piles of waste lumber, and the various parts of broken wagons littered the ground. The picturesqueness that Donald had expected to find in this wilderness camp was lacking, but he was vastly thrilled by the stupendous power exhibited in the combined forces of men and machinery.

From up the line came the roar of a terrific blast that made the ground tremble and sent rumbling echoes through the valley. A whole train-load of logs were dumped into the millpond with a crash that sent the water in a hissing wave that struck the opposite shore and exploded in a seething mass of dirty white foam. The air seemed charged with a dynamic energy which caused the blood to tingle in the veins.

In the yard of a stable a number of horses lay on the ground or stood weakly with drooping heads.

"Horse hospital," informed Gillis, to Donald's inquiry.

Donald moved to the fence, his heart filled with pity. Two men, one carrying a rifle, entered the enclosure and walked to the side of a handsome big Clydesdale that stood on slayed legs, his head lowered and his eyes filled with mute agony. One foreleg was terribly swollen, and a long, livid wound showed on one powerful hip.

"Sorry, Pete, but Doc. sez he's got to go," said the man with the rifle regretfully, as he slipped a halter over the stricken animal's head.

The man addressed as Pete patted the horse's head affectionately. "I bin drivin' old Bob for about six years, Bill. We knows each other like a book." He pressed his face roughly to the horse's muzzle. "Don't we, old pal?" he finished in a muffled tone.

Pulling and coaxing they urged the doomed animal through the gate.

"You needn't go, Pete," said the man with the gun.

His companion stopped near Donald and stood staring after the painfully limping animal. Nearing the woods the horse stopped short, lifted his head high on his arched neck, and sent out a clarion call that was answered by weak nickers from his mates within the corral.

A few men glanced up casually, then turned to their tasks. Work went on as usual. The mill clattered, drivers shouted, engine bells clanged—only a horse that was no more useful being led to his death. An everyday occurrence in a construction camp.

For a short interval the noble animal held his majestic pose, then, swaying awkwardly, he disappeared from view. At the sharp crack of the rifle the man by Donald's side winced as though the bullet had seared his own flesh. Brushing the sleeve of his coarse mackinaw shirt hastily across his eyes, he muttered a curse, then turned and ran with stumbling steps to his waiting team, mounted the seat and clucked gently to his four horses. The big animals strained against their collars. The huge load moved slowly at first, then, gathering momentum, rolled swiftly up the road.

Gillis brought five cayuses to the rear of the station, and in a few minutes his practised hands loaded two of them with their luggage.

The small cavalcade moved up the dusty road in a single file, with Douglas in the lead. They overtook and met numbers of freight wagons, going in and out, the drivers shouting greetings to each other in foreign tongues. They passed the track-laying machine, which was throwing the heavy rails about as if they were matches in giant hands. Guards stopped them without the zone of flying débris while giant blasts rent the air as if some titanic monster had torn the earth asunder. Huge rocks soared above the trees, then crashed to the ground with sickening thuds, while small pebbles spattered about them.

Through the trees they saw a cloud of steam and smoke. The air was shrill with incessant quick steam-whistles as a huge steam-shovel growled and tore like a ravenous monster at the gravelled hillside. Four men bearing a stretcher came slowly down the trail. A man on horseback, wearing riding-breeches and leather leggings, rode in their wake.

"How are you, Doctor Paul?" greeted Douglas. "Is it a serious accident?"

"Tree fell on him. Broke both legs, and he is hurt internally—won't live," answered the doctor in a low voice.

Donald glimpsed the face of the sufferer showing ashen through a stubby beard. Bloody bandages framed two crimson-stained lips, from which issued gurgling groans of agony. They moved on in silence for a few moments.

"When people ride in trains," observed Gillis "there ain't one in a thousand that knows what it costs in sufferin' and lives to make it so's they can ride in comfort."

By mid-afternoon they came to the vanguard of the army of workers, the men who were clearing the right-of-way. At intervals they could hear the long-drawn cry of the choppers as the top of a giant tree shivered and then with a great rending crash fell to earth with a resounding roar. Here they came to the end of the new road, and with a feeling of relief they plunged

into the cool shadow of the virgin woods. After the great clamour, the forest, through which the trail wandered deviously, seemed steeped in primal calm. The roar of the blasts no longer came in definite crashes, but was smothered by the distance to a muffled rumble.

A rider jogging down the trail reined in his horse and shouted a cheery greeting in true Western style. He was a clean-limbed, alert young man, with a frank smile, and seemed elastic with the sword-keen health of outdoors. He swung easily from the saddle and introduced himself.

"My name is Wilkinson. I am the District Ranger. It's getting a bit dry in spots, so I want you to be careful about your fires."

When Douglas told him the object of their trip to Summit Lake the Ranger smiled apologetically.

"My warning was unnecessary, then. I took you for a party of campers. I'm following the construction work, so will probably see you again before long."

He mounted his cayuse, waved his hand in farewell, then galloped down the trail.

The narrow path wound around the boles of enormous trees towering high above them, some of the tallest being nearly two hundred feet in height. Gillis appraised them with a critical eye. He was thinking of them as logs, calculated in terms of board feet, but over Donald their beauty and nobility cast a strange spell. How long had these monarchs enjoyed the repose so soon to be broken by puny man? Probably some of them were good-sized trees when Columbus discovered America.

The solemnity of the forest was at times broken by the sharp "ka-a-a-a-a-h" of startled deer as they caught their scent, or the sudden hum of wings as big blue-grouse shot up from their path. Once the horses pricked their ears and snorted in fear as a bear crashed his way through the deep woods.

As daylight abandoned the forest and twilight made eerie shadows on the dusky trail, they swung to an open space on the banks of the roaring Cheakamus River, and made camp for the night.

At daybreak they began the upward climb, and by noon felt the buoyancy of the air in the higher altitude. They crossed rushing streams and skirted the shores of small lakes on whose waters rested flocks of ducks in gregarious raft-like formations. The cayuses with their enormous packs showed signs of fatigue, and Gillis called frequent halts as the trail grew gradually steeper.

"We are nearly there," cried Douglas eagerly.

A few minutes later they topped a heavily-wooded hill and swung in to a narrow path on their right. There was no need to guide the horses, as they knew that here were rest and food for them.

There was a sudden quickening along the line. Donald's horse broke into a run, with Andy's close behind, the latter holding to the rear of his saddle and making a wry face.

"I wish I knew 'ow to keep this 'ere blinkin' saddle from comin' up and hittin' me in the seat," said Andy querulously.

Donald reined in his eager horse as they emerged from the woods and an enchanting scene burst on his view.

"This blinkin' 'orse is. . . ." Andy stopped as his gaze followed Donald's. Both sat spell-bound, and the others joined them quietly.

The panorama spread before them was singularly wild and impressive. Below them stretched a lake of emerald hue, rippled here and there by occasional cat's-paws, but for the most part, placid enough to reflect the shores with mirror-like clearness. To their right lay an open valley, through which ran a crystal clear mountain stream, its banks fringed with willow, alder and cottonwood, with frequent splashes of the early blooming labrador tea. A rustic bridge of logs crossed the rushing stream to a cluster of well-built log cabins that were fenced in by a palisade of cedar posts. Inside the enclosure a patch of freshly ploughed soil stood out rich and dark against the carpet of green.

Under an azure sky, dotted with fleecy clouds, a brilliantly white sky-line of ice-covered mountains, whose peaks flashed in the setting sun, circled this beautiful mountain valley.

From below were wafted the odours of an awakening earth. The sweet perfume of the newly-opened and sticky buds of the balm-of-gilead, the delicious aroma of the spruce and pine, the heavy, sweet smell of the water plants and the white orchis; all this fragrance was borne on the crisp, sparkling mountain air. Involuntarily the travellers filled their lungs with this life-giving atmosphere.

A beautiful gold-eye drake and his drab-coloured mate swam along the shore in search of a safe place to nest. From the centre of the lake a loon sent out its weird cry, echoing and re-echoing from the wooded hills like wild, demoniacal laughter. A quick rush of wings overhead, then a mallard duck struck the water with a loud splash and immediately set up a sustained quacking until answered by a more gentle note from the reeds, whence

emerged a hen-mallard. The two met amid a great bobbing of heads. Gabbling in an undertone they swam down the lake together.

The elusive hooting of male blue-grouse came from the tree-tops of the rocky slopes. A willow grouse moved from a clump of bushes with a haughty step to show her finery by ruffling the feathers of her neck and spreading her fan-like tail. There was a sharp "plop" as a rainbow trout curved gracefully on the surface to leave a widening circle of ripples on the calm water. All through this sun-washed valley was the soft murmur of a land at peace—at peace because unspoiled by man.

Donald drew a long breath.

"Strike me pink!" breathed Andy in an awed tone.

"Holy mackerel! but ain't she a pretty spot?" came excitedly from Gillis.

As they rumbled across the bridge a man came to the door of the log cabin, ran swiftly to the fence and swung the gate open. With a hand held to his brow to shade his eyes from the slanting rays of the setting sun, he peered up at the horsemen. His eyes lighted up as he recognized Douglas.

"Hello, ol' timer!" he shouted cheerily.

John Hillier filled the dual rôle of trapper and road-house keeper. His fantastic dress of deerskin, the six-shooter slung at his hip, and the big sombrero that topped his shaggy grey head gave him almost a sinister appearance.

Old John's face was savage and wild, but his bristly moustache hid a mouth as tender as a woman's. Great shaggy brows beetling out over his grey mountaineer eyes could not conceal the softness that crept into them so often. His gentle eyes seemed out of place in that homely, battle-scarred face. It was like finding a touch of romance in a treatise on trigonometry.

He was known under several sobriquets: "Trapper" John, "Coffee" John, and "Mahogany" John. "Coffee" John for the excellence of his brew of that beverage, and of which he drank enormous quantities. His call to meals: "Come and throw your feet under the mahogany," supplied the reason for the cognomen of "Mahogany" John.

With the assistance of their host they unsaddled the tired horses and turned them into the pasture, where they rolled luxuriously on their backs for a moment, and then started feeding hungrily on the rich clover.

A wind shook the tree-tops and turned the surface of the lake dark with ripples. High in air, streaming dark clouds scudded swiftly by.

“Got here jest in time,” said the old trapper, as he looked up at the sky. “It’s a goin’ to rain. Come inside.”

John had served as cook in a cowboy camp in Texas. He never overlooked an opportunity to make ostentatious display of his skill in the culinary art.

“Jest set my bread this mornin’,” he explained, “so I’ll hev’ ter make a bannock.”

Taking a tin pan from the shelf, he threw it the full length of the room to the table. He tossed the cooking utensils about like a practised juggler. Soon the bannock swelled to the rim of the frying-pan, the edges showing brown and crisp. He lifted the heavy dish from the stove, and with a dexterous twist of his wrist threw the bannock to the ceiling and caught it neatly in the centre of the pan as it came down. He dipped a half dozen trout in the yolk of eggs, rolled them in flour, then tossed them with apparent carelessness, but with deadly aim, one at a time, to the sizzling pan. From a shelf he took two glass jars and turned their contents into an earthenware dish on the stove. Immediately the room was filled with an aroma that caused the newcomers to sniff hungrily.

“Mr. Hillier,” began Andy, “what. . . .”

“Mr. Hillier! Hell! My name’s John,” exploded the trapper.

“I was goin’ to ask you what kind o’ meat that is that smells so good,” grinned Andy.

“Muskrat.”

“What?”

“Muskrat,” repeated their host, turning to the astonished Australian. “Did ye ever eat any?”

“No,” returned Andy weakly, “I don’t care much for meat anyway.”

“They’re darn good eatin’,” affirmed the trapper. “Reason folks won’t try ’em is because they think that they are a rat. Their right name is musquash, and they live on vegetable food only. Did any of you fellers ever see ‘Diamond Back Terrapin’ on a bill-of-fare in restaurants?”

“I have, many times,” answered Donald.

“Well, ’bout half the time when the waiter hands ye what ye think is turtle he’s givin’ you musquash,” stated the trapper as he speared a cube of butter with a long fork and shot it accurately to the debated dish.

Andy laughed outright. “Strike me fair, John, you’ve got anythin’ I ever see beat a block for slingin’ grub.”

John was pleased. “Oh, I’m fair to middlin’ good,” he admitted.

John served the dinner in the pots and pans in which the food had been cooked, and piled the table with enough to serve a dozen men. “Like to see lots of grub in sight,” smiled the old trapper. He placed a big steaming coffeepot in the centre of the table, and then sent out his original dinner-call. “Throw your feet under the mahogany!” he roared.

The party needed no second call. The mountain air had given them wolfish appetites and they made huge inroads on the trapper’s well-cooked dinner. With the exception of Andy, they ate and enjoyed the musquash; the meat being fine-grained and tender. John was visibly disappointed by Andy’s refusal to try this delicacy.

“Try it, ol’ timer,” he insisted, as he pushed the steaming pan across the table.

Andy made a wry face. “Don’t feel jest hungry to-night,” he mumbled.

Dinner finished, Donald pushed back his chair and lighted a cigarette. “John, that was a dandy meal, and your coffee sure is a nectar fit for the gods.”

The trapper was justly proud of his cooking. Donald’s praise brought a deeper tinge of colour to his bronzed face. He refilled the tin cups and they sat quietly smoking and sipping the fragrant coffee.

After the day in the open and the excellent meal it was pleasant to sit in the genial warmth of the cabin while the storm which had been gathering broke overhead and the incessant patter of rain sounded on the roof.

Between Andy and John there sprang up a comradeship based on the peculiar brotherhood which often exists between small men. Each found in the other traits that amused him.

“Comical little duck,” was John’s opinion of Andy.

“Strike me pink! He’s the funniest old geezer that I ever saw in me life,” Andy confided to Donald.

Together they washed the dishes and tidied up the room. When they had finished Andy dragged in his duffle-bag, rummaged through the contents, and produced a flask of rum. The trapper’s face brightened.

“I brought this for medicinal purposes,” stated Andy. “How are you feelin’, John?”

The mirth wrinkles around the trapper’s eyes deepened. “My misery is purty bad to-night, ol’ timer.”

Andy poured liberally into a tin cup. The pungent odour of rum filled the room. Old John sniffed the contents. “Whuff!” he yowled, “good licker!”

The old trapper, standing in the centre of the room, presented a figure wild and strange. His coat of buckskin was open at the throat to expose a hairy chest. His mane-like mass of wiry hair stood straight out and shook with every movement of his body. A veritable wild man of the woods he looked as he grasped the cup and held it up to his admiring gaze.

The storm had reached the height of its fury. The wind roared and moaned like a famished wild thing denied its kill. Occasionally a venturesome gust would find its way down the chimney to send thin puffs of smoke to linger in the air and fill the cabin with the sweet perfume of the burning alder.

“Give us a toast, John,” begged Andy.

The trapper raised his cup on high:

> “I’m the trapper of the mount’n top,
> A ring-tail-snorter an’ a dead-sure shot.
> I’m wild, I’m woolly an’ full o’ fleas,
> I’ve never bin’ curried below the knees,
> I live on the fruit o’ the prickly pear,
> An’ I play in the brush with the grizzly bear.”

“Here’s hopin’ ye’ll never see the back o’ yer neck,” he added. Then placing the cup to his lips he drained the contents with one great gulp. John’s jaws were well-nigh toothless, and as the fiery liquor scorched his throat his leathery cheeks folded and unfolded like the pleats of an accordion.

“Wow!” he yelped, “she’s sure got a kick.”

The humorous toast and the trapper’s facial contortions sent Andy into paroxysms of laughter.

“Strike me blind!” he gasped, as he held his sides. “I never——” His eyes rested again on the trapper’s convulsed features. Speech failed him and he sank writhing to a chair.

When finally they climbed the ladder to their bunks the rain had ceased and a brilliant moon flooded the valley with a white light.

Donald awakened as the first grey streaks of dawn brightened the dusty windows of the loft. The air was suddenly filled with the sweet song of birds. Wild-fowl quacked and splashed in the waters of the lake. The aroma

of coffee and frying bacon and the pungent odour of wood smoke was wafted strongly from below.

Suddenly the trapper's shaggy head protruded through the opening at the top of the ladder. "Get out o' the hay an' let the sun shine on ye!" he boomed.

"Now, let's get busy," said Gillis, when breakfast was over. "The first thing to do is to find a good spot to pitch our tent."

"You'll find a deserted cabin at t'other end o' the lake that'll be a whole lot more comfortable nor a tent," informed the trapper.

The cabin of cedar logs proved to be in good repair and the location excellent.

"A couple of days' work," observed Gillis, "an' I can fix her up so's we'll be as snug as a bug in a rug."

John had spent the forenoon in baking. Cakes, pies, doughnuts and cookies were placed at regular intervals on the shelves in platters and tins tipped at an angle to make the display more effective. It was an exhibit of pastry that any housewife might envy. The unstinted praise of his guests was like music to the trapper's ears.

For dessert they had a savoury mince-pie, steaming hot from the oven. Andy waxed most eloquent in his praise of this culinary delight.

"Have another piece, ol' timer," insisted John, his face beaming.

"You bet I will," was Andy's quick response as he transferred a big slice to his plate.

"Like it, do ye?" asked John.

"U-m-m," mumbled Andy as he devoured the last crumb and settled back with a sigh of content.

John's wrinkled old face spread into a wide grin. From his lips came a cackling laugh.

"What's the joke?" queried Andy.

"I thought I'd get that muskrat into ye somehow," chortled the trapper.

"Well, it's not so durned bad, after all," philosophized Andy.

On the third day after their arrival they moved to the cabin at the head of the lake. There followed days of arduous toil, days spent in "blazing" lines through almost impassable swales, up steep hillsides and through canyons. Days of strenuous exercise in the stimulating air, when the bright sunshine tanned their faces to a deep brown, brought the glow of perfect health to

their eyes, and gave to their muscles the resiliency and strength of steel springs.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE calm Sunday morning Donald paddled across the lake to try the fly at the mouth of the small creek which flowed past the trapper's cabin. The clear water was as smooth as glass and the trout refused to be lured from the depths. After casting steadily for fifteen minutes without a rise, he sat down to enjoy a smoke. Sounds from afar came with surprising clearness through the quiet air. Andy was splitting wood outside the cabin door, and the sound of his axe and the words of his song brought a medley of returning echoes. Loons gabbled, wild ducks of many varieties shifted their positions with a whistling rush of wings. The "chee-ry, chee-ry" of a flock of chickadees sounded from a copse of willows on the creek bank. The warmth of the morning gave promise of a hot day when the sun should reach the zenith. A breath of cool air rippled the lake's surface, bringing with it the faint rumble of a waterfall high up the mountain-side. Donald paddled to the shore, crossed the rustic bridge to where the trapper was working in his garden, and sat down on a convenient stump.

"Good morning, John."

"Mornin', ol' timer."

"John, is there a waterfall on the big creek?"

"Yes, I've heard 'em, an' I've seen 'em from the ridge, but I ain't ever bin close to 'em."

"Do you think there would be any fish at the foot of the falls?"

"Couldn't say, ol' timer. It ain't never bin fished."

To the disciples of Isaac Walton the expression "never been fished" brings an incomparable thrill. To cast a fly on virgin waters is the acme of bliss to an angler. Donald unjointed his rod, slung his basket over a shoulder and started toward the trail.

"Ye better let me fix ye up a lunch to take along," the trapper shouted after him.

"Good suggestion," admitted Donald as he retraced his steps.

Fried eggs placed between slices of snow-white bread, fresh doughnuts, cake and cheese were quickly prepared by the deft hands of the old trapper, and Donald was again on his way.

He tried to follow the stream, but the sides were so precipitous that he was forced to climb to the ridge or "hog-back." Here he found the walking excellent, as there was no under-brush and the ground was covered with a soft moss.

At intervals through the park-like pines he caught the glint of running water in the gorge below. The air was warm, but the gentle zephyrs wafted from the glacial stream brought a coolness that was almost chill. The sound of the falls became louder as he climbed higher, increasing to a trembling roar as he came to the edge of a boulder-strewn precipice. Here there met his gaze a tumbling cascade of water, falling from a cliff to an iridescent pool sixty feet below.

Donald scrambled and slid to the lower level, only to find that he would have to walk down stream and wade up in order to get within reach of the pool. By leaping from rock to rock he managed to reach a flat ledge near the side that allowed him perfect freedom for casting. The spray reached him in the form of a fine mist that felt grateful after his exertions. A shaft of brilliant sunshine, looking like a searchlight where it penetrated the heavy mist, was reflected and refracted to form a rainbow that shone resplendently against the dark wall of the canyon. On each side rose a sheer wall of rock, with here and there a small fir or spruce clinging to fissures where sufficient earth had accumulated to give it nourishment. At the point where the cataract struck the pool there was a mass of heaving, foaming water that spread in ever lessening waves to become gentle ripples lapping softly on the shores.

The little birds known as waterousels, or dippers, were in their element. Standing on the rocks around which the turbulent waters roared, they bobbed and curtsied, then flew in under the waterfall to their nests in the damp niches of the rocks. Far overhead, like a speck in the azure sky, a bald eagle careened and soared. Over all was the thunder of the cataract drumming in Donald's ears and giving to the earth a gentle tremor.

He began eagerly to joint his rod, attach leader and flies, and unfold his landing-net. "There," he said, when he had completed the task, "I'll just throw that in to soak while I have a smoke."

He cast carelessly, laid the rod down and reached for a cigarette. "B-r-r-r-r," the reel shrilled madly. He made a wild clutch for the rod, retrieving it just as the tip entered the water. A big rainbow trout leaped into the air with a flash of prismatic colours, and made that graceful curve that is so pleasing to the fisherman's eye. The five-ounce rod bent double as he checked the trout's rush. Then the line slackened as the fish turned and came toward him

with incredible speed. He reeled frantically to take in the slack line. Once more the gamey trout turned and the line was singing with the strain. Suddenly it went straight down and in the pellucid depths he could see it lying near the bottom with tail and fins moving listlessly. Slowly he reeled in the line, bringing the fish nearer and nearer. With landing-net extended Donald leaned forward; but with a quick flirt of its tail the trout shot to the surface, sending a shower of spray in his face. Then, leaping and dashing—the reel singing merrily—it crossed the pool with renewed energy. Unexpectedly the whirr of the reel ceased and the rod was nearly jerked from Donald's hands—a detested "back lash." In other words, the line had tangled at the reel. The slender rod was bent nearly to a circle.

"It won't stand it," muttered Donald in a fever of excitement. He lowered the tip slowly to relieve the strain on the rod, all the while working desperately to free the tangle. Snap! The fish with a tremendous tug parted the leader, and with one last triumphant leap to flaunt its brilliant colours, it disappeared.

It is universally understood among the angling fraternity that when a fish is lost under such conditions the Recording Angel turns her head.

In an hour the cold spray from the glacial water had dampened Donald's clothing and benumbed his fingers. The basket by then being nearly full, and his wrist lame from casting and playing the fish, he decided to quit. As he climbed the ridge the air above felt like a breath from an oven in contrast to the atmosphere of the canyon.

Through a tall, stately grove of pines Donald descried an open glade whence came the sound of running water. He walked through the dark aisles of towering trees, his feet making no sound on the thick carpet of soft needles. Pushed aside a growth of low deciduous trees that fringed this open passage in the woods, he gazed upon a scene that held him entranced. At some time in the earth's remote history moving ice had gouged out this tiny valley and left a rich deposit of glacial silt. A small mountain stream cascaded from a moss-covered cliff to fall from ledge to ledge and flash crystal clear and sparkling through the vividly green grass and bright flowers which formed the carpet of the valley floor. The brilliant columbine, interspersed with the yellow marigold and dandelion, made bright splotches of colour. Wild roses hung in masses in the border of low green shrubs. The white rein orchis grew in rank profusion everywhere, filling the air with its delicate perfume. Ferns and cotton grass grew to the very edge of the limpid brook that prattled musically over the moss-covered stones. A rabbit with her young nibbled at the tender grass roots at the far side of the creek.

Humming-birds buzzed back and forth and a bluejay—the Paul Pry of the woods—peered curiously down at the interloper, with its head moving from side to side and its beady eyes shining. Then with a startled shriek it flew across the glade—like a streak of blue in the sunshine—to hold excited colloquy with its mate. A willow grouse sailed from a cliff above to land with a great preening of feathers and move with a peculiar gliding run to the shelter of a stand of salal bushes.

Near the centre of the field was a "fairy ring" of mushrooms about twelve feet across. The beginning of these rings may be a single mushroom which drops its spores in a circle about its base. The next season a smaller ring of mushrooms drops a larger ring of spores, and so the circle expands year by year, exactly as the ripple spread out on the surface of a pond when a stone is cast into the water.

Some fairy rings have been estimated to be six hundred years old. Legend informs us that these rings are magic circles within which elves and other nimble fairy folk hold their revels at midnight. There is another superstition that the rings mark the spots where bolts of lightning have struck the ground.

"A fairy-land!" breathed Donald as he stepped into the open.

It was warm, but now and again a breeze, that had swept between snow-capped peaks, dropped down into the valley and made the pines sway and the willow and alder leaves coolly rustle. At the time of these visitations Donald threw back his head and drew in deep breaths of the flower-scented breeze.

Making his way to the foot of the tiny falls, Donald seated himself on a soft bed of moss and proceeded to eat his lunch. Two birds, of the species known as "camp-robbers" or "whiskey-jacks," dropped ghost-like from nowhere and eyed him reproachfully. He threw them a crust of bread. There was a shrill cry like that of a hawk, that sent the feathered visitors in terror to the safety of the trees, and a flash of blue landed on the bread. With a chuckle, almost human a bluejay flew to the top of a spruce to enjoy his meal at leisure.

Donald's happy laugh rang throughout the sylvan glade and was re-echoed mockingly from the cliffs. The camp-robbers emerged from their retreat looking rather crestfallen. They took no chances with the crust thrown to them the second time. Each seized a generous portion and retreated hastily.

Donald selected a soft spot in the shade of a small grove of cedars, stretched himself at full length on his back, and lighted a cigarette. The

sound of murmuring waters, the rustle of leaves, the gentle sighing of the pines, and the fragrant, balmy air that fanned his face held a soporific influence. He watched a fleecy cloud floating far above the tree-tops in the ethereal blue. A long-tailed wren, of the white throat and white eye lines sang joyously from a tree nearby.

Donald's eyes closed slowly, and in a moment he was in a doze. As though in a dream he felt something brush his face and he shook his head. An instant later the tip of a cedar bough fell fairly on his face. He brushed quickly with his hand as though to dislodge a fly. A larger branch fell with a gentle swish to land on his nose. This time he opened his eyes and plucked the branch from his face, noticing as he did so that it was freshly broken. "Odd," he thought, and lay with eyes half closed to detect the cause of this singular occurrence.

Near the top of the four small cedars under which he lay there seemed to be a nest-like thickness. There was a movement in the tops of the trees, and Donald's amazed eyes saw a little brown hand steal forth holding a cedar tip. Then a small childish face appeared, surrounded by a mass of lovely golden hair. The face was one of sheer, exquisite blonde beauty, marked by a pair of wide, roguish blue eyes, as blue as pansies, a small pensive mouth that formed a cupid's bow, and an impudent little nose dotted with freckles. As the slender hand loosed the branch, Donald's astonished eyes looked up directly into the blue ones looking down on him so full of mischief. There was a startled gasp and the golden head disappeared amid a great swaying of branches.

Donald came slowly to his feet, rubbing his eyes. Was this a fantastic dream, or had he actually seen a child's face? He looked at the branches on the ground, and again his eyes sought the tree-tops. He could now see that some sort of big nest was built within the tops of the four small cedars.

"Hello," he ventured.

A slight rustling of the branches followed, but no answer.

"Hello, wood-nymph!"

Still no answer, but a low silvery laugh was proof that the occupant of the nest was not a wraith.

"If you are a fairy," he persisted, "won't you come down and give me a Terpsichorean exhibition in the fairy ring on the floor of your enchanted glade?"

"I am a dryad," came the dulcet tone of a childish voice, "and a dryad's life is bound up in her tree. I cannot leave my arboreal bower until the hour

of midnight.

"We'll see about that," laughed Donald as he seized the slender cedars and rocked them violently.

A scream of simulated fear came from the tree-tops. "Stop!" the voice cried, "I'll come down."

A tiny moccasined foot felt its way to a limb, and a slight figure clad in men's overalls and a brown cotton shirt, stood erect with downcast eyes.

"Jump," invited Donald, as he stood with arms outstretched; "fairies don't weigh much."

The "dryad" shook her head bashfully, then with a quick, bird-like motion sprang straight out into the air, her golden hair streaming and flashing in the sunshine. She landed gracefully on her moccasined feet and went bounding across the valley, leaping the creek with the ease and grace of an antelope, and, without turning her head, disappeared in the dark forest aisles.

Donald's black eyes remained fixed on the spot where the fairy-like vision vanished from view. His whole attitude registered astonishment. He was completely mystified by the appearance of a girl in this remote wilderness.

He climbed the trees for a glimpse of the golden-haired fairy's bower. A rope was tied around the tops of the four cedars, with interlacings of cord between. This rope pocket was filled with pine boughs, and these covered with ferns and moss. A cord that led to a nearby spruce was, he decided, used to impart a swinging motion to this strange maiden's cosy retreat.

In the centre of this cosy nest lay a copy of "Tennyson's Poems" and a book on "Bird Life." As Donald leaned closer a gentle breeze fluttered the leaves of the book of poems.

"Fairy hands turned to the right page," he mused aloud as he read these lines from "Maud."

> "My bird with the shining head.
> My own dove with the tender eye. . . .
> Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
> To the flowers, and be their sun."

"A corner of dreamland," murmured Donald.

A stronger breeze swept down the valley, causing the nest to rock with gentle undulations. "A novel idea," he thought, "and what a restful spot to sleep and dream!"

Donald was tempted to finish his nap in the vacated dryad's nest, but put the thought aside as being almost a sacrilege. He descended to the ground, picked up his basket and started down the mountain. As he neared the lake he saw the trapper with Douglas and Andy sitting outside the cabin door.

"Any luck, ol' timer?"

Donald lifted the lid of the basket.

"Whew!" ejaculated the trapper. "Them's wallopers, ain't they?"

"John," queried Donald as he sat down on the grass, "did you ever see a dryad?"

"A what?"

"A dryad."

The trapper's wrinkled face puckered. "Yeh," he answered quizzically, "I seen lots of them fellers in Vancouver one time after I'd bin drinkin' for a week."

Donald told of his meeting with the strange child of the forest. "Who is she, John?" he asked.

"That was little Connie Wainwright. She an' her father live in a little valley t'other side of that bluff," pointing up the mountain. "She's a great kid, too. She has a hoss that's named after a hoss that had wings. I forgit the name she calls him." The trapper pondered for a moment.

"Pegasus," prompted Donald.

"That's it. She rides that hoss like a Texas Ranger, an' she's a crack shot with the rifle. Funny thing, though, she ain't ever shot anything to my knowledge 'cept a cougar that tried to get her pet deer. Her father's jest the same, he won't kill nothin' an' they've got all the birds 'round their cabin as tame as chickens. They are always studyin' birds, flowers, an' animals. He's an Englishman of eddication, an' he's eddicated the kid, too. Was the 'Breed' with her?"

"No. Who is the Breed?"

"He's a half-breed Indian with a lame leg. He came over the trail 'bout two years ago. Got one look at that shiny haired kid an' thought she was an angel, I guess, an' has been hantin' her ever since. He built hisself a cabin up there. Works for Wainwright in the summer an' traps in the winter. He follers that kid 'round like a dog follers its master."

Donald was interested.

"I must call on them."

“He’ll be glad to see ye, as ye can talk his lingo. His langwidge is too high-falutin’ for me. He sometimes comes to ask me ’bout the habits of animals, but I got a sneakin’ notion that he knows more ’bout it than I do.”

That evening Donald and Andy visited the recluse.

CHAPTER IX

THE trail to Wainwright's cabin was a mere path that followed the vagaries of a small mountain stream which at times flowed with a tranquil murmur, then suddenly plunged over ledges and shattered itself into creamy foam on the worn rocks below.

Out of breath from the steep climb, Donald and Andy sat down as they reached the bluff. Everywhere was the song of birds and the whispering of gentle zephyrs laden with the fragrance of the forest.

"Whit, whit, whit, ch' wee-e-e-e," sounded the shrill hunting call of an osprey, or "fish-hawk," as he wheeled over the lake, then made his spectacular plunge and rose on high with a fish gripped in his long, powerful talons. Donald watched him carry it to his mate, who was standing guard over a big nest in the top of a dead pine. Again the male bird dropped like a bolt, struck the water with a loud splash, and disappeared below the surface for a few seconds, then rose to scatter spray in his struggles to lift himself clear of the water.

A bald eagle, from the vantage point of a tall fir, took instant note of the successful fisherman, and with a majestic swoop flew under the smaller bird. Higher and higher rose the osprey, the eagle relentlessly pursuing, until at last the intimidated bird released its hold on the prize. With a scream of triumph the eagle seized the glistening, wriggling fish in mid-air and bore it away.

From the woods in their rear came the lilt of a song mingled with the thud of flying hoofs, and around a tangle of low spruce came a piebald cayuse at full gallop. On his bare back the girl of the woods was standing with arms outstretched, pirouetting on her moccasined toes like a dancing dervish. Her heavy hair streaming about her face and shoulders, she seemed even more an elf than when poised for flight on the edge of her fairy nest. As she neared the bluff she settled to her seat and seized the reins.

Donald came to his feet. For a moment it seemed as if he were to be passed unnoticed. He ran to the trail and waved his arm with a welcoming shout. This brought him a flash of startled blue eyes, then the cayuse with a snort of fear went straight up into the air, spinning high on his hindlegs. A sharp word of command and a quick twist of the nut-brown hands caused the frightened beast to half turn and lower his forelegs gently to the ground. As he stepped to the cayuse's head Donald noted the lean and sinewed

flanks of the animal, the strong muscled shoulders, and the slender but powerful limbs. He stroked the shiny neck and Pegasus made answer to such advances by rubbing his moist nose against Donald's shoulder.

"Nothing mythical about this steed," observed Donald, gently prodding the bunched muscles on the horse's chest. "And," he added jestingly, "I do not see the golden bridle presented by the goddess to Bellerophon while he slept."

A subtle flicker danced momentarily in the corners of the blue orbs of the rider. "I have clipped his wings, so I have no need of the magic bridle," she said smilingly.

The voice was gentle and mellow. The pronunciation, clear and perfect, held a trace of English accent that was pleasing to Donald's ears. One could not look upon Connie without thinking of flowers, birds and sunshine. Constant exercise had turned her muscles into cords of steel; mountain air and sunshine had darkened her face and hands to a deep bronze and brought to her cheeks a warm glow that showed richly through the coat of tan.

Connie looked on this stranger as a being infinitely beyond her ken, a part of a world of which she had no knowledge. His tall, well-knit body, his shining black hair, dark flashing eyes, his fine clothes and his deep resonant voice were a source of wonder and admiration to this girl, whose knowledge of men was limited to a few lone trappers and Indians. She was suddenly disconcerted and felt like running away.

"I was on my way to call on you. Is your father home?"

Surprised at her own boldness, Connie slipped lightly to the ground and stood beside him.

"Yes," she rejoined awkwardly, "he is. I'll go with you."

Donald spoke again, with a playful smile that caused the girl to flush with a mixture of pleasure and confusion. "I thought when I saw you poised on Pegasus's back that a close inspection would disclose a pair of transparent, gauzy wings, but," peering at her shoulders, "evidently the rider is clipped as well."

As they walked up the path, Andy following, it seemed to Connie that they were strolling through the fields of Elysium.

At first glance Donald saw that Wainwright's log cabins had been built by a rank novice. The walls were rakishly askew, the corners out of plumb, and the joints showed big gaps filled with moss. The rough construction of the dissimilar, rambling cluster of houses served to enhance rather than mar the wild grandeur of this oasis on the rocky mountain-side.

Into this valley poured a mountain stream which had gouged out for itself a canyon, through which its waters swept and tumbled, as green as jade in the sunlight, like emerald in the shadow, and snowy white in the roaring rapids. On the other side, the towering profiles of the cliffs were edged with stunted growths of pine and spruce, while here and there were soft patches of green moss clinging to the damp places.

The few acres wrested from the wilderness were rich with a green carpet of clover and timothy, and in a pasture at the corner a sleek Jersey cow was feeding diligently. In the same enclosure a deer nibbled delicately at the tender shoots. A flock of pure white ducks, in single file, waddled down the hill and plunged with a subdued quacking into a small pond. Within a yard enclosed by a fence of split cedar the lusty crow of a rooster sounded above the cackling of his family.

The low walls of the main cabin were festooned with a mass of wild creepers in which the wild honeysuckle predominated. Wild flowers, each species separate, were growing in neat round plots bordered with carefully arranged stones. Scores of birds flitted through the low bushes, rested on fences and roofs, or hopped unafraid through the grass. Siskins and finches there were, in gold or olive; blue jays and their cousins, the camp-robbers; bluebirds; sparrows singing sweetly; waxwings "zeeping" through the garden; warblers gurgling softly; scolding grey flycatchers and numerous other species unknown to Donald.

A camp-robber flew to Connie's outstretched arm. From the capacious pocket of her overalls she brought a crust of bread, at which the bird pecked hungrily. Another bird lighted on the brim of Andy's wide hat. The little man attempted to peer up at it without moving his head, and the effort set his bushy eyebrows dancing. "Get off there, you blighter!" he growled. "I don't want any bloomin' trimmin's on me 'ead gear."

It was the first time Andy had spoken. Connie turned to him, her eyes wide with curiosity. His droll face, the strange dialect and the lively eyebrows caused a flock of dimples to chase each other about her pretty lips.

Connie's father and the Breed, working in the vegetable garden below, glanced up and, seeing the strangers, laid down their tools and came up the hill, the Breed moving jerkily on his crippled limb.

Raleigh Wainwright was a man of rather striking appearance. He was slender, grey-haired, clean chiselled, and carried himself with a military bearing. There was a certain fineness in the slight figure, a symmetry of design, that suggested that indefinable something which is the hall-mark of good breeding. He had a way of carrying his well-shaped head that

accentuated this aristocratic air. His grey eyes met Donald's with a level gaze as they shook hands.

After a cursory glance, Joe Pardon, the Breed, settled himself on a seat against the wall of the cabin and rolled a cigarette. His face was swarthy and sombre; coarse black hair topped his head. In repose his features wore the impassive expression of the Indian, but when he smiled—which rarely happened—he showed the French strain in his blood and became almost handsome. He was of a sturdier build than the average Siwash Indian, and as he leaned against the logs, with muscular arms folded across his powerful chest, one would have thought him the embodiment of all that is strong and virile in man, until the eyes rested on the pitifully malformed leg, shrunken to one-half its normal size.

"Won't you come inside?" asked Wainwright politely.

"Thank you," answered Donald, "but if you don't mind I'd rather look at your flower garden."

It was quite evident that their host was pleased by this statement. "You are interested in flowers?" he questioned eagerly.

"I am," admitted Donald, "but unfortunately I don't know much about them."

The dignified Englishman proved to be not only an intelligent, but a most willing teacher. From plot to plot they went, the botanist glad to talk on his hobby to an attentive audience. He gave the names of the plants, their mode of germination, growth, nature and uses. For half-an-hour his quiet voice went on until the lengthening shadows deepened. As they moved toward the cabin, the Breed passed them carrying a pail brimming with milk, at which Andy gazed with longing eyes.

"We always have a light lunch in the evening; won't you stay?" begged their host.

Andy nodded his blond head vigorously in a silent signal to Donald for acceptance, and acceptance was instantly forthcoming.

The interior of the log cabin was rough in the extreme, but scrupulously clean, with chairs, tables and beds that had never issued from a furniture factory. The window-curtains were made of flour and sugar sacks, on which the names of the manufacturers could still be deciphered. On one wall were two bunks, set one above the other, on which were spread heavy Hudson Bay blankets. No sheets were in evidence, and the pillows were rough sacks stuffed with moss. The lower bunk showed the feminine touch in its drapery of cheap blue print, a pathetic attempt to brighten the coarse surroundings.

Behind a small stove in the corner hung an array of cooking utensils, spotlessly clean, but of inferior quality. The one and only table, placed conveniently near the stove, was as white as a ship's deck from constant scouring.

In direct antithesis to this seeming poverty, one end of the cabin was literally filled with books. These richly-bound volumes looked incongruous in conjunction with the rough tables, the uncomfortable chairs and the rude beds. Donald's eyes roved over the books, arranged on the shelves standing and crosswise. Most of them were in English, but many were in German, French and Italian; some in what appeared to be Arabic, perhaps Sanskrit; and dozens were on botany, ornithology and natural history.

"A bookworm," mused Donald, "a bookworm, and at the expense of his personal comfort." He felt ashamed of his unwarranted criticism of their kind host.

"I built this cabin all alone," informed Wainwright proudly.

Donald's eyes rested on the speaker. Wainwright wore a shooting-jacket and riding-breeches of excellent cut and of rare material, but now worn threadbare and neatly patched. Donald knew that those rents had been mended by a woman's hands. Wainwright's æsthetic face was impressive. The marks of toil could not hide the delicacy of his thin hands with their long, tapering fingers. The hands of a dreamer or poet, thought Donald, not the hands to wield an axe. A quick admiration for this man's gameness filled his heart. "A good job," he lied, as he surveyed the sagging roof and bulging walls.

"As good an authority as Hillier told me that it was excellent work," stated their host rather boastfully.

"Bless old John's heart!" thought Donald fervently.

It was plain that Connie had anticipated their staying for lunch, as the table was set—with tin plates and cups—for four. She drew a pan of hot rolls from the tiny oven, and, her face a deep red from the heat and her exertions, she sat down to the table, using a canned goods box as a seat. Donald noticed that the two chairs had been given up to the guests, and he arose at once to offer his seat. Andy, not to be outdone in gallantry, successfully prevailed on Connie to make the change.

"Bit shorter ever day," he grinned as he sank to the box. At this Connie lowered her head, her shoulders shaking with merriment.

Wainwright's manner was that of the owner of a baronial estate entertaining guests under the most luxurious surroundings. His cheeks were

flushed, and he seemed filled with a boyish happiness. “It no doubt will seem incomprehensible to you,” he remarked with a smile, “when I say that, with the exception of John Hillier, you are the first white men to break bread with me under this roof. We are quite a distance from the Pemberton trail, and therefore come in contact with but few travellers.”

Little wonder, Donald thought, at their host’s nervous gaiety and the child’s distress. What turn of Fate had caused this scholar to seek a home in so lonely a spot? Misanthropes fled to the wilderness to escape their fellow-men, but their welcome was proof that Wainwright was not of that class. Why, then, had he voluntarily become an anchorite? Was he obsessed by his hobby to such an extent that he had ostracized himself to carry on the study of Nature? Was he a criminal hiding from justice? Donald put the latter thought aside quickly. The Englishman’s delicate features, with wide forehead, clear eyes, and tender, sensitive mouth, were not the features of a man of criminal tendencies. At times, when in repose, Wainwright’s face held a deep and brooding sadness. Some tragedy had entered his life, Donald decided; some great calamity, that had seared his very soul, had driven him to the life of a recluse.

Connie strove to appear at ease, but without success. Hoping to relieve her embarrassment, Donald spoke to her. Although she ventured an upward glance, his voice seemed only to heighten her confusion.

Mr. Wainwright resumed the discussion of the wild flowers of British Columbia. With his head held sidewise, Andy listened intently to the flow of conversation. When their host used Latin words Andy’s face would assume a bewildered expression. With eyebrows raised inquiringly and a humorous smile playing about his lips, he would turn to Connie and slowly shake his head.

This odd little man, with his blithesome manner and the whimsical gleam in his blue eyes, was extremely amusing to Connie, and it was with difficulty that she controlled her mirth.

“I s’y,” observed Andy deferentially, “I’d like to learn about these flowers and things; but, strike me ’andsome, the big words you use, and some of them in the bohunk langwidge, puts more’n ’arf of it over me bloomin’ ’ead.”

Wainwright’s laugh had a pleasant ring. “I’ll do my best to help you, Mr. Pettray. You’ll find books here,” pointing to the shelves, “that will be of greater assistance.”

The keen mountain air made itself felt through the poorly chinked walls of the cabin, and the company moved their chairs nearer to the warmth of

the crackling fire. Donald offered their host a cigar, which was accepted and smoked with evident relish.

"Start me at the beginnin'; put me in the kindergarten, where my size belongs," chuckled Andy.

Wainwright leaned back in the rough chair, puffing luxuriously at his cigar, sending wreaths of fragrant smoke about his head. "I hardly know where to begin," he said meditatively.

The room suddenly grew dark, and they heard the soft sighing of the wind in the branches of the trees nearby. These signs were precursors of one of the mountain showers so common in the coast Range of the Province. A moment later there came the intermittent patter of big raindrops on the roof, gradually increasing until it became a strumming roar that debarred conversation.

Connie lighted a candle, and using the neck of an empty vinegar bottle as a candlestick, she placed it on the table, then took a seat outside the radius of the dim light.

The door opened to admit the Breed. As he entered a rush of sweet rain-washed air, laden with the odour of fragrant buds, filled the room. Shaking a shower of glistening raindrops from his wide sombrero, the Breed hobbled silently on moccasined feet to a seat in the corner.

The pelting rain dwindled to a drizzle, then stopped as abruptly as it had begun.

For an hour Wainwright gave a disquisition of the value of plant life to mankind. Selecting two books from the shelves, he placed them on the table before Andy. "You will find no difficulty in understanding these volumes, as they are written for the novice. You will also find that there is no pursuit more conducive to health and happiness than the study of plants. It keeps one largely in the open air, and promotes pure and helpful thinking. For this reason parents should lead the minds of their children to the study of plant life."

During her father's discourse Connie's eyes scarcely left Donald's face. The Breed from the darkness of the corner noticed her rapt interest in the tall stranger, and his dusky eyes glittered with jealousy. He limped to the doorway, and, as he turned, Donald could not repress a start as he caught the malignant look of hate which shot from the half-breed's glowing eyes.

"Constance, dear, will you play for us?" asked her father.

She moved obediently to her bunk, and from the floor beneath she drew out a much worn violin case.

The mellow radiance from the candle and the ever-changing lights from the open draft of the small stove cast long, wavering shadows within the cabin. From without came the wailing of the wind, the creaking of the trees, and the steady drip of water from the eaves.

As the bow touched the strings Connie forgot her shyness. The violin drifted into a melody as light as a bird singing through the trees, now joyous, anon sobbing in a deep rhythm of eerie sadness. As she played her body swayed, almost imperceptibly, as a blossoming tree sways under a soft spring breeze.

As the last note ascended and faded on the throbbing air, Connie's embarrassment returned. At Donald's words of praise a scarlet flush dyed her cheeks. She returned the instrument to its case, and, with eyes downcast, resumed her seat in the darkened corner. Wainwright's eyes held a look of deep tenderness as he thanked her in a voice that was like a caress.

As they said good-night Donald saw that their host's face was again shrouded in deep melancholy. The light of a waning moon threw ghost-like shadows as they stumbled down the narrow trail through the aromatic woods. Save for the drip of water, a brooding hush hung over the forest. The trail was soft with needles, on which their feet made only a softened beating. In the nave of huge conifers the solemnity of the forest made speech seem almost irreverent.

Near the centre of the tunnel-like trail, where the shadows deepened, Donald stopped short with every sense alert. Without knowing why, he suddenly felt a quick sense of danger. A dark form rose in front of them and slunk into the woods.

"The blinkin' Indian," whispered Andy.

In passing the spot where the Breed had disappeared, Donald had an uncanny feeling that the burning eyes of Connie's devoted guardian were fixed on him and he felt a crinkly chill creep up his spine. It was with a feeling of relief that they emerged from the obscurity of the timber and caught the friendly gleam of light from their cabin window on the lake-shore far below.

CHAPTER X

THE following day their work brought Donald and his companions to the top of the falls near Connie's fairy nest. The melting snows from above had swelled the water until it filled the narrow gorge to the brim.

As Donald viewed the thundering river he was impressed by the potential power in the mighty surge of water that flung itself in a cascade of foam to the rocks below. "Good place for a dam!" he shouted to Gillis, as he pointed to the narrow canyon and then to the slanting walls that formed a natural basin.

That night, while Andy pursued his studies on flowers, Donald covered several sheets of notepaper with drawings and figures. He became so deeply engrossed in his work that he sat up long after the others had gone to bed. At breakfast he placed the result of his night's work near Gillis's plate. "Jack, I believe we could put in an electric mill that would be successful," he said earnestly.

Gillis studied the papers carefully, then passed them to Douglas. "Might be done," he said non-committally. "I don't know nothin' 'bout electricity; do you?"

"I've had a little experience," admitted Donald modestly.

Douglas, who had been poring over the drawings, spoke emphatically. "I'll bet Dad would be interested in this. I've heard him say that all mills would be electrically driven sometime. He's up-to-date—always willing to listen to new ideas."

"But old 'Moss-back' ain't," growled Gillis.

"Who's old 'Moss-back'?"

"One of the office men by name of Renwick. He's one of them narrow-'tween-the-eyes, psalm-singin' old has-beens that sez 'tut tut' every time he hears a logger say 'damn.' His health is poor, so they're goin' to send him up here to take charge of this mill. Thanks be, I'm goin' to have charge in the woods, so I won't have nothin' to do with him."

They discussed the matter during the day, and that evening they again visited the falls. From the trapper Donald learned that the supply of water was unfailing. Owing to the natural formation, the cost of building the dam would be small. Donald's friends became as enthusiastic as himself.

“We’ll be finished to-morrow night, Douglas,” announced Gillis that evening. “If you and Donald want to, you can go to town and put this proposition up to your father.”

The lines of steel were creeping north slowly but surely. As they left the cabin to start for the Coast, the first faint boom of a blast was brought to their ears by the southern breeze. Ten miles south of the lake they came to steel and rode to Squamish in the cab of a locomotive, reaching Vancouver that night.

Douglas informed Donald over the ’phone the next morning that his father would give him a hearing at two o’clock that afternoon.

As Donald thought of the impending meeting he experienced certain inward qualms. He felt that Renwick would oppose him, and wondered if Robert Rennie would consider him conceited and forward in suggesting such a radical innovation.

At the appointed hour Donald and Douglas entered the office of the R. C. & L. Co. Robert Rennie greeted Donald with a friendly smile and motioned to chairs near the desk. “You have some papers with you, I presume,” he said.

Donald placed the rough plans on the desk before him. For five minutes Robert Rennie studied them quietly while Donald fidgeted. Without comment, he leaned back in his chair for a moment, apparently in deep thought. Presently he pressed a button at the side of his desk.

“Send Renwick, Bolton and King here,” he said to the boy who answered the bell.

As the men entered the room Donald had no difficulty in recognizing Renwick from Gillis’s description. Robert Rennie rose to introduce Donald, then spoke in quick, flashing sentences, that went straight to the heart of things, as he spread the plans on the table before them.

As Donald had anticipated, Renwick, after a short scrutiny of the papers, objected strenuously, his chief objection being the initial cost, together with the fact that experience had demonstrated that only small mills had proved a success when electrically driven. Bolton was of the same opinion, but he admitted that if the supply of timber were sufficient to keep the mill in operation for years, the initial cost would be offset by the economy of operation.

King, the company’s chief engineer, vouchsafed no opinion, but sat with Donald’s plans before him, copying the figures in his note-book.

Robert Rennie glanced at Donald expectantly.

Donald spoke of the lessened cost of operation in an electrically-driven mill by the reduction of the number of millwrights, oilers and helpers, the lower insurance rates, the saving on line-shafting, belts and oil, of the advantage in speed over a steam-mill, etc. As he warmed to the subject he came to his feet and leaned over the desk.

"As you gentlemen know, the greatest enemy of the mill-owner is fire. With a steam-mill of the size you are to build, with donkey engines and locomotives operated by steam, you will have a battery of smokestacks that will be an hourly menace during the summer months in the dry air at that altitude. Electrify your mill and donkey engines and you will reduce the fire hazard by seventy-five per cent. I don't ask you to accept my opinion. I advise you to investigate thoroughly before deciding. An electric mill with the enormous power available would be a credit, not only to this company, but to the Province as well."

Robert Rennie's brain functioned with a clear-cut precision. He would listen to the advice of his experts with an attentive ear, and his decision was usually made before the last one had ceased talking.

While Donald was talking Robert Rennie sat forward in his chair with a look of almost strained attention. As Donald finished he swung quickly to his chief engineer. "King, to-morrow you go to Summit Lake. Furnish a full report. If your figures correspond with McLean's we will install an electric plant. Bolton, get quotations at once on electrical equipment. That's all," he finished tersely.

He turned to the two young men as the door closed. "Beginning with the first of next month, McLean, if you so wish, you will act as assistant manager at the Summit Lake Mill. And you," he turned to Douglas, "will occupy a similar position at the Cheakamus plant." He rang for his stenographer, who entered at once.

Donald muttered an embarrassed thanks, and as he passed through the door he heard Robert Rennie's voice in rapid dictation.

They spent the remainder of the afternoon buying supplies from the list which Andy had furnished them. There were numerous delicacies in the items of foodstuffs that brought exclamations of surprise from Douglas. "There is everything here to serve a banquet; even tablecloths and napkins. What is the little beggar up to now, I wonder?" he said laughingly.

"His birthday," explained Donald. "He is going to invite the Wainwrights and John Hillier. And besides," he added, "I think he wants to show the old trapper that he can do a little fancy cooking himself."

Janet Rennie could not interpret the inner urge that prompted her to arise at an early hour the next morning to drive her brother to the wharf. It rather bewildered her—made her ashamed of herself that she could not put Donald from her mind entirely. “Why can’t you forget him?” she asked herself in protest for the thousandth time. As the boat pulled away from the dock she waved an adieu and, with a troubled look in her eyes, swung her car cityward.

For two days after their return to the mountains, their little cabin was a hive of industry. Andy banished his fellow-lodgers to the outdoors at every opportunity while he performed mysterious rites over the small stove. “I’ll show that juggling old pirate what a real meal is like,” he chuckled to himself.

Their guest arrived late in the afternoon and sat outside in the warm sun while Andy busied himself behind the closed door.

Old John’s face shone from the vigorous application of soap and towel. His sole change in attire for the occasion was a clean buckskin coat from the breast pocket of which protruded the corner of a red silk handkerchief.

Connie’s abundant golden hair had been carefully brushed, and hung over her shoulders in glistening, billowy waves that reached to her waist-line. She seated herself a short distance from the party and took no part in the conversation. This was her first social affair and she felt ill at ease. Donald’s repeated attempts to break her reserve were answered in monosyllables.

The door opened to disclose a remarkable figure framed in the entrance. Andy stood before them in the most ridiculous make-up of a butler. An old black coat of Gillis’s, cut off at the sides to form a “claw-hammer,” hung loosely over his narrow shoulders; side-whiskers of tree moss were stuck to his cheeks, and his face was as stolid as a graven image.

“Dinner is now being served in the main dining-’all, me lord,” he intoned slowly.

They applauded Andy’s effort heartily, and as they laughingly entered the cabin a scene met their eyes that was remarkably incongruous amid such drab surroundings.

A snow-white cloth covered the rough board table. A huge turkey, with bulging breast browned to a crispness, graced the centre of the board. Oysters in the shell, celery, salads, several kinds of vegetables, pies, cookies and fancy cheeses were in tempting abundance; and in a place of honour

near the turkey reposed Andy's birthday cake, its frosted surface covered with tiny candles.

Connie's blue eyes opened wide with wonder. "Oh, Dad!" she cried joyously, "it's just like stories, isn't it?"

John tossed his hat to the floor in the corner. "You can deliver the goods, ol' timer, sure enough," he commended in a tone of respect.

It was an odd party that gathered in the log hut in the wilderness to celebrate Andy's birthday—a wilderness whose silence was soon to be broken by the crash of trees and the clang of steel. A late blast, so near that the cabin trembled, caused the old trapper to shiver slightly.

"Trains will soon be running through your backyard, John," observed Douglas.

The old man shook his head sadly. "Yes," he concurred, "an' I'll hev' to be hittin' the trail agin before long."

Andy's banquet proceeded merrily, and when the last course was finished Donald took a bundle from the shelf and placed it in Connie's hands. "Something I brought from town for you," he smiled.

Connie's colour heightened. "For me?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes, some reading matter."

"Thank you," she murmured softly, as her quick fingers unwrapped the package. She cried aloud with delight as half a dozen novels and as many magazines were disclosed to view.

"And here, Andy, is a present for you," said Donald as he dragged a box from the corner; "something to assist in passing away the time pleasantly."

Andy's joy knew no bounds when, opening the box, a superb Victrola was disclosed to view.

Suddenly the sweet strains of a full orchestra playing the "Barcarolle" filled the room. Connie was enraptured. She stood with bowed head and closed eyes, her hands pressed to her throbbing breast, as the music stirred her emotional soul to its depths. She sighed deeply and her cheeks were wet with tears as she moved to the machine when the music ceased.

They all sang the chorus to the "Old Oaken Bucket," "Suwannee River" and "Annie Laurie." Connie's embarrassment had vanished and her clear voice rang in sweet harmony with the deeper tones of the men.

At the conclusion of "Home Sweet Home," old John Hillier blew his nose vigorously and surreptitiously dabbed the big red handkerchief to his eyes.

The words of “A Dream,” sung in an impassioned tenor voice, came with surprising distinctness:

> “I dreamed thou wert living, my darling, my darling,
> I dreamed that I pressed thee once more to my breast.
> Thy soft perfumed tresses and gentle caresses
> Thrilled me and stilled me and lulled me to rest.”

Donald saw that Wainwright was deeply moved. His throat was working convulsively, and he seemed to have difficulty in lighting his pipe. His shaking hands were cupped over his pipe-bowl in an attempt to hide his emotion. His face was pale and tears brimmed his clear grey eyes.

“Come on, John, let’s ’it up a jig!” cried Andy as he capered across the room and pulled the trapper to his feet. To the lilt of the “Irish Washerwoman” the odd pair smacked the floor with their feet, whirled in giddy circles, and whooped like wild men. They linked arms and spun like a top until John’s moccasined foot trod on Andy’s long coat and brought them to the floor in a heap.

The comedy helped Wainwright to regain his composure, and sent Connie into screams of happy laughter.

“I’ve had a most wonderful evening, Andy,” said Connie gratefully as they were leaving. “The most wonderful in my life,” she added softly.

“By the way, Mr. Pettray,” spoke Mr. Wainwright from the doorway, “how are you progressing with your studies?”

“Not ’arf bad,” answered Andy. “I ’ave learned about the sepals, calyx, corolla, pistil, filament, anther, pollen, style and stigma.” As he rattled off these words he glanced at Gillis and Douglas. He had been longing for this chance to air his newly-acquired knowledge.

“Fine,” complimented Wainwright smilingly. “You are having no difficulty, then?”

Andy wrinkled his brows. “I ’ave found it a bit difficult,” he began importantly; “just a bit, you know, to classify the flowers as to whether they are oxillary, confulate, peduncular, polyandrous, gynandrous, zygomorphic ____”

“Holy mackerel!” roared Gillis, as he clapped his hands over his ears. “Stop him, somebody!”

Douglas caught Andy by the coat-tail and dragged him from the door. Connie’s cheerful laughter drifted back to them through the darkness.

The Breed crossed the outer edge of light thrown from the doorway and limped to the trail. Wherever Connie went her argus-eyed guardian flitted in the background.

CHAPTER XI

In the construction of the railroad to Summit Lake the speed and efficiency of the R. C. & L. Co's organization excelled any past effort.

The land-clearing outfit arrived the evening after Andy's party and began work on that portion of the right-of-way that skirted the west shore of the lake. Like a swath of destruction, the ground became covered with the litter and wreckage of blasted trees—noble trees that had stood for centuries like silent sentinels guarding the limpid blue lake lapping gently at their feet.

For two days Connie had been no nearer than the bluff. Seated astride her horse, she now gazed in startled awe on the invasion of her loved valley. On the third day, drawn by a horrible fascination, she ventured timidly into the valley and watched with wide eyes the advance of the pygmy army, who, with such tiny tools as the axe and saw, crashed to earth mammoth trees that seemed as enduring as the mountains on which they stood.

The steam-shovel roared and crashed in the distance as it ploughed deep gashes in the green hillside, men shouted, heavy wagons banged over the rough road, and fearful blasts shook the air. Through all this tumult the men worked in a frenzy of haste.

A giant fir—a veritable king of the forest, towering in regal glory high above its mates—stood near the water's edge. Around the massive bole of this tree Connie had played since her earliest recollection. She had endowed this half-god with a living personality, to whom she had confided all her childish fancies and aspirations. The corrugated bark bore numerous bits of nursery rhymes, and her name was etched deep with a sharp knife in several places. With a lump in her throat she saw the "fallers" move to the foot of this great tree and gaze aloft with appraising eyes. Then sinewy arms sent shining axes through the thick bark to form the "scarf," which to Connie appeared as a gaping white wound on the dark grey trunk.

As the cross-cut saw with its rasping clang ate its way slowly through the tough fibre of the great titan, Connie made inarticulate sounds in her throat and for a moment covered her eyes. As the wedge was applied, a great shudder passed through the tree. Connie held her breath. The tower of dark branches at the top nodded as if in fond farewell. There was a pause, then with a rending and tearing crash it fell to earth with a thunder of sound that filled the valley with a wild tumult of echoes. A whistle blew shrilly, and the men picked up their coats and walked toward their camp.

For a short space Connie stood motionless. Then, with a last long look at the fallen monarch, she sighed deeply and turned to the trail.

That night at dusk she came again. Donald came upon her as she crouched, a forlorn figure, by the prostrate tree. Pointing to her fallen friend, whose top was torn and splintered, she told Donald in halting sentences of the day's disaster. As he noted the grave face and trembling lips, he wondered at the depth of feeling in one so young. His soft words of sympathy brought unseen tears to her eyes, and she dared not trust her voice in answer. He spoke to her cheerily on other subjects, but could not shake her melancholy mood.

Even the night calm was ravaged by the thunder of blasts. A lurid wall of flame shot high in the air as a rocky portion of the shoreline was rent asunder, and huge boulders plunged into the calm lake, sending up pyramids of water to break in noisy waves on the shore.

Donald enjoyed the unusual experience of witnessing the construction of a railroad, but he understood now why the old trapper had wagged his grey head sadly when he heard the clamour of striving men and machinery creeping up from the south.

The night work had ceased, and a welcome silence settled over the shattered forest. Lambent stars sparkled and twinkled in the high, clear air, with colours that changed from orange to blue and back again. The eastern sky brightened, the glow gradually spread through the heavens, then the moon came slowly over the towering snow-peaks, flooding the valley with light. The fallen tree took on a ghost-like appearance in the moon's radiance.

Then an uncanny thing happened. Suddenly from a clear sky, without a moment's warning, a dark and ominous cloud obscured the moon's light. Connie came quickly to her feet and gazed with startled eyes at this strange phenomenon. The air took on a sudden chill. A quick, strong wind swept up the hill. From the swaying tree-tops there came a moaning like a wailing requiem for the dead—so much like the human voice that Donald shivered.

To Donald the darkening moon and the sighing trees were a coincidence, but to this child of nature, who had been reared in loneliness where rivers roared and mountains loomed, and who understood so intimately the wild things of the forest, it was a manifestation of sorrow by the God of Nature. With her breast heaving tumultuously, she leaned against the mammoth tree and pressed her cheek to its rough bark. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" she whispered brokenly.

As if in answer to her words of compassion, the veil suddenly lifted from the moon and the wind ceased. Donald shook himself. "Rather weird," he

said, with a quick, nervous laugh. He turned to find that he was alone.

Events moved swiftly that week.

King's report was favourable to Donald's plan, and word came that electrical equipment for the Summit Mill had been ordered.

At Donald's invitation Connie came to the station to witness the arrival of the first train. As the awesome black monster, with whistle screaming and bell clanging, roared through the rock cut at the south end of the lake and bore down upon them, Connie gasped in wonder. As the train came to a hissing stop she shrank against the walls of the building, a startled look in her eyes. She flushed at the men's hearty laughter.

The train was loaded with working-men, who with their bundles of blankets overflowed the small platform. A kitchen-car and a sleeping-car were shunted to the side-track which would be their home until the erection of the big dining-hall.

Donald was given charge of constructing the dam, Gillis started the lumbering operations, while Douglas moved to the Cheakamus Mill. Andy was to be boss of the kitchen staff, and was kept busy overseeing the work of interior construction.

A portable mill was fast at work turning out timbers for the big plant, and carpenters and millwrights worked night and day. An American expert came with the machinery to superintend the installation.

With the new task set for him there descended on Donald a deep sense of responsibility. Unlike the others, he worked no regular hours. A feeling of gratitude toward Robert Rennie for the confidence displayed in him kept him at top speed; his energy and resource seemed inexhaustible. From the time his alarm clock—that harsh, brutal little destroyer of sleep—shrilled its call at daylight until darkness filled the valley, he stuck to his task.

One week earlier than the time allotted he reported the dam as finished.

Robert Rennie came with Renwick and King for a short trip of inspection, and as he was leaving he spoke a kindly word in commendation of Donald's work.

The Summit Mill was to be modern in every respect, lighted with electricity and provided with modern plumbing and hot shower-baths. The white steel beds of the dormitory were clothed in clean white sheets and

pillow-cases. There was no analogy in this perfection to the ordinary logging-camp.

For hours Donald followed the expert through the mill, while the latter explained and tested the different motors.

Once a week Robert Rennie came to the mill, taking a keen interest in all phases of its construction, and invariably he went away with a pleased smile on his face.

"Never saw the old man so worked up," commented Gillis. "Guess he'd like to come up here and run her himself."

Renwick was still sceptical. For no apparent reason he had taken a dislike to Donald. "It's just 'cause you and I are such good friends," explained Gillis. "Me and him get on like a couple of strange bull-dogs."

When the huge three-storied mill, with its dry kiln, lumber skids, conveyor shed and railroad spurs, was ready for operation, and each machine had been tested, Robert Rennie arrived with other officials of the Company. Next morning Donald's heart thumped as the mill's big whistle sent out its first call to work and the men filed eagerly to their posts.

The logs were sprayed with huge water-jets as they came up the chain-haul to clean them of gravel and débris. The electric "nigger" spun them about and threw them into place with a thud that shook the mill. Then in a wild crescendo of sound there rose the harsh chorus of saws: the singing howl of the cut-off, the strident, slurring sound of the gang-saws, and the staccato snarl of the trimmer.

Smiling and rubbing his hands, Robert Rennie walked through the mill. "Running like a greased pig," shouted Gillis above the clamour. The owner of the R. C. & L. Co. so far forgot his decorum as to slap the astonished Gillis heartily on the back.

Donald noticed an ever-increasing irritability on the part of the logging foreman during the next week. The ertswhile jocular Gillis became sulky and morose. Donald got an inkling as to the cause of his friend's gloom when he heard Gillis in conversation with Andy.

"What the 'ell's the matter, you big lunkus? You're like a bear with a sore foot," complained Andy.

"If my gang don't get here pretty soon, and I have to put up with this crowd of bohunks much longer, I won't be fit to live with," growled Gillis.

Gillis's gang of "redshirts" were known the length and breadth of British Columbia. Employers bid high for their services, but for many years they had stuck loyally with Gillis and the R. C. & L. Co. At present they were

employed by the Company in one of their camps up the coast, but, at Gillis's earnest request, Robert Rennie had promised to send them to Summit Lake.

Gillis's "redshirts" had the well-earned reputation of being the wildest crew of lumber-jacks west of the Rockies. "They're wild, all right," Gillis had admitted; "a swearin', drinkin', fightin' gang of roughnecks. But holy mackerel! How them boys can log!"

That night Gillis confided his troubles to Donald. "I don't know what in tarnation's to become of loggin' in years to come if things keep on as they are now," he began in a despondent tone. "It used to be that when you sent down town for loggers you got loggers. But now," with a gesture of disgust, "you git a lot of silk-stockin'd, mandolin-playin', gum-chewin', smooth-haired guys, or else a bunch of snuff-chewin', garlic-smellin', macaroni-eatin' bohunks, whose names sound like a war in Central Europe."

Sighing reminiscently, he continued: "I often wonder if it's because I'm gittin' old; but, you know, when I look back on the days, when we logged with bull teams, it seems to me that the men at that time *liked* to work. I can still see the old timers in their whiskers, and their big black hats and flannel shirts, as they sailed out on the old *Comox* or the *Cassiar*." He shook his head sadly. "Ah! there was only one kind of logger in them days."

Seeing that Donald was interested, he went on: "Yes, there's two kinds of loggers nowadays, Donnie, the 'single-breasted' and the 'double-breasted.' And there's a hell of a lot of difference between the two. The 'single-breasted' logger is a man that don't speak anythin' but English, an' he don't belong to the 'I won't works' neither. He knows loggin' from A to Z; don't mind sleepin' in a bunk, and always carries his own blankets. If he borrows a ten-spot off you, as soon as he earns it he comes lookin' for you, slips you the money, grabs you by the hand, and lookin' you straight in the eye, says: 'Thanks, friend, come and have a drink.' At night, when he is through work, he'll smoke his pipe, grind his axe, talk about the next day's work with the boss, read the paper and go to bed. In the mornin' he'll swallow a big load of prunes and ham and eggs and go to work a-singin'.

"But this 'double-breaster'," he snorted disgustedly, "he's a mixture of a taxi-driver, bartender and soap-box orator, and just because he lives in B.C., he thinks he is a logger. He knows the difference between a fallin' saw and a bucket's saw, and that just about lets him out. If he borrows a dollar off you, the minute the bill slips out of your hand you can see a look in his eye that says, 'You're hooked.' And the devil of it is that he won't cross to the other side of the street when he sees you comin', but he'll walk right up to you a-smilin' and ask you for another buck.

"When he gets through at night he cleans his finger-nails and picks on a mandolin while he tells how many Janes is stuck on him in Vancouver; gives an opinion that the shower-bath was not hot enough, and how we sufferin' workers should rise against the capitalists. He'll kick at the breakfast table because there is only oranges and no grape-fruit. When he goes in the woods he'll throw a few tools away so's to help the cause of the workers.

"Workers!" he exploded, as he came to his feet and walked the floor, "we've got too many 'double-breasteds' and 'hunks' in this camp right now, Donnie. A hunk will work if you show him a pick and shovel, but these other guys are trouble-breeders. Did you see that big brute that came in to-day?"

Donald remembered seeing an enormous man with narrow, piggish eyes, in the crowd of men sent by the employment agency.

"That's ol' Hand. He's a bad egg. I s'pose I'd ought to fire him, but he's a good logger, and they are mighty scarce 'round these diggin's." He yawned sleepily. "Got to fix a 'spar-tree' for a 'high-lead' to-morrow, so I better hit the hay."

Preparing the "spar-tree" for "high-lead," or "sky-line" rigging, is the most spectacular and thrilling performance in the logging industry. A standing tree is trimmed of top and branches, then strengthened with guys. With the pull coming from this altitude, the advantage over the straight ground pull is enormous as logs are lifted high in air over all impedimenta. The men who do this hazardous work are known as "high-riggers."

Next morning, a man with a short-handled axe, wearing a wide belt to pass around the treetrunk, and a pair of lineman's spurs, slowly climbed a big fir. As he ascended he trimmed the trunk clear of limbs. Quite a crowd gathered, among them the trapper, with his rifle on his arm.

"I ain't got a 'high-rigger' in the outfit," growled Gillis. "This feller agreed to trim her, but he says he never chopped the top off one, so I guess we'll dynamite her."

The explosive, with a detonating cap, was tied around the top of the tree and wires strung to the ground. For some reason the batteries would not act, and Gillis chafed under the delay.

"I kin set her off for ye," said the old trapper.

Gillis turned to him. "How?"

The trapper tapped his gun. "Put a piece of paper on the cap so' I kin see her and I'll pop it."

"That's a new one on me," laughed Gillis.

He sent the man aloft to place a square piece of pasteboard on the cap. The men moved back from the foot of the tree, and Gillis gave the signal that all was clear. The old man sprang briskly to the top of a stump, tipped his big hat to the back of his head, and raised his rifle slowly. For an instant the long barrel wavered slightly, then steadied. The report of the rifle was drowned by a splintering crash. The heavily-branched top lifted, then came hurtling through the air to strike the ground a mass of wreckage. For a moment the big spar swayed drunkenly from the shock, then stood stark and rigid. Deprived of its fronds of green, it appeared a ghastly relic of its former self.

That afternoon, as they waited the arrival of the train, Gillis talked again of his "redshirts." "White men, every one of them," he declared proudly, "and every one of them with a nickname that is known all over the Coast. Ye just ought to see my two 'high-riggers,' 'Hoop-la' McKenzie and 'Blackie' Anderson. 'Blackie' is as black as an Indian, and 'Hoop-la' got his name from standing on the top of a spar-tree, after he cuts her off, wavin' his hat and yellin' 'Hoop-la'.

"I got five Jack McDonalds in the gang. Their names are 'Sly' Jack, 'Fightin' Jack, 'Check-Book' Jack, 'Johnnie-On-The-Spot,' and 'Crazy' Jack. An' if they had all bin named 'Crazy' Jack it wouldn't bin no mistake," he finished with a laugh.

The train rumbled to the station and the usual crowd of workers came pouring from the cars, while a crowd stood waiting to board the train. It was the same every day—men coming and men going.

Gillis uttered the glad cry, "Here they are!"

A big, ostentatious man, with broad shoulders and narrow hips, stepped to the platform. His dress was truly colourful and striking—wide hat, high boots, a vivid scarlet shirt, with a cloth belt of the same bright hue tied at the side, the ends dangling loosely.

"Get out of the way, hunkies, and make room for a logger!" he roared, as he elbowed his way through a crowd of scattering foreigners behind him, a line of men clad in the same brilliant attire.

"Hello, Hoop-la! you ornery ol' skate!" bellowed Gillis.

The big man turned. "Here he is fellers!" he shouted.

In a moment Gillis was surrounded by this picturesque crew, howling tumultuous greetings.

"Hello, ol' hoss!"

"Hello, you son-of-a-gun!"

"How the hell are ye?"

Donald was subjected to crushing hand-clasps as he was introduced to each and every one of this crowd of husky loggers.

As Donald studied them he did not wonder at Gillis's pride in these men. With the exception of Blackie, there was none under six feet in height, and they carried themselves with a loose swing that was almost a swagger. Many of them were well past middle age, some quite grey about the temples. They were all filled with the sparkling health of the great outdoors, their skins the colour of mahogany.

"Where's the bunk-house?" asked Blackie.

"We don't call them bunk-houses any more, we have dormitories," corrected Gillis as he nudged Donald slyly.

"A what?" questioned the puzzled Blackie.

"Dormitories," repeated Gillis.

Blackie glowered at his boss. "What are you runnin', a ladies' seminary?" he questioned sarcastically.

"And another thing, you don't need your blankets. Company furnishes 'em," informed Gillis.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing right now," declared 'Crazy' Jack, "I ain't goin' to sleep in a pair of blankets that forty smelly bohunks has wrapped themselves in. What kind of a joint you brought us to, Jack?"

"What I want to tell you fellers," said Gillis, ignoring 'Crazy' Jack's remarks, "is this: I want you to stay all summer. None of this running to town to get your teeth fixed, or a new suit, see the ball game, or to meet your sister who's comin' out from the East, and all that old bunk. We got more orders——"

"Can that chatter," interrupted 'Fighting' Jack with a wide grin. "We're all goin' to town on Dominion Day, ain't we, boys?"

"You bet!" they roared as one.

Gillis shrugged his shoulders resignedly. "Thought you fellers was gettin' old enough to have a little sense," he said.

"Too much kick in us yet, Jack," demurred Blackie.

"Where is this door-mee-tory, Jack?" asked Hoop-la.

Gillis pointed to the long building, and the boisterous crowd moved noisily up the hill. The men dropped their packs to the ground outside the door, and, shouldering each other, peered in. The long rows of white beds

stood immaculate against the walls, and two white-coated flunkeys were sweeping the glossy varnished floor.

"This ain't the right place," growled Hoop-la, "this is the hospital. They must expect to kill about a hundred men every day. Hi! Jack! Come here. Where's the bunk-room?" he asked as Gillis approached.

"That's it."

"That!"

"Sure."

"Say! what you givin' us? I wouldn't dare sit down on one of them beds; 'fraid of dirty'n it."

The others gathered round.

"Jack, can we put up a log shack for ourselves?" asked Blackie.

"You sure can," responded Gillis tolerantly.

"All right, we'll sleep in this morgue 'till we get a decent place," said Blackie.

He poked his head in the door just as Andy, clad in white coat, entered by the rear.

"Say, nurse," shouted Blackie, "get ready for twenty-two cases of delirium tremens!"

"That's easy," was Andy's quick retort; "I've 'ad more than that by myself." His eyebrows lifted in quick surprise as he saw the brilliant shirts.

"When does the blinkin' circus start?" he grinned.

That evening in their explorations Blackie and Hoop-la found the log shack on the lake-shore.

"Say, Jack, can me and Hoop-la have that cabin down there?"

"You bet you can, Blackie. You and Hoop-la can have anythin' round here," replied Gillis heartily.

Blackie had turned to go, but on hearing this broad statement he stopped quickly. "Say, Jack, me and Hoop-la came away from Vancouver owin' a little money—an' I promised to send——"

"Ye've got me when the gittin' is good," interrupted Gillis. "How much do you want?"

"Let me see," reflected Blackie, "I owe for my room in town; and I owe at Old Joe's, and—and——"

"How much? Spit it out, I can stand the shock," commanded Gillis.

“ ’Bout a hundred, Jack.”

“Whew!” whistled Gillis as he reached for his purse.

With Donald’s assistance the hundred dollars was found and Blackie ran joyously down the hill.

“Little devil!” smiled Gillis as he gazed after him. “Good-hearted a feller as ever lived,” he added feelingly, “but he can’t take one drink without goin’ crazy.”

The “redshirts” had been up in the woods looking over the logging operations, and they now came swinging down the hill, their bright shirts flashing in the sun. They were loggers, “every inch of them,” as Gillis had said.

CHAPTER XII

ANDY'S study of nature proved to be no idle whim, and Gillis had long since ceased teasing him. All his leisure moments were spent in scouring the hills and meadows for specimens, and regularly every Sunday afternoon he ascended the hill to Wainwright's cabin with his collection for the learned Englishman's inspection.

On this afternoon, Wainwright, being in one of his solitary moods, had wandered up the mountain, and Andy found Connie busily engaged in spading the earth in search of worms, which she tossed to the swarm of birds that hopped on the ground and filled the air about her.

Scolding the bold camp-robbers that ventured dangerously near the shovel blade, she scattered the soil, then laughed joyously as the birds with a great flutter of wings pounced on the fat worms.

Andy threw himself luxuriously on the green sward. This beautiful spot was a diversion from the hot kitchen, a veritable haven of rest. The gentle murmur of the bees among the flowers, the soft, subdued twittering of the birds, the rustle of the leaves, and the laughing of the water, all combined to make one sweet monotone of sound that lulled him into drowsiness.

Connie sat down near him, the birds all about her.

" 'Ow do you get them so tame, Connie?"

"They know that I love them," she replied simply.

"I can't get anything but the camp-robbers to come near me," said Andy.

"It takes time and patience, Andy. As soon as the birds are assured that you mean them no harm, they are eager to be your friends. You'll remember, Dad told you that without plants man could not live," she went on. "It is equally true that if all the birds should perish, man would soon follow. And, still more wonderful, if we had no insects man could not survive."

Andy came to a sitting posture. "Do you mean to s'y that we would die if we 'ad no insects?" he asked incredulously.

"Surely, Andy, you haven't forgotten what Dad told you last Sunday about the insects carrying the pollen from flower to flower," reproved Connie.

"I 'ave it now!" cried Andy, after a few moments of reflection. "If we 'ad no insects to carry the pollen the plants couldn't live. And if the birds

were all gone ther'd be so many insects that they'd eat up every blinkin' thing the farmers raised, and we'd starve to death."

Connie nodded.

"Strike me 'andsome if it ain't wonderful!" said Andy in an awed voice.

Connie explained very simply to Andy the benefits derived by mankind from the various birds. Her discourse proved so interesting to him that he paid little heed to the time until the sun, disappearing behind the trees, warned him that it was time to return to his duties. Regretfully he arose and turned to the trail, Connie walking by his side. A goldfinch, rich in his summer plumage of bright yellow, black and white, hung swaying like a dainty sprite on a slender stem near the path. From its bulging little throat came a rippling, bubbling song like a miniature torrent of ecstasy.

"Dear, dear, dearie," he called sweetly.

"Oh, you darling!" cried Connie as she clasped her hands in rapture. "I've been trying to find their nest for several days, Andy, but the little dears have hidden it too well."

She made soft clucking sounds as she moved nearer to the beautiful bird. The goldfinch fluttered close to her side to perch like a yellow flower on the top of a tall thistle, perked its pretty head and looked up at her with bright shining eyes.

"Dear, dear, dearie," it sang again, then flew with characteristic wavy motion to a clump of willows, twittering sweetly as if calling Connie to follow.

"I 'ave to 'urry 'ome," said Andy as he looked at his watch. He glanced back at a turn in the trail to see Connie pressing the willows gently aside in her search for the goldfinch's nest.

"Strike me pink! but she is a wonderful girl," soliloquized Andy. "The 'andsomest and the brainiest kid I ever saw in me life. If I was thirty years younger, two feet 'igher, and 'arf decent to look at, I'd fall 'ead over 'eels in love with 'er."

He smiled broadly at these ridiculous reflections, but there was a tender light in his bright blue eyes. A swarthy foreign labourer, moving aimlessly up the trail, merely grunted in reply to Andy's cheerful salutation.

"One of Gillis's beloved bohunks," chuckled Andy.

A moment later he stopped suddenly. Connie was up there alone. For a short interval he hesitated, then resumed his downward journey. "She'd shoot 'is blinkin' 'ead off if 'e tried to 'arm 'er," he decided.

Just then he heard Connie's voice raised in a quick cry of anger. Andy jumped as though subjected to a galvanic shock. He turned in mid-air and before he struck the ground his short legs were going through the motion of running. The picture of Connie struggling in the arms of the burly foreigner made him fairly fly.

"I'm coming, Connie!" he shouted as he tore up the hill.

Donald and Gillis, sitting near the bluff enjoying a smoke came to their feet as they heard a faint shout from above. For an interval they listened intently, but hearing no further sound they resumed their seats. Andy slackened his pace as he came to the clearing and saw that Connie was unharmed. She was standing near the labourer with her head bowed over an object held in her hand.

"What's wrong, Connie?" panted Andy.

"Andy, look!" she choked, "it's the mother bird. I had just found her nest —here it is." She parted the bushes to disclose a compact, cosy, cup-like structure of fine grass and moss placed in a crotch of the tree. In the centre lay four downy fledglings whose tiny mouths gaped wide to receive the expected bit of food from the mother's bill. "Oh, Andy, if she dies the little ones won't live," said Connie in a voice filled with pity.

Andy took the wounded bird from her hand. " 'Ow did it 'appen, Connie?" he asked tenderly.

Connie was as open and unaffected as the wild birds of the forest. She was as capable of hating as she was of loving. Her eyes were laughing eyes, and the soul that looked out of them a merry soul, but she had a temper, and under sufficient provocation her blue eyes could take on a dangerous glow.

She now turned like an enraged lioness on the foreigner. "He killed it with a stick!" she cried furiously. "You brute, you cowardly brute. . . ." In her rage her voice became incoherent. With hands clenched and with breath coming in short gasps, she moved nearer to the object of her hatred. In her hysterical anger her voice rose almost to a scream.

"You cur, if I were a man I'd—I'd lick you!"

The cry came to Donald's ears, and he was off up the trail like a deer.

"Something wrong, Jack!" he shouted.

"Go ahead, I'll follow," responded Gillis.

Andy looked down on the mother goldfinch as it lay in his hand. He felt the quick throbbing of its heart grow fainter and fainter. One wing was broken and its white breast was stained with blood. The bird's head drooped

lower, and a film settled over its bright eyes. The beautiful wings stretched rigidly, and it gasped convulsively, sending a tiny stain of crimson from its mouth that felt warm on his palm.

Andy's face became colourless. His hand shook violently as he placed the dead bird tenderly on the ground. "Connie dear," he said, in a voice that trembled, "I ain't a whole man, but 'ere's where you see 'arf a man goin' into battle to give all he's got."

He removed his coat and threw it from him. Through a rage-mist Andy saw the grinning foreigner throw up his arms in an absurdly unscientific posture of defence. Like a mad cat, Andy launched himself straight at his husky opponent. The grin was wiped from the big man's face by Andy's compact fist, as it smacked resonantly on the end of his thick nose with a snap like that of a whip, and with a skilled force that brought blood.

Andy's years of training boxers now stood him in good stead. He well knew that a small man would stand little chance in long range fighting, and he kept well inside the larger man's wild swings. With his blond head tucked against his adversary's body, his fists worked like pistons; he kept sending short jolts to the body that brought heavy grunts every time they landed.

Connie was delirious with excitement.

"Hit him, Andy! Hit him! Good! Good!"

And then she groaned as the big man's hand found Andy's throat and flung him to the ground. Little Andy was up immediately, but stepped into a swinging fist that caught him over the eye and sent him sprawling. Undaunted, he came to his feet, waited warily for an opening, and again sprang under the big man's guard.

Andy's fist shot up in a ripping upper-cut that was judged to a nicety, catching his opponent on the point of his chin with force enough to send him rocking on his heels, and before he could recover himself the same fist, accompanied by its mate, beat a tattoo on his solar plexus.

In desperation the bewildered man wound his arms about the little Australian and lifted him high in air. Like a game bulldog Andy hung on. Though his feet were off the ground, he clung to the big man's body like a leech.

Again the big hands felt for Andy's throat, and he was flung six feet to strike with a thump that shook every bone in his body. Connie cried out in fear as he narrowly avoided a brutal blow aimed at his head.

Andy's sense of British fair play had received a rude shock. "As Methusalem said," he panted, as he came to his feet, "when in Bohunkia do

as the Bohunks do."

"Take that, Spaghetti!" he shouted, as he kicked the foreigner viciously on the shin. While the latter leaned over in pain, Andy shot a well-directed upper-cut to his face. The big man sat down, a dazed look in his eyes.

Breathless, Donald arrived on the scene, with Gillis puffing in the rear.

Breathing heavily, Andy's adversary came to his feet, picked up his hat, and with arms wound about his head beat a hasty retreat. Andy was after him like a hornet, sending stinging blows through his vulnerable guard. Donald and Gillis stood with mouths agape to see Andy administering a sound thrashing to a man twice his size. Right to the edge of the woods he relentlessly pursued his fleeing enemy.

Andy's head was held at its usual cocky angle, and he assumed a swagger as he retraced his steps, but his short legs wobbled and he sank dizzily to a stump.

"I brought 'is blinkin' meat-'ouse down, Connie," he gasped.

"Oh, Andy, you're a darling!" she cried, throwing her arms impulsively around the little man's neck, and touching her lips to his cheek.

Andy's florid face took on a deeper magenta, and he blinked hard to hide certain signs of emotion. He afterwards admitted to Donald that he was no "sweet sixteen," and that it was the first time that he had ever been kissed in his "bloomin' " life.

Connie wet her handkerchief in the cold water of the creek and bathed his face with tender care.

She showed Donald and Gillis the nest with the motherless birds, doomed to die a premature death by this act of wanton cruelty, and pointed to the tiny bird on the ground, for whose untimely end Andy had taken a well deserved and summary vengeance. Connie choked as the lovely male bird flew to a stalk of goldenrod near its dead mate and sent out its throaty warble.

"Dear, dear, dearie," sang the goldfinch in a plaintive, questioning note.

Andy presented a pitiful figure with an eye closed, his lips swollen, and his face bruised, but the indomitable spirit of him shone from his one bright orb.

"You darned little buzz-saw!" said Gillis tenderly.

Donald slapped his little friend on the back, his eyes shining with admiration.

CHAPTER XIII

RENWICK announced that Robert Rennie's daughter and a party of girl friends were to visit Summit Lake the following week, and carpenters were set to work erecting cottages for their accommodation.

A few days before her arrival Donald was both surprised and pleased to receive a cordial letter from her in which she said that she was looking forward with pleasure to the coming holiday, and that she would deeply appreciate anything he might do for the entertainment of her friends.

As always, her father spared no expense in providing for the comfort and pleasure of his daughter. That week a car containing a motor-boat, canoes and six saddle-horses was run in on a side-track at the mill.

Connie learned of the coming event through Donald as she was watching with keen interest the unloading of the spirited animals.

"You will enjoy yourself next week, Connie," he said gaily. "Miss Rennie is coming with friends. We'll have rides, picnics and dancing."

A few minutes later Connie joined Andy, who sat on the steps of the kitchen door enjoying a breath of fresh air.

"Is Miss Rennie rich, Andy?"

"An 'ole barrel o' dough."

"Is—is she beautiful?"

"I've 'eard so, Connie."

A short pause ensued while she searched the pockets of her overalls and produced several neatly folded papers. She extracted one, pressed it smooth, then passed it to Andy.

"Does Miss Rennie dress like that?"

It was a photograph of an actress dressed for the street, taken from one of the magazines that Donald had given her.

"I think so, Connie."

"Oh! She must be wonderful, then!" said Connie earnestly.

She moved closer to Andy, unfolded another page, and spread it on her knee.

Andy bent his blond head close to the one of gold. A startled look crossed his features and his brows bobbed up and down. It was a full-page

advertisement of ladies' lingerie. The highly coloured illustration of a lady, partially dressed, achieved its object of arresting the eye, while the remainder of the space was occupied by articles of apparel similar to those adorning the lady's graceful form.

Andy coughed. "Er—yes, Connie."

Connie raised her eyebrows incredulously.

"All at one time?"

"Sure—sure," mumbled Andy.

Connie stared. "Why, there must be nearly a dozen pieces. How is this fastened?" she questioned as she pointed with a slender brown finger to one of the engravings.

Andy took a quick glance. "Buttons."

"And this?"

"Buttons," replied Andy, gripping the bowl of his pipe and sending out clouds of smoke.

"And this?"

"Strike me blind, what a 'ell of an 'ole," thought Andy.

"Buttons," he responded desperately without looking at the paper.

Connie raised her head. "Oh no, I don't think so, Andy; that must slip on," she objected.

Andy made a pretence of studying the article in question.

"Yes, yes, sure! That's right! that's right!" he conceded quickly.

Andy's pipe was now sending out billows of acrid smoke. Connie coughed and moved beyond the smoke screen. Much to Andy's relief, she sat for a moment silently studying the advertisement. When she raised her golden head there was a look of wistful yearning in her blue eyes.

"Oh, Andy," she said dreamily, "it must be lovely to feel those soft silky things next your skin."

"I'm—I'm sorry, Connie," stuttered Andy, "but I 'ave a roast in the oven —I——"

"Just a minute, Andy," she pleaded, "there is something else I want to ask you." She sorted the papers for a moment.

"God 'elp me, what will it be now?" thought Andy, as he braced himself for the next question.

"Andy, what is a camisole?"

A look of profound relief crossed the little Australian's face.

"A camisole," he explained with an air of wisdom, "is a fish. It's a——"

He was interrupted by Connie's peal of laughter. "Oh, Andy," she cried, "you're a funny man!" She turned and ran laughing down the hill.

"Strike me lucky!" exclaimed Andy as he mopped his brow. "It's enough to make a blighter's 'eart bleed. The poor motherless kid comin' to a bloke like me to ask such questions."

He watched Connie as she slowly ascended the trail, still studying the magazine pages.

"But 'ow the 'ell can I 'elp 'er?"

He pondered deeply for a moment, but, seemingly unable to answer the question, shook his head sadly and turned to his duties.

Fortunately for Janet's peace of mind, none of her friends had recognized in the photograph of the new champion of Canada the handsome young man they had met at her home. They were puzzled by her decision to spend a holiday in the wilds until she casually mentioned that Mr. McLean was arranging for their entertainment, and she accepted with a smile the sly teasing that followed.

The party arrived by special train a day earlier than originally planned, and as Janet stepped to the platform Donald was for a moment disconcerted by the warmth of her greeting and the softness in her eyes as they rested on him.

That afternoon Connie came riding down the hill holding in her hand an enormous bouquet of Alpine flowers. She leaped from her horse and ran blithely around the corner of the big building. Andy, dressed in white coat and hat, came smilingly forward to meet her.

"Andy, here are some rare flowers Dad sent for——" She ceased speaking abruptly as Donald, leading Janet and her friends from a tour of the kitchen, came through the door.

Donald's face lighted with a glad smile as he saw Connie.

"Miss Rennie, I want you to meet Miss Wainwright."

Connie's face burned with embarrassment as all eyes turned toward her, and the mass of wild flowers held crushed to her breast quivered as though shaken by a breeze. She glanced about her quickly, strongly tempted to flee the spot.

For a moment the society belle and the girl of the mountains eyed each other silently. Janet stared at Connie as if she were some strange creature unclassified by science. Connie for the first time was gazing on a stylishly-clad member of her own sex. Janet's dress of white silk shimmered in the sunshine, and her broad-brimmed white hat, with lining of pale rose, gave to her beautiful face a ruddy glow.

Connie's eyes roved in admiring awe from the neat high-heeled shoes to the silken hose and skirt, and then to the flowered hat set jauntily on thick shining coils of dark hair.

There was a certain dewy freshness, a native frankness, about the girl of the woods that made Janet appear artificial. Their eyes met, and Connie's lips parted in a timid smile, revealing two rows of perfect milk-white teeth and forming two tiny dimples in her brown cheeks. Her lonely heart longed for the friendship of this wonderful girl, but the smile quickly faded when she saw that Janet's eyes remained cold and appraising.

Janet scrutinized Connie's faded blue overalls and coarse cotton shirt, which, even though loose and ill-fitting, could not conceal the graceful lines of the childish figure. Confused by the cold reception, her eyes wide and misty with a hint of pain, Connie turned quickly away.

Moving with the easy grace and freedom that an empress might envy, Connie walked to the side of her cayuse, and with characteristic bird-like motion sprang to his back. Her moccasined feet struck his sides, and with ears flattened Pegasus leaped forward with a speed that sent Connie's hair streaming. His spurning hoofs sent a cloud of dust in their faces, then horse and rider went tearing down the hill.

Janet stood staring after the flying rider, a look of blank astonishment on her face.

Connie's visits to the mill ceased, but from the highest point on the bluff she watched the merry-makers with keen interest as, dressed in natty riding costumes, they rode their stylish horses, disported themselves in bathing-suits on the sandy beach, paddled the lake in light, graceful canoes, or chugged about in the shiny white motor-boat. For two evenings she sat with a feeling of dreary lonesomeness while Donald and Janet floated on the placid lake in one of the tiny canoes, their subdued voices and gentle laughter coming up faintly from below.

During the evenings she spent with Donald, Janet was assailed by fleeting emotions in which she tried to define her attitude toward him. She felt that the time was not far distant when some definition would be necessary. In a number of artful ways she had tried, but without success, to

lead him to talk of himself. When she put a direct question she saw the lines about his mouth tighten, and his reply carried a tone of such unmistakable rebuke that her face reddened and the subject was instantly dropped.

On the night before Janet's departure a dance was arranged, to which the clerical staff of the Cheakamus Mill was invited. Gillis promised a special feature on the programme in the form of an old-fashioned square-dance with his "redshirts" as the performers.

All that day the skies drizzled continuously; lake and mountain were hidden under a heavy mist. The inclement weather did not dampen the ardour of the merry crowd, who, in slickers and oilskins of every description, gathered flowers and trees to decorate the big dining-room that was to be used as a dance-hall.

That night, lights gleamed from every window of the big room, which had undergone a sudden transformation. The walls were one mass of wild flowers, and on the beams overhead small cedars and jackpines stood upright in rows, adding a pungent odour to the air, already burdened with the sweet smell of wild flowers. The music of the phonograph flowed out of the open door to vibrate softly through the dripping trees.

Connie learned of the dance, and after dark she slipped quietly down into the valley. She crouched by the open window, heedless of the rain dripping from the eaves, her eyes glued upon the enchanting scene within. She saw Donald and Janet gliding across the floor, and she marvelled at the grace of their movements. The hum of talk, the constant ripple of feminine laughter, the rustle of silken skirts, were all foreign to Connie. She felt a touch of intense and utter loneliness, like a stranger in a strange land.

Janet seemed to have thrown aside her cloak of reserve; she brimmed over with an unwonted gaiety, but at times her big brown eyes held a troubled look as they rested on Donald.

Gillis's "redshirts" filed in to give an exhibition of old-fashioned dancing. Half the men wore handkerchiefs tied about their arms to indicate that they were impersonating ladies. Blackie played the violin, while "Fightin' " Jack's roaring voice did the "callin' off." Gillis informed the company that Blackie "didn't know a note of music from a post-hole." But what he lacked in technical knowledge was made up in the immense volume of sound he produced from the instrument, and the speed he set for the whirling dancers to follow soon had them dripping with perspiration. There were shouts of Homeric laughter, big feet thumped the floor as they girated through the intricate steps of the quadrille, and above all sounded the hoarse voice of "Fightin' " Jack in the colourful jargon of "callin' off."

"Birdie jump out and Jackie jump in;
Jackie jump out and give Birdie a swing.
All the men left; back to pardner;
And grand right and left.
Chickadee right and pack-rat left.
Meet your pardners and all chaw hay.
Gents sashay and put on style,
Re-sashay with a little more style,
Little more style, gents, little more style."

At the finish the girls loudly applauded the efforts of this picturesque crew, and after a short breathing spell they again took the floor and danced until sheer exhaustion forced them to quit. Mopping their dripping faces with big red bandannas, they trooped boisterously outside.

Near midnight the rain ceased, and as Donald walked with Janet to her cabin the moon came suddenly from behind a dark wall of clouds to set the lake sparkling under its soft light.

"Too wonderful a night to sleep," said Janet softly.

"Shall we walk to the lake?" asked Donald.

She nodded assent.

They stood near the edge of the lake in the light of the moon and looked across at the towering snow-fields etched against the star-spangled sky. There were lights still shining from the big room they had just vacated, and the night-watchman's lantern bobbed jerkily as he made his rounds. Across the lake the light from the trapper's cabin shone on the calm surface of the water. The faint, weird call of a loon wafted to their ears was echoed and re-echoed in soft cadences from the surrounding hills. A faint breath of wind came out of the rain-washed forest, laden with the sweet perfume of earth and flowers, and caressed their faces like loving fingers. Donald took a deep breath that seemed more like a sigh.

"Isn't it beautiful?" He indicated with a sweep of his arm the lake, the wooded hills and the glittering glaciers lifting their heads high to the sparkling firmament. He turned to find his companion standing with downcast eyes.

"Don't you like it?" he asked, a trifle resentfully.

Janet raised her head slowly. The limpid depths of the big brown eyes were soft and languorous in the half-light; the full red lips were dewy and tremulous; the peaceful light of the moon shone upon her radiant upturned face, giving it an ethereal glow.

“It is wonderful,” she breathed.

Involuntarily he moved closer. What was this inner urge? Love—feeling—emotion, or, it might be, passion?

Laughter and voices came from the trail above. Douglas with several of the visiting party emerged into the white light of the moon. Douglas called his sister’s name and Janet and Donald moved up the hill to join them.

After the sound of their footsteps died in the distance there was a rustle in the bushes near the path as a slender, childish figure, clad in blue overalls and cotton shirt, glided into the soft moonlight. She stood leaning forward with the grace of some wild thing, her heavy hair flowing about her shoulders. The big blue eyes that usually were filled with light and happiness were now dark with passion, and two small brown fists were pressed against a wildly-heaving breast. Tears welled from the blue eyes and rolled slowly down her cheeks. Her breath came in gasps.

“I hate you! Oh, how I hate you!” She stamped her tiny moccasined foot passionately, then turned and ran blindly along the dark forest trail.

An owl flew like a ghostly wraith to a thick growth of firs. The startled cheep of a flying-squirrel turned to a cry of terror, quickly silenced by the powerful beak of the owl as it made its kill. A song-sparrow, with her downy brood cuddled to her warm breast, heard the death-cry, and her eyes grew round with terror.

A mallard duck, sleeping quietly on the lake, emitted a terrified quack as it was drawn below the surface. A moment later the water was disturbed as a mink arose, with its sharp teeth fastened in the duck’s throat, and moved through widening ripples toward the land.

The quick “plop” of a startled muskrat sounded sharply on the night air as the Breed rose slowly from a spot not far from where Connie had lain in hiding. He stood with arms folded, the stolid look of the Indian on his face, and stared toward the spot where Connie had disappeared. A look of ineffable sadness was in his sombre eyes. Thus he stood as immovable as a statue for an interval. Then a long-drawn sigh escaped him. “She loves him,” he said in a dead voice.

He walked to the shore, his distorted limb causing him to sway grotesquely in the moonlight. He drew a skilfully concealed dugout from the bushes and launched it gently. His paddle spurned the water noiselessly, and in a moment he was lost in a bright patch of reflected moonlight.

CHAPTER XIV

A WEEK before Dominion Day men began applying for leave of absence until the exodus depleted the crew to such an extent that it was deemed advisable to shut down for a week. Donald turned to Gillis as he saw the whole crew of "redshirts" pile tumultuously on the train.

"How often do the men quit like this?" he asked rather irritably.

"Every holiday," replied Gillis.

Donald pondered a moment.

"That means that we may lose a week for Labour Day."

"Very likely."

"Jack, do you think we could keep them here if we held some sort of celebration at the lake?"

"I believe we could," responded Gillis warmly.

"We'll do it then," declared Donald. "We've so many orders ahead that this lay-off may force us to run a night crew."

"Did you spend all your dough, Blackie?" asked Gillis when the "redshirts" arrived back from town.

"Me and Hoop-la spent about two hundred bucks, but we had three hundred dollars' worth o' fun. We ain't got enough money to buy a humminbird a pair o' leggin's, but we sure had a helluva good time, so we ain't worryin'."

"S'pose you bought them new boots?" inquired Gillis.

Blackie forced a laugh. "Goin' to git them next time, Jack," he continued, moving closer to his big boss; "say, Jack, you know that I send twenty dollars to my mother back east ev'ry month. I—I——"

"All right, Blackie," said Gillis gently, "I'll advance it to you."

"Thanks, Jack, you're a good pal," commended Blackie in a relieved tone.

Donald and Gillis walked down the hill to inspect the logs in the boom, and as they walked Gillis indulged in some pointed observations. "You know, Donnie, that these loggers are game guys to come back after spendin' all their money and say: 'We had a good time, so we ain't worryin'.' The man ain't human that won't worry after spendin' in a few days the money

it's taken him six months to earn swingin' an axe an' draggin' a saw. Still, they hide their remorse under a grin and tell of what a good time they've had. So many people think that loggers spend all their money for booze. 'Tain't so. That gang of mine give away about half their money to bums around town. I have seen Blackie give away twenty bucks at a time."

As they passed the high-rigger's little cabin, Gillis poked his head through the door. Blackie was absorbed in the task of sewing a patch on a pair of worn boots. A mournful wind blew querulously around the cabin.

"Say, Blackie, do you know what that wind is saying?"

Blackie grunted a negative.

"Here's what it's a sayin'," said Gillis as he puckered his lips: "O-o-o-o-h! W-h-e-e-r-r-e-e has your summer wages gone! O-o-o-h! W-h-e-r-r-e-e has your summer——"

Gillis dodged back as a boot came whizzing past his head.

Midsummer brought an epidemic of labour disturbances throughout the Province. A radical labour organization seized on a time when work was plentiful and labour scarce to spread their insidious propaganda through the camps. Railroad construction in the interior had been seriously interfered with, and in many cases there had been violence and bloodshed.

Two agitators arrived at the Summit Mill, and the next day several of the men—including Hand and Blackie—did not appear when the whistle blew. Gillis found them in Blackie's cabin in a half-drunken condition. That afternoon Renwick ordered the two strangers off the premises and discharged Hand.

Hoop-la begged successfully for lenience toward his erring pal. "You know how booze affects Blackie, Jack," he pleaded.

Donald became aware of a changed bearing on the part of many of the men. Sullenness had fallen upon them; discontent manifested itself, as well as insubordination. That afternoon spikes driven in the logs wreaked havoc with the saws and forced a partial shut-down.

A committee of four men waited on Renwick and presented an ultimatum. They demanded a heavy increase in wages, or they would call for an immediate cessation of work on the part of the men they represented. Renwick promptly refused. In fifteen minutes every man in the mill except the clerical staff, the mechanics and the engineer, walked out. In the woods only Gillis's "redshirts" remained at work.

The strikers moved up the track and made camp on a point of land on the lake-shore. That night the door of the commissary was prised from its hinges and a quantity of food stolen, and the night-watchman put out a fire of incendiary origin.

Renwick, while returning from the power-house, was shot at twice from ambush. He wired his resignation to Robert Rennie, and in terrified haste packed his belongings and left on the next train. An hour later the agent brought Donald a telegram:

"DONALD MCLEAN,
"Summit Mill.

"You are promoted to position vacated by Renwick. Refuse strikers' demands. Ship at Squamish Oriental order white pine. Utmost importance lumber loaded within week. Use every means in power to keep plant operating.

"ROBERT RENNIE."

He passed the message to Gillis. The big man turned and grasped Donald's hand in congratulation.

"We'll get that order out on time or bust," declared Gillis grimly.

Donald distributed firearms among his loyal men, and one-half the crew patrolled the plant while the others slept.

Donald had been up the greater part of the night, and at Gillis's earnest request he went to his cabin near midnight. As the door closed behind him, Connie, with her rifle resting in the hollow of her arm, rose silently from behind a tree in the darkness of the hillside and flitted noiselessly on moccasined feet from stump to stump. Unseen she reached the corner of Donald's cabin, where she sank to the ground with the soft, slow grace of a nestling bird.

The Cheakamus Mill, robbed of man-power, was forced to cease operations. At the Summit Mill work went on with such speed as in the situation Donald was able to induce in the men, who were on edge. To him it seemed that they were working on top of a powder mine that might go off at any moment. He discovered in himself a faculty to handle men and to raise them to a fever pitch of enthusiasm—not that the B.C. logger is a hard man to lift to the fighting point. His fight against great odds had gained the sympathy of the loyal—a sympathy and respect that money could not buy. Gillis's gang, with the exception of "Blackie," remained fervently faithful.

Toiling in the hot sun, nearly blinded by sweat, singing lustily, this gallant crew worked their twelve hours without a murmur of complaint. Donald lived on the job, ate on the job, and all day long he drove his men even as he drove himself. His rest consisted of such fitful snatches of sleep as he could steal between his rounds of the night guards.

The first move of the strikers was not of open violence. The haul-back on two of the donkeys broke without apparent reason; one of the big saws had been tampered with; Wilkinson reported two fires of incendiary origin, and also that an attempt to dynamite the power-house had been frustrated.

On the third morning Hand, at the head of a mob of fifty men, made a swift descent on the lumbering operations. It might have been successful if Donald had not expected something of this kind and set efficient watch.

The invaders came down the track in a solid body, armed with cant-dog handles, pick-axes and clubs, and thirsting for battle. At Donald's quick shout of warning his men dropped their tools and came on the run to form in a compact body behind him.

"Don't use your guns unless you have to," he warned, as he noticed several of them flash their revolvers.

Donald climbed quickly to the top of a large stump. In his left hand he held a stick of dynamite with fuse attached; in his right he held a match close to the dangling fuse. "Men," he cried in a determined tone, "if you move forward one step I will throw this."

"To hell mit him!" shouted Hand. "He don't dare do it. Rush him."

But the mob did not obey their leader's rash command. Donald's pale face and burning black eyes were sufficient evidence that he made no idle threat. Donald saw the big hand of his foreman stealing to the butt of the heavy Colts that hung at his side. "Keep cool, Jack," he begged; "don't start anything."

For days Gillis had been without sleep. He turned bloodshot eyes on Donald. "By G——! I would like to take a crack at Hand," he said in a voice thick with rage.

The hostile crowd did not advance; neither did they leave. Scattered in groups, they lay or sat on the hillside to shout occasionally words of derision at Donald's faithful crew.

Donald's nerves were on edge. At any moment there might be a pitched battle with loss of lives. He studied the faces of the strikers to see how many were from his crew, and was surprised to recognize fully forty of his men. He saw "Blackie" in the rear of the crowd of strikers. When his eyes met

Donald's he turned away shamefacedly. All the men from his camp refused to meet his gaze squarely. "Those men are ready to come back right now," he said to Gillis. "Hand has bullied them into this. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know," answered Gillis. "I never thought Blackie would go back on me. I'll wring his d——d neck when I catch him in town!" he added bitterly.

Donald heard a slight movement behind him, and turned to see Connie standing with her rifle in the crook of her arm.

"Good heavens! Connie, you shouldn't be here!" he exclaimed.

Connie's face bore traces of weariness and sleeplessness. For three nights she had stolen softly away from her cabin on the hillside to lie hidden outside that of Donald. By night she had kept up a weary vigil, ever on the alert; in the forenoon she had lain behind a stump on the hill with eyes on Donald's tall figure whenever he came in sight, her rifle ready for instant action. Hand did not know that death had nearly claimed him when he stepped forward to urge his men to charge. At that crucial moment Connie's rifle was aimed at his heart.

"Get away from here at once, Connie!" said Donald, firmly, but kindly.

Connie lowered her eyes to her moccasined foot, that was weaving patterns in the dry soil, and shook her small head obstinately.

"Why do you wish to stay?" he asked.

She patted the stock of her rifle. "I—I want to help you."

Donald looked down at the weary little figure. He stepped down from the stump, keeping a wary eye on the belligerent strikers, and came to her side. "Connie," he said softly, "you are a dear, brave little girl, but you must get away from this place, as there may be serious trouble. Please, Connie," he entreated, reaching out a hand to stroke her shining hair.

Connie's face paled quickly, and she shrank from the caress. Her slender body trembled at his touch, and his display of tenderness brought a sudden rush of tears to her eyes. But she made no move to leave the scene.

Finding that he could not shake Connie's determination to stay, Donald returned to the vantage point of the stump. "Jack," he said, turning to his big foreman, "I am going to make one last appeal to these men. If I am any judge of human nature about half of them, if they can save their faces, will welcome the chance to go back to work. They are being dominated by Hand."

Gillis shrugged his shoulders. "Do what you think best," he said.

Donald passed the dynamite to Gillis and stepped forward with his arms extended, palms upward. The crowd moved uneasily. Hand came slowly to his feet, his small eyes narrowed with suspicion.

"What's up?" he growled.

"Men," Donald began in a high clear voice, "I would like to convince you that you will gain nothing by your present tactics. Bloodshed will surely ensue. I have orders to refuse your exorbitant demands. Personally, I have no choice in the matter; there is no other course for me to pursue. In spite of your interference we will continue working with the few men who have remained loyal. I will ask for police protection only as a last resort. I appeal particularly to the men who worked for me here at this camp. Is there one of you who can truthfully say that you were not accorded fair treatment? Is there one of you who will not admit that the general equipment for your comfort is unequalled in any camp in British Columbia? You are making a mistake, men," he went on in a pleading tone, "a mistake you will be sorry for later, for you will be blacklisted in every camp in the country. Go back to work, and I promise you there will be no mark against you. That's all."

Donald walked back to Connie's side. The men had not interrupted him once.

Hand turned to the wavering crowd. "To hell mit him and all capitalists!" he snarled. He turned to shake a huge fist at Donald.

"You treaten us, do you? You d——" The epithet that came from his coarse lips was one that would cause any decent man to see red.

Donald stiffened. His face turned livid. "You dirty cur!" he flamed. "Don't you know that there is a lady present? You apologize to this little girl or I will whip you within an inch of your life!" His voice trembled with passion.

"Lady," scoffed Hand, "vat you call a lady? She moost be nice lady, runnin' in de woods wit' you ev'ry Sunday."

A murderous look shot from Donald's dark eyes. A terrible rage possessed him, a rage that made his blood feel hot in his veins and gave him the unnatural strength of a madman. A dull red flamed in Connie's tanned cheeks. She sat down and covered her hot face with her hands.

Andy now came running from the cook-house, dressed in white cap and apron, his rifle trailing at his side. "What's goin' on, Donnie?" he questioned.

Donald did not answer. Gillis spoke to Andy in an undertone.

“My God, Donnie, ’e’s twice your size! Don’t fight ’im!” implored Andy.

“I’ll kill him!” rasped Donald.

Gillis seized his arm. “Let me fix the d—— skunk; he’s nearer my size.”

“No, this is my affair!” shaking himself from the grasp.

The sound of a paddle came from below, and the trapper sprang from his dugout and came swiftly up the hill. As Andy briefly explained the situation the old man’s grey eyes narrowed to mere slits beneath the shaggy brows.

“Ah!” he breathed. “Me and ‘Betsey’,” patting his six-shooter, “we likes to shoot up bohunks. We shoots them in the heel so’s to save their clothes.” His mouth was set in a grim smile, a smile that was belied by the steely look in his deep-set eyes. He seated himself on a log and placed his gun on his knees.

Donald had by this divested himself of coat and shirt and now stepped forward dressed in light cotton trousers, a sleeveless undershirt and moccasins. “Hand,” he said in a steady voice, “this is between you and me. See to it that your men do not interfere; I will vouch for mine.”

The big foreigner was rubbing his big hands as though in pleased anticipation. “I suppose you know how we iss goin’ to fight? Everything goes, you know.” His grin was fiendish.

Donald knew what was meant. There were to be no rules of combat; no time duration; no referee; no rounds, and woe to the man who should go down. It was to be a battle as of primeval man. It might result in terrible injury and mutilation. He sickened at the thought.

Hand stripped to the waist. Connie’s eyes rested on the mighty frame of this huge blond; the bunched and rippling muscles, the great chest covered with a mat of thick hair, and the enormous limbs. Her glance then turned and roved to the man who was to fight for her honour. Donald’s eyes were like burning coals. His face had regained its colour, but was contorted with a passion that made him seem unnatural. Yet he appeared a mere stripling in comparison to his burly antagonist.

For a moment Connie became a primitive woman. She felt as though she could rend and tear. Her eyes darted blue lightnings of wrath toward the man who had insulted her, and her small hands clinched in impotent fury. Her nails cut into her palms as she exercised every ounce of self-control to keep from screaming aloud. Donald was fighting for her. She caught her breath in a quick stab. Her heart was beating with alternate throbs of joy and fear. A sudden fit of trembling seized her, and her head felt light and giddy.

Hand's reputation as a rough and tumble fighter was well known throughout the Province. It was his proud boast that he never had been whipped. He advanced now, a sinister leer on his face. Andy ran to Donald's side.

"Box 'im, Donnie," he whispered. "Don't let 'im get 'old on you."

"You goin' to vip me? De dude goin' to vip me? Ach!" scoffed Hand in guttural accents.

He came slowly forward with arms spread wide, his thick fingers working convulsively. Donald leaned slightly forward and waited. As he neared him, Hand tore in, sure of himself in the rough and tumble. Donald side-stepped the big man's first rush and shot his left to his face. He was not properly set for the blow, but it stung Hand to madness.

"Ach!" he grunted, "stand and fight you d—— coward!"

He came on, his arms swinging wildly. Leaping aside, Donald's heel struck a stump, and before he could regain his footing the giant's arms were around him in a bone-crushing grasp. His hands were clasped at Donald's waist, and the big head was pressed suffocatingly against his throat. Donald was forced slowly backward to strike the ground with a thud, the big man on top.

"Now I got you!" panted Hand as he released his hold on Donald's waist and aimed a blow at his face. With a quick movement the under man turned face down. Hand struck him viciously as he lay prostrate under him.

Connie's eyes were wide with horror, and a muffled scream escaped her lips as the blow fell.

With a quick, convulsive movement of his lithe body Donald threw Hand from his back and sprang to his feet. Whirling quickly as the foreigner came toward him, he sent in a volley of blows to his opponent's face. Hand staggered, but did not fall. His lips were cut and bleeding: his nose was broken; and he spat out several broken teeth. Any one of the blows landed was sufficient to send an ordinary man down for the count, but still the gargantuan giant came on.

In and out Donald flashed, his arms moving like steel pistons. Hand could not keep away from the punishing left hand of his lighter opponent. Men not trained in the science of boxing have no punishing power in their left hand, but depend solely on their right. Such was the case with Hand. His style did not vary for a moment. With head lowered between his powerful shoulders, he would bore in, swinging wildly in the hope of landing a lucky punch, or striving to get a hold on his adversary. Donald's hand kept beating

a tattoo on his rock-like jaw, but still Hand came forward, slowly and relentlessly as a steam-roller.

Crowding Donald back to the line of tense spectators, Hand rushed him into the scattering crowd and seized him in a rib-cracking embrace. Donald broke the hold, but not before the brute had butted him over the eye. With the blow Donald's senses reeled and the blood gushed from a wide gash on his brow. A blow from the foreigner's big fist then caught him over the heart and sent him staggering to his knees. With a curse the big man came after him.

Andy shouted hysterical words of advice.

Donald came slowly to his feet and mechanically side-stepped as Hand came stumbling toward him. Donald evaded him until his head cleared, and then summoned his remaining strength into one mighty blow that landed flush on his opponent's midriff. The blond beast came to his knees with a dull grunt.

"Go after him!" yelled excited voices from the crowd.

Donald stepped forward with fist drawn back to strike the kneeling man, but his arm fell to his side and he shook his head. "Get up!" he commanded hoarsely.

Even the strikers gasped their appreciation of this honourable act. A murmur of applause came from both sides. The foreigner shook his shaggy blond head and came uncertainly to his feet and the sanguinary battle went on. Both men were tired. Hand's breath was coming in short, choking gasps from his tortured lungs, and his face was one smear of blood. Donald's left eye was closed; his lips were split, and the gash over his eye had covered his body with blood. His arms were tired from pounding the iron jaw of his adversary. The big logger's strength was waning; the pounding administered by Donald was beginning to tell. But Donald was too weak to avoid his rushes. In a clinch Hand again butted him with his head.

Blackie, his eyes blazing, leaped forward with a peavy handle in his hand. "You fight fair, d—— you, or I'll brain you!" he shouted. One of the strikers attempted to wrest the peavy handle from his hands. Blackie felled him with a blow of his fist. It looked for one tense moment as if there would be a general mêlée. There came sullen mutterings from the crowd of strikers.

"Back!" John Hiller's voice rang out sharp and clear. "I'll kill the first man that interferes!" The eyes shining over the long-barrelled Colt held a dangerous glint. The men who had moved to the centre backed away hurriedly.

Back and forth the combatants struggled, neither gaining any decided advantage, each trying to land a blow that would end the battle. Reeling, gasping, striking, falling to their knees from sheer weakness, the men fought on under a burning noonday sun.

No knight of old ever fought more nobly for a fair lady's honour than did Donald McLean that day by the lake-shore. His undershirt was torn to tatters, showing his white skin blotched with welts and bruises. He was losing his sense of distance. Swinging wildly with his left, his wrist struck Hand's adamantine jaw and the onlookers saw his face writhe in pain as the arm fell helplessly to his side.

" 'E's broken 'is 'and," groaned Andy.

"Oh, stop it, Andy, please stop it!" sobbed Connie, her arms held out in entreaty.

Donald's face turned a sickly grey, and as the well-nigh sightless foreigner staggered weakly toward him, he with a strength born of agony whipped his right to his opponent's sagging jaw. The big man faltered, sank slowly to hands and knees, then stretched at full length, his face pressing the soil, quivered and lay still. No sound came from the crowd. The thing had been too stupendous for immediate shouting or applause. Donald stood for an instant swaying uncertainly, then turned to stumble toward his cabin.

Blackie sprang to the top of a stump and swung his hat in the air. "Three cheers for our boss!" he yelled wildly.

A roaring cheer came from the crowd with a right good will.

"Boys, let's go back to work!" shouted Blackie.

"We're with you, Blackie!" they answered.

Gillis reached Donald's side as he tottered into the cabin and caught him in his arms as he collapsed into unconsciousness. The big man picked him up tenderly and placed him on the bed.

"Get some 'ot water and towels and telephone for Dr. Paul," commanded Andy tersely.

As Gillis left to fill Andy's commission, Connie fell on her knees by the bedside and wept with wild and passionate violence. "Oh, Donald! Donald!" she sobbed, "you fought for me. I love you! I love you! Oh, Andy," turning her streaming eyes to the little man, "he won't die, will he? Tell me he won't die!" Her trembling fingers were smoothing Donald's dark hair, and she kissed his battered face tenderly, all the while calling his name hysterically.

With tears in his eyes and a heart full of sympathy, little Andy looked down on the recumbent form of his unconscious friend. " 'E's all right, Connie. 'E'll be all right in a few days," he answered her in a choking voice.

Donald stirred as Andy applied the water, and his one good eye opened slowly. "Did I win?" he questioned weakly.

"You bet your blinkin' life you did."

When Donald's gaze rested on Connie his face twisted into a wry smile. He reached for her hand and held it in a firm pressure. "Good little sport," he whispered through split lips.

Connie felt as though her heart would burst. Scorching tears ran down her face, and it was with the utmost difficulty that she controlled the suffocating sobs that filled her throat.

The sound of the big mill whistle smote their ears in a wild medley of short, sharp blasts, quite unlike the decorous tone that summoned and dismissed the men.

"What's that?" asked Donald, attempting to sit up.

"The engineer is celebrating, Donnie. The men 'ave returned to work. The strike is broken."

"Ah!" sighed Donald happily as he fell back on the pillows.

The distant hum of a gas-car gradually increased to a series of staccato explosions, then died out suddenly. They heard the light rumble of wheels as it drew to a stop at the station below. There was the sound of quick footsteps on the board sidewalk and the door opened to admit Dr. Paul. He crossed the room and took Donald's hand. "Is it true," he asked incredulously, "that you whipped Ole Hand?"

"Strike me pink if 'e didn't," Andy vouchsafed.

"I have patched up Hand's victim's many times," the doctor stated, "but this is the first time that I have attended his victor, and I can assure you that it's a pleasure." He removed his coat and rolled up his sleeves. "I'll look you over," he added, then glanced significantly at Connie, who rose and left the room.

"A couple of cracked ribs, a fractured ulna, and a few hundred bruises," was the doctor's verdict a few minutes later.

The physician's deft hands soon bandaged the broken ribs and set the bone of the forearm.

"I'll go and patch up the fallen bully. I hope he's worse still," he chuckled as he left the room.

Andy stepped to the door and called in Connie.

“Don’t look so frightened, Connie,” smiled Donald. “I don’t feel half as bad as I look.”

“I’ll have to go now,” she said in a voice choked with emotion.

Andy accompanied her outside the door. “ ’Ave a bite to eat, Connie?” he invited.

Connie shook her head. Now that the excitement was over, the strain of the emotion she had experienced showed in the dark shadows under her eyes and in the droop of her slight shoulders. “Andy,” she began, as she placed a small hand on his arm, “you—you won’t say anything what—what—I——”

A flood of rose dyed her tanned cheeks and her blue eyes fell in embarrassment. Andy patted her shoulder reassuringly.

“I’ll never s’y a blinkin’ word, Connie; an oyster’s got nothin’ on me.”

Connie, visibly relieved, picked up her gun and started up the hill. Andy watched the pathetic little figure until she disappeared in the woods. For a moment he stood staring into nothingness, then, shaking his head sadly, he entered the cabin.

“She’s a little brick, Andy,” Donald spoke weakly from his bed.

Andy glared at him. “Brick!” he repeated sarcastically. “Is that all? You big, bone-’eaded, blinkin’ boob!” He slammed the door as he went out to give emphasis to the remark.

“What the devil does he mean?” puzzled Donald. He turned painfully to his side, yawned equally as painfully, then fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER XV

On the third day of Donald's convalescence he was able to leave his cabin. With his arm in a sling, his face patched with plaster, he made the rounds of the mill.

The men welcomed him with eager nods and smiles, many coming forward to shake his hand in silent respect. The big plant was now going at full blast. Belts flapped, logs thudded, planers snored loudly, and the great saw ripped shrilly through the big logs in a raising crescendo of sound.

Down at the siding an engine bumped noisily into a long string of flat-cars piled high with lumber. With arms akimbo, his wet undershirt clinging to his powerful torso, the mop of blond hair hanging damp on his brow, Gillis stood surveying the heavily-laden cars with an air of complacency. The lumber handlers sat about in positions of weariness, mopping their hot faces.

Gillis smiled cheerfully as Donald approached.

"Good news for you, Donnie," he said.

"What is it, Jack?"

"Last load for the big steamer," replied Gillis, as he pointed at the moving train.

"We're on time, then," cried Donald gladly.

"One day ahead," corrected Gillis.

The engineer came to the cab window as the engine passed, and pantomimed his congratulations by shaking hands with himself. The train gathered speed, and as the caboose rattled by, the conductor came to the rear platform.

"Good work, boys!" he shouted.

They stood watching the train until it struck the down grade and disappeared through the cut.

"Well, that's over," observed Gillis, as he sat down heavily and wiped the sweat from his face. He looked tired and worn, but the light of victory shone in his eyes.

"If it hadn't been for you, Jack," said Donald earnestly, "we would not have got that order away on time. You look all in; you'd better have a good sleep."

The big man's eyes brightened at Donald's praise.

"You don't look like you'd bin to a Sunday-school picnic," replied Gillis with a chuckle.

As Donald walked up the hill the whistle blew for the noon-hour, and the men trooped past on their way to the dining-room. Blackie left the ranks and walked shamefacedly to Donald's side.

"I'm sorry for the part I took in the strike, boss, I——"

"It's all right, Blackie," interrupted Donald, "you more than made up for it. We'll forget all about that."

Blackie's face wore a relieved look as Donald gave his hand a friendly grip.

Meals in logging camps are eaten in silence and with a fixity of purpose. It is a business to be finished with as hurriedly as possible. From the time the men are seated until the chairs are pushed back, the clatter of dishes and an occasional "pass the butter" are the only sounds.

As Donald moved to his place at the table the men arose and clapped their hands. Someone called for a cheer, but Donald laughingly held up his hand.

"Men, I can't find words to tell you how much I appreciate your good work. Your long hours of labour enabled the Company to get an important order away on time, thereby saving their prestige in a big Eastern market. You will receive double pay for every hour you worked during the week."

A low murmur of applause followed this welcome announcement.

After lunch, feeling the need of exercise, Donald made his way slowly down the hill. The severe mauling and the days in bed had weakened him to such an extent that he was forced to take frequent rests. As he turned a curve in the trail, Hand and the man with whom Andy had fought crawled stealthily from the bush, looked furtively about them, then followed Donald down the hill. He reached the open glade by the fairy nest to find Connie seated by the rippling stream, her chin resting in cupped hands, and staring dreamily into the flashing water.

"Ah!" he cried gaily, "I have caught my little dryad at her orisons."

At the sound of his voice Connie sprang to her feet, her heart racing madly. Hearing a sound behind him, Donald turned to find the eyes of the Breed fixed on him in a malignant glare that chilled him to the marrow. For a short interval the dusky orbs of the Indian held his as though with a hypnotic power.

“Whew!” he ejaculated, as the Breed hobbled down the trail, “your guardian sure does give me an awful look. Why does he hate me, Connie?”

“Joe has peculiar ways,” she parried.

“What were you dreaming about, Connie?” he asked interestedly.

A gay light danced momentarily in her shining eyes, and the red lips curved in a smile; “I was dreaming I was rich,” she archly confessed.

“An old, old dream,” smiled Donald as he stretched himself painfully on the moss.

Connie sat down near him.

As always, this spot gave Donald a restful feeling. The gentle zephyrs wafted from the woods about them were somnolently delicious and the sparkling glacial stream that rippled through the glade sang its clear, sweet song. He closed his eyes wearily.

The proximity of the man she loved, lying there with his arm in a splint, his handsome face still bearing the marks of the blows he had suffered in her defence, thrilled Connie to the depths of her warm, impulsive heart. An almost overmastering desire to touch his hair possessed her.

“What would you do if you were rich, Connie?” he queried drowsily.

Connie sank back in the delicious moss and clasped her hands behind her golden head. “I’d buy a big trunk—one of that kind with the bulgy top—and I’d fill it with silks, satins, brocades, velvets and all kinds of soft frilly things. Then I’d unpack it slowly one by one and hang them up all around the room and sit down and look at them. I’d buy a great, big stone house in London, and I’d walk down the wide marble stairs, trailing a long rustling silk gown, and I’d raise my lorgnette to my eyes and say, ‘James, have the carriage at the door in half-an-hour.’ I’d have a country place in Scotland, with hundreds of dogs and horses, thousands of birds, and acres of flowers.”

She paused for a moment.

“I’d take Dad and Peggy with me everywhere I’d go,” she went on softly, “and I’d buy Dad millions of books, and for Peggy I’d buy a solid gold-mounted bridle, and lots of warm blankets for winter instead of those old sacks. I’d buy lots of good things to eat, and lots of good clothes for all the poor kiddies in the world.”

She looked up at the hills. “And six months out of every year,” she continued, “I’d live right here in these mountains and come every day and sit beside—beside—this stream.”

She raised herself slowly and looked down at Donald as he lay with closed eyes. Leaning forward until her golden curls almost brushed his dark hair, her eyes rested on a purple bruise on his brow. “And,” she finished fiercely, “I’d kill every man like Ole Hand.”

Donald laughed sleepily.

“Connie, you are a dear little girl,” he said tenderly.

The endearing tone held a paternal ring, and Connie bit her lip in vexation.

“I’d like to have you and your father go with me to Vancouver some day. Will you go?”

For a moment Connie was silent. “When—when my dreams come true,” she responded with an embarrassed smile.

Then he told her of the city and its ways and the things people did. She listened, not with amazement, but with a contented smile, as though what he told her was a confirmation of her dreams. But when he told her of the grand opera, the music, the costumes and the singing, her grey eyes wide with longing, she sighed deeply.

Donald’s voice trailed to a drowsy close; his chest rose and fell regularly, his features relaxed. He felt as though he were floating, exquisitely floating, on a sea of fleecy clouds that was bearing him softly away. A delicious langour enthralled him—an enchantment drowsy and dim. He felt himself drifting, drifting . . . He was asleep.

The willows at the lower end of the meadow were pushed cautiously aside, and Hand’s head appeared in the opening. For two days he had lain hidden awaiting an opportunity to waylay Donald. The day after the fight he had boarded the train for the Coast, but had slipped from the car at the station below.

His face—unprepossessing at its best—was now a horrible sight. The thick lips were swollen and cracked, the eyes discoloured and puffed, and the broken teeth bared in a snarl as he saw Donald lying by the stream. Every hour since the fight Hand’s hatred for Donald had grown blacker. He would show him that he, Ole Hand, deserved his reputation as a fighter. He would hold this crippled man helpless while he showered blows on his unprotected face, make him cry out for mercy on bended knees; perhaps kill him. His hatred grew hotter and deeper as he watched him lying peacefully beside the girl who had been the cause of the fight in which he had been ignominiously whipped.

Connie sat gazing intently down on the sleeper. A sudden thought seized her, bringing a warm flush to her cheeks. Why not? No one would ever know. Would she dare? She glanced timorously about her, then leaned slowly over, her curls falling about her face, and touched her soft lips to Donald's cheek.

A bluejay screamed derisively. Connie came to her feet, her face crimson. Donald stirred, opened his eyes, and painfully raised himself.

"I'm sorry, Connie," he apologized, "it was very rude of me to go to sleep."

A moment later he walked down the hill. Connie accompanied him a short distance, then turned up a steep path, and from a high, rocky ridge she watched his retreating figure as he turned toward the dam.

A huge bucket on a cable, that had been used during construction for carrying men and material across the roaring chasm below the falls, still hung above the boiling waters.

For Donald there was a certain thrill, a keen exhilaration, in swinging in mid-air in this crude conveyance. He stepped into the bucket and with his one good arm pulled it along the rusty cable.

The Breed, hidden near the trail, saw Donald as he walked toward the dam. The venomous look in his eyes gave place to one of strained interest as he saw the two men skulking menacingly after the unsuspecting man. With a feeling of malignant exultation, as he sensed disaster to the man he hated, he hobbled to the trail and furtively followed.

From the heights above Connie saw the sneaking figures as they crouched low against the edge of the dark spruces and at once divined their murderous object. For an instant she was paralyzed with terror. Her lips refused to move and her limbs grew numb.

The men moved cautiously as they approached their intended victim, fearing that he might be armed. As Hand saw Donald suspended over the river a look of fiendish elation crossed his features. Here was a chance to dispose of his enemy with no trace of the crime. He tore a fire-axe from the wall of the tool-house and ran to the swaying cable.

The Breed heard Connie's piercing scream of terror above the sound of crashing waters. He glanced up to see her silhouetted against the blue sky, her arms waving frantically.

"Joe! Joe! Stop them! Stop them!"

Screaming again, she plunged straight down the hillside in a mad race to reach the scene of action. Running like a deer, stumbling and falling, her

breath coming in short gasps, she ran wildly on. Snarls of the thorny crab-apple tore at her, devil's-club lacerated her face and hands, but she felt no pain. "O God," she prayed aloud, "help me save him! Help me save him!"

Donald's face blanched at the sound of the axe as it bit into the heavy wire cable. He looked down at the jagged rocks and seething waters below. Then with closed eyes and a prayer on his lips he tore in mad frenzy at the rope. Desperately he tugged with both hands, although the pain from his broken wrist sent a wave of torment up his arm that sickened him.

No man can measure the speed of thought in a crisis; even the sluggish brain of the Breed functioned rapidly. Connie was not for him. Her happiness was bound up in the man working feverishly at the haul-back. There was not one chance in a million that he would gain the safety of the cliff before the strands parted to plunge him to eternity. As he heard the crashing of Connie's slender body as she tore down the hill, a softness crept into his eyes. With a speed incredible in one with his pitiful deformity, he ran in a series of bounding steps to the edge of the bluff. The noise of tumbling waters drowned the sound of his approach. Just as Hand raised his axe for the final blow, the muscular arms of the Breed were flung about him. Emitting a startled curse, the big man turned and with a twist of his powerful shoulders flung his dusky assailant to the ground. As he rose Hand swung viciously at him with the axe.

With a quick movement the Breed dodged, and the weapon flashed over his head, flew from the big man's hands, and struck his confederate, a glancing blow on the shoulder that brought from him a howl of pain. Again the Breed's arms closed about his adversary's waist. Mad with the pain in his shoulder, the foreigner drew a long, keen knife, circled warily about the two wrestling men until he found an opening, then plunged the knife to the hilt in the Breed's left side. The stricken man slithered from his opponent's arms and fell a crumpled heap to the ground.

Sick and giddy, Donald stumbled from the bucket, seized the axe and advanced weakly toward Hand. Hand's accomplice, taking one look at the prostrate body, turned and fled terror-stricken to the woods. Hand hesitated for a moment, then followed heavily after.

At this moment, Connie, with clothes torn and hair dishevelled, broke from the woods, and with a cry of pity flung herself to the ground by the Breed's side and placed his head on her lap. The eyes of the wounded man flickered slowly open. He tried to speak, but a strong convulsion shook his frame from head to foot and he writhed in desperate agony.

Connie's face as she lifted it to Donald was drawn with grief. "Get me some water, please," she said brokenly.

The dying man's lips moved. Connie leaned closer.

"I—I—love you," he whispered faintly, "I—saved him—for you."

A ghastly pallor spread over his features and his lips were widely parted in a struggle for breath. Again his lips moved in a fluttering whisper. "Connie—will—you—kiss me?"

As Connie pressed her tear-wet face to his the pain-contorted features relaxed in a smile of wonderful peace and his eyes closed.

When Donald returned Connie's head was bowed and she was weeping softly.

"How is he, Connie?" he questioned gently.

"He's dead."

Donald removed his hat and knelt with bowed head.

"He died for me," he choked.

"And for me," she whispered inaudibly.

CHAPTER XVI

LEST we tire of monotony, Nature gives us a change of colour for each of the flowering seasons. Flowers of every hue may be found through the different months. Pink for May, red for June, blue and pink for July, and during August royal robes of gold and purple clothe the hills and valleys.

The last week of August brought to Summit Lake a pageantry of colour that the Coast region is denied owing to the persistent rains that retard the ripening of the leaf. The deciduous trees were already withdrawing their life-giving fluid from the leaves to store it in their roots until spring. The willow, vine maple, birch and alder along the creeks and lake-shore held touches of autumnal colouring; while on the hills the yellowed leaves of the cottonwood were brilliant in their setting of sober dark green conifers.

A gaudy red were the vine maples, but there was a leafy beauty greater than theirs. The flowering dogwood blazed from every nook and cranny. The ripening of the dogwood gives to its leaves a flame that burns with a fierce glow; a glow that further ripening deepens until its crimson flush becomes the loveliest hue of the British Columbia woods.

The fireweed, or willow herb, that in July gives to the open spaces a gorgeous tint of bluey pink, were now loosing a flock of seeds to float away like tiny parachutes. Each small bit of fluff held a minute germ of life that would build a plant as large as its parent when, dropped by the friendly wind, it reaches a fertile spot. The stately cottonwood were sending out a life-fluff as tiny as that from the smaller plants. Thistles, cat-tails and asters hurried to join the silken clouds until the air was misty with these germ balloons, seeking their winter's rest. The red elderberry and its magenta neighbour, the thimble berry, with its truculent Scotch cap, gave to the woods a material flame.

A curious timidity had come over the birds; not only were they quiet, but they were no longer to be found in their usual haunts. In some retired spot they were moulting. While the weather was at its best, and food was the most plentiful, they were dressing themselves in a new set of feathers for their long flight to the south. The tops of the tall pines were filled with sweet twitterings, of flutterings out and in, wing trails and quick short flights. A flock of waxwings had gathered for the migration. They would not leave for some time yet, but the change had come. Birds from the north had arrived,

creeping south by easy stages, taking plenty of time in their journey—the freest creatures that live, staying or going as they feel inclined.

Wild berries, dead ripe, hung on lush drooping branches.

A soft "prut-prut-kwit-kwit" came from the leader of a covey of willow grouse that were feeding on the tiny fruit of a crab-apple tree. The call was answered by a shyer note from one of the young birds, who probably was being taught the scale.

The summer had been one of exceptional dryness. For weeks there had been no rain, and a blazing hot sun had poured its fiery rays from a cloudless sky. The heavy mountain dews could not penetrate the close standing timber, and the carpet of needles and moss became dry as tinder. A pall of smoke, from fires raging on the Coast, hung over lake and mountain.

For Wilkinson and his men these were anxious days. They covered the section between the mill and Squamish twice a day; scanning the hillsides and valleys, ever watchful, ever on the alert; pleading and exhorting the settlers and loggers to greater vigilance, and all the while praying fervently for rain.

Donald had posted a notice that any employee found smoking in the woods would be immediately dismissed. Logging creates a vast amount of débris, or "slash," as it is known to the men of the woods. With the assistance of the Forestry men, Donald's crew had piled enormous heaps of slash on the hillside, awaiting a favourable opportunity to burn. These menacing piles of brush, extending along the main road for a quarter of a mile, were a constant source of danger. Every precaution, therefore, was taken. The spaces between the mounds of brush were raked clean, the road was patrolled day and night, and pails filled with water were placed at regular intervals. Special notices stating the great danger of fire, and warning not to smoke in this area, were posted conspicuously on tree and stump.

The mill at Cheakamus had closed. Sparks from the donkey engines had threatened the extinction of both plant and timber.

Donald with Wilkinson stood surveying the piles of dangerous waste. "If a fire starts and we can get to it at once, we will be all O.K." said Wilkinson, "but if it ever gets away from us here," pointing down the road, "no human agency can stop it."

They made the rounds of the patrol to satisfy themselves that the watchmen were attending to their duties. Leaving the main road, they scrambled through the tangled masses of tree-tops to ascertain how far

distant the slash had been removed from the standing timber. Suddenly a tiny wisp of smoke was seen to drift from behind a fir tree at the edge of the clearing. Without comment, both men broke into a run.

Aroused by the crashing footsteps, a young man, who had been lying stretched lazily on the soft moss, came quickly to his feet, a cigarette held in his fingers. His companion, also smoking, lay with his back against the bole of a tree a few feet distant. Fishing-rods, creeks, landing-nets and the remains of a lunch lay scattered on the ground.

"Don't you know better than to smoke here?" blazed Wilkinson.

The fisherman brazenly replaced the cigarette between his lips. Wilkinson's arm shot forward like a flash to pluck the offending weed from the mouth of the astonished youth. "I wish we had a law to prevent smoking in the woods. I would take great pleasure in arresting you," he growled savagely as he pinched the fire from the cigarette and ground it under his heel.

Unnoticed by the Forest Ranger, the second man removed his cigarette furtively and with a flirt of his hand threw it behind him as he rose to his feet.

"You are too damned officious! You have no authority to prevent us smoking," he said angrily, as with clenched fists he advanced belligerently.

Wilkinson was near the breaking point. The weeks of worry, the long hours of arduous toil, and the lack of sleep had frayed his nerves. "Damn you!" he flared, "if it's a fight you want——" He broke off suddenly, his eyes wide and staring. "My God! look!" he shouted. A flare of flame shot from the spot where the cigarette had fallen. A breeze rustled through the trees to fan the flame to a drumming roar as a pile of slash caught fire. The Red Terror was loosed.

"The alarm!" cried Wilkinson.

"Fire!" shouted Donald as he stumbled to the road.

"Fire!" repeated the nearest patrolman.

"Fire!" rang the cry down the line until the call reached the mill, and every whistle was loosed in a screaming bedlam of sound to blanch the cheeks of these hardy men, who knew the awful terror of this devastating, devouring, fiery scourge that blasts the wilderness with smoke and ashes and takes its toll of both man and beast. Men dropped their tools and ran to answer the call.

The trapper's dugout shot swiftly across the lake.

Connie lay reading in the shade of her cabin. She came to her feet at the whistle's first call for help. A moment later, seated astride her cayuse, she was galloping down the hill.

Every man, regardless of position, answers the call to fight fire. When a forest fire is raging the forest ranger is an absolute sovereign. He can call the lawyer from his desk or the labourer from the ditch, but seldom does he need to exercise this power, as every good citizen is willing to help stay the deadly scourge. Meanwhile the fire was leaping from heap to heap of the powder-like slash to cross the road and sweep up the hill with incredible speed. With a throbbing roar it hissed to the tree-tops and rushed up the mountain. Stifling smoke enveloped the fire-fighters. Showers of burning bark pelted them from above.

"To the mill!" Wilkinson shouted; "we can do nothing here."

The men at the mill filed silently to their stations, and the big hoses poured torrents of water on roof and wall. Big jets curved up the hill to drench the dry, hot earth.

In short, quick sentences Wilkinson outlined his plans.

"We will try to stop it on the north at the river, on the south with fire-breaks, and at the track on the east by back-firing. On the west we have to let the fire take its course until it burns itself out on the cliff above." His voice rose in sharp command as he sent the men to their posts. Donald with twenty men under him was set to work digging a fire-break on the south side. A "fire-break" is made by spading up the leaf-mould and humus down to the mineral soil and raking all inflammable material back from each side.

The fire was advancing rapidly and the heat was terrific. Choking and gasping in the stinging resinous smoke, the men strove in frenzy of haste to complete the fire-break before the flames should reach them.

A deer with a fawn at her heels came bounding in terror through the screen of smoke. Grouse and song-birds made a common escape from a common enemy feared by all. Rabbits, wild-eyed, scuttled in fear; squirrels and chipmunks joined in the hurried flight. Many of these smaller birds and animals would be flanked and lost.

Connie, proud that she could be of assistance, dashed back and forth carrying messages for Wilkinson to the different fronts.

From up the mountain-side came a drumming roar and the rending crash of trees as the fire undermined their roots. Sparks from burning tree-tops crossed the fire-break and started other fires. To combat these, water had to be carried up the steep hillside in pails. Andy was among those delegated to

this arduous task. For hours he staggered from stream to hill and back again with a brimming pail in either hand. Scorched by sun and fire, the perspiration streaming down his face and stinging his eyes, the little hero stuck gamely to his task.

"I 'ired on this 'ere job as a cook," he grumbled, "not as a blinkin' water-spout. Strike me pink, if the water I've carried to-day was sprinkled in 'ell the devil'd be out of a job. Oh, well," he added resignedly as he filled his pails and turned to again ascend the hill, "as Methusalem said, 'Every little bit 'elps!' These two buckets myke exactly four million, two 'undred and six gallons that I've carried this d'y." At this instant his foot caught in a root to send him sprawling on his face rolling down the mossy hillside, the pails clattering after. He lay where he had fallen, flat on his back, with arms outstretched. "There," he soliloquized, "*that* was the wisp of straw that broke the elephant's back. To 'ell with the fire. Let the blighter burn."

Wilkinson came wearily down the hill. His face was blackened and blistered, his hat gone, and his shirt a network from holes burned through the cloth by flying sparks. He sprawled on all fours by the stream, drank sparingly, then plunged his face in the cooling waters.

" 'Ello, Wilkie!" shouted Andy, " 'ow would you like to 'ave a cold bottle of beer?"

Wilkinson seized a stone threateningly and glared at his tormentor. "Men have been killed for less," he growled huskily.

"I s'y, Wilkie," grinned Andy, "these Forestry jobs are a snap. Do you 'ave the nerve to collect a salary?"

The district ranger was too tired for speech. His swollen face puckered in a smile and he passed on up the hill, and Andy came stiffly to his feet and resumed his never-ending task.

Connie brought reports that the fire was being held on the north and east. The fire-break on the south held, but spot-fires were kept in check only by the almost superhuman efforts of the fire-fighters.

Forest fires reach the peak of their intensity while the sun is hottest. With darkness the wind subsides, and, especially in the mountains the heavy dews are a never-failing help.

The sun, showing blood-red through the smoke, now sank behind the hills and a blessed coolness filled the air. The fire smouldered along the fire-breaks, but the dreaded sparks were not flying. The trembling roar diminished to a steady crackling where fallen trees were being steadily consumed.

The fire-fighters, their shoulders drooping, and wavering from sheer weakness, plodded down the hill for well-earned food and rest.

"You'll have to be at it again at daylight," said Wilkinson grimly. They nodded a tired assent. Wilkinson and Donald with twelve men patrolled the fire area throughout the night.

The next morning broke sullenly in a dull haze. As the first streaks of light heralded the coming of the new day, the fire-fighters again took up their posts. Men from the other mill arrived, and another day of battle with the fire demon was begun. An attempt was made to check it on the west front, high up the mountain-side, where the fire had crept through in the night to a small level plateau. At ten o'clock the wind came suddenly, and with it the fire broke through on the south-west corner with a deafening roar and rushed through a stand of dead trees with ever-increasing speed.

Donald shouted a quick cry of warning to the men who were in danger of being cut off by this break. They came on the double quick, just in time, as a lurid wall of flame shot up the hill over the path they had traversed.

"Are the men all out?" questioned Donald.

"Andy isn't here!" said one of the men excitedly.

Donald seized the speaker's arm. "Was Andy with you?"

The man nodded.

Donald's face set in grim lines. Whirling quickly, he ran straight toward the line of fire. With a bound Connie was on her horse and after him at a swift trot. As he neared the screen of smoke, Pegasus changed his gait to that of a mad runaway, and with the small rider lying prone on his bare back disappeared from view.

At this spot the fire had spent its fury in the first mad rush, but a heavy smoke welled up from the charred ground. Terror possessed the horse, but the calm voice of his mistress urged him on. Crimson embers showered about her. Scorching heat fanned her face as if the doors of a blast furnace had been opened. A blazing branch fell with a rushing sound, barely missing the horse's head. Sharp reports from the tree-tops made the plucky cayuse shy in a panic of fear.

Filled with apprehension, the crowd of fire-fighters stared with tense anxiety into the drifting smoke. Then a glad cheer burst from them as horse and rider emerged: Andy clinging to Connie's stirrup, and Donald swaying drunkenly in the rear. Ready hands held water to Andy's parched lips and bathed his hot face as he lay panting on the ground. He sat up with an effort

and looked about him. “Where’s Connie?” he asked. But Connie had stolen quietly from the scene.

By mid-afternoon the main body of the fire was apparently under control, but the persistent spot-fires kept the entire crew engaged. A huge cottonwood, standing just within the fire-breaks, was the chief offender. Sparks from its lofty blazing top were floated by the breeze to land on the dry ground, starting innumerable fires.

“That tree will have to come down or we will be fighting spot-fires indefinitely,” said Wilkinson.

Silence fell. Everyone of those lumber-jacks knew the danger attached to the falling of a rotten, blazing tree. In sound timber the skilled “faller” can cut the scarf and drive the falling-wedge to lay the tree within six inches of the desired spot. With a hollow tree the task is much more difficult, as in the soft, decayed pulp the wedge may not provide sufficient leverage to swing the enormous weight, and the tree may crash from any angle.

Men working at the butt of a burning tree, too, are exposed to the fall of branches. Even a small bough, hurtling from the dizzy height of lordly cottonwood or fir, will break a man’s limbs.

Wilkinson picked up a falling saw. “Who will go with me?” he called.

Gillis stepped forward with wedge and hammer.

“Nothin’ doin’,” said little Blackie; “Wilkinson here has a wife and kid, an’ Jack has brains enough to be our boss. Me and Hoop-la ain’t got neither, we’re just a coupla roughnecks. Whadda you say, Hoop-la?”

“Ye betcha,” came vigorously from Blackie’s pal.

Two men were sent with them to assist in clearing a space at the foot of the big snag. A few minutes later the twang of the cross-cut, mingled with Blackie’s happy song, sounded above the crackling of the fire.

Wilkinson pointed to the southern sky, where heavy nimbus clouds were massing. “At last! The blessed rain is coming!” he cried in a voice of thankfulness.

A stronger gust swept through the valley to send a surge of flame from the giant cottonwood’s topmost branches. There was a sharp cry of warning as a limb broke off with a splinter-crash and came roaring to the ground, sending up a swirl of dust. A strangled cry of pain, animal-like in its intensity, cut the air.

“Blackie’s hit,” screamed Hoop-la.

Blackie lay on his face, his clothing afire, pinned down by the shattered limb. With a heave of powerful shoulders Hoop-la flung the crushing weight aside, and his big hands quickly smothered the fire in the clothing of his fallen comrade. Gently he raised the stricken man in his arms and bore him beyond the range of fire.

"Blackie! Oh, Blackie! are you all right?" he questioned fearfully as he looked down at the quiet face that held the grey pallor of death.

"Call the doctor and bring a stretcher," sharply ordered Wilkinson.

Men hurried to do his bidding. When the stretcher bearers leaned to lift the inanimate body, Hoop-la fiercely interfered. "Let him alone," he said savagely. Stooping, he picked up the light form and bore it down the hill to their bed in the rough log shack. Donald forced a few drops of brandy through the dying man's colourless lips. Blackie stirred feebly. His eyes flickered open and he smiled as he recognized Hoop-la.

"Give me your hand," he whispered faintly; "I'm runnin' my last high-lead, old pal. I guess God'll be good to us roughnecks." He gasped painfully. The irregular breathing ceased; his eyes became fixed and glassy; his jaw sagged.

Hoop-la sat motionless, the hand of his dead friend held in his warm clasp. Slowly his head dropped forward and his big frame shook with dry racking sobs. Doctor Paul came in hurriedly. In answer to the look of interrogation in Donald's eyes, he shook his head sadly.

Donald and Wilkinson tiptoed softly to the door. They were unashamed of the tears that made furrows down their blackened cheeks. Sick at heart, utterly overcome by this tragedy, Wilkinson sank dejectedly to a seat outside the cabin door and covered his face with his hands.

There came a sudden patter of raindrops that drummed on the roof of the cabin. Wilkinson stood erect with arms stretched wide. "Rain!" he cried. "The merciful rain! Thank heaven!" He stood with face upturned for an interval, enjoying the pelting downpour, then turned to look in the cabin door, a deep and brooding sadness in his bloodshot eyes.

"Donald," he said gently, "the newspaper account of this fire will mention the fact that 'a logger was killed.' A logger!—yes—men like Blackie are the backbone of this country, the salt of the earth. Will people ever learn?" he continued, in a voice vibrant with deep emotion. He pointed to the barkless skeletons of trees blackened and charred and branchless save for the gibbet-like limbs stuck out from the naked trunks. "Think of it! All this—the sniffing out of a valuable life—a verdant hillside changed to a

charnel-house of dead trees and blackened stumps on bare rocks—the loss of thousands of dollars worth of valuable timber—all this caused by the careless dropping of a lighted cigarette!”

CHAPTER XVII

DONALD'S announcement that Labour Day would be celebrated at the Lake was received with good-natured approval by the men of the camp, who spoke of the coming event as the "dry" holiday. The rain, which had brought such blessed relief to the hearts of the guardians of the forest, had cleansed the air of the last vestige of haze that had overhung the valley for the past month.

The morning of the holiday dawned auspiciously. The hot days of August had given place to the mellow sunshine of Indian summer. Through the crystal clear atmosphere the mountains seemed much nearer, standing out sharply against the blue sky. Near the top there had been a fresh fall of snow that had covered the bare ice of the glaciers like a white mantle. The brilliant rays of the September sun were reflected from this virgin covering with a brilliancy that was dazzling to the eye.

Janet arrived for the occasion, bringing with her a score of her friends. All through the previous day the trail from the north had brought strings of cayuses from the Indian Reserve, their dusky riders gaily bedecked in holiday attire. "*Klahowya, tillicum!*" they shouted, their coffee-coloured faces lighting up with a grin that betokened a gala day spirit. Their tents dotted the lake-shore, their camp fires glowing cheerfully throughout the night.

The sports committee had arranged a varied list of events. A rowing race between the two camps; a sack race, free for all; a baseball game between the whites and the Indians; a sawing race in which two "buckers" from each camp would participate; a hundred-yard dash; a log-rolling contest between a man from the State of Maine and a citizen of New Brunswick. But these were mere preliminaries to the real event of the day, the much advertised horse-race. The men from the other camps, arrayed in their "Sunday clothes" made their appearance early in the day.

Each camp brought its quota of sandwiches and cakes, but the brunt of the work fell on Andy and his assistants, who piled tier upon tier of sandwiches on the long tables under the willows by the lake-shore. The lemonade was in half-barrels at each end of the tables, with a "help yourself" sign attached.

Old Klootchmen, with stolid, sombre faces, etched deep with cross-hatching of wrinkles, walked through the throng laden with baskets they

were trying to sell. “Mika tika basket,” quavered their aged voices as they held forth their wares.

About eleven o’clock Mr. Wainwright appeared alone.

“Where’s Connie?” asked Donald.

“As you are aware, Mr. McLean, Connie is very shy. I could not induce her to accompany me.”

“That will never do,” said Donald quickly. “I am going after her.”

“I am afraid that your trip will avail you nothing,” smiled Wainwright in his absent-minded way.

Donald borrowed a cayuse and set off up the trail. He hitched the horse at the edge of the clearing and proceeded on foot down the path, his shoes making no sound on the soft dark earth. As he turned a clump of alders and came in view of the cabin he stopped short, arrested by a sight that evidently elicited his amused interest.

Connie stood outside the door before a small mirror hung on the rough log walls of the house. She was attempting to place her heavy hair in a knob at the top of her head. A page cut from a magazine was tacked to a log near the mirror. She studied the photograph carefully, then returned to the attack with renewed vigour. But she could not get it to suit her. She tried and tried, but the heavy shining coils would elude her slender fingers and fall in a golden cascade over her slight shoulders. Her efforts to reach a satisfactory result brought her to the verge of tears. She stamped her little foot impetuously. At last she got it arranged in a fair semblance to that of the envied actress. The effect was so startling that Donald fairly gasped. The child of the moment before was transformed, as if by a fairy’s wand, to a woman of wondrous grace and beauty.

Connie perked her head saucily, then half smiled to show her small milk-white teeth; apparently she was pleased with the reflection she saw in the glass. From the clothes-line she took a flour sack that had been split open and washed to be used for drying dishes. Draping this from her waist-line, she pinned it securely. Assuming a haughty pose, she walked past the mirror with a sinuous, undulating movement. The little artist was so perfect in her mimicry that Donald’s lips involuntarily formed the word “Janet.” Twice she passed before the tiny mirror with a regal step, her head turning with its characteristic bird-like motion to catch the reflection.

Gradually the queenly pose slipped from her. She stopped abruptly, throwing out her arms with a forlorn gesture. Her golden head fell forward. Two big tears welled from her blue eyes and ran down the small freckled

nose. Her small hands plucked convulsively at her faded blue overalls. A sob like a stab [of] pain shook her slender body. One arm came up slowly to cover her tear-wet face as she threw herself face forward on the grass. Her slender shoulders were shaking with such an agony of weeping that Donald's throat felt constricted and his eyes grew suddenly dim.

Her spotted cayuse, grazing nearby, raised his head at the sound of Connie's hysterical sobbing and moved to the small figure of his mistress. With ears bent forward and a look of bewilderment in his soft eyes, he nuzzled her neck with his velvety nose. The sobbing continued, but her brown hand came up to pat his head lovingly.

Donald tiptoed softly back to the trail. He stood for some time with his hand on the saddle, his head bowed in deep thought. "Poor little kid," he said gently, then whistling a lively tune, he slowly retraced his steps to the cabin. He entered the clearing just in time to see Connie as she disappeared in the timber across the field. He did not want her to know that he was aware of her flight, so he knocked loudly on the door and shouted her name. A raven croaked derisively from the top of a dead tree. The pony raised his head to eye him silently. Connie's pet deer came around the corner of the barn, a look of gentle questioning in her beautiful big eyes.

Donald rode slowly back to camp. Connie's distress had touched his heart; her heart-breaking sobs were still ringing in his ears. "It is not that Wainwright does not love his daughter," mused Donald. "It must be that he is very poor.

"Don't see how I can help," his thoughts ran on. "One can't very well suggest to a father that he buy clothes for his child."

Andy rang the lunch-bell, and there was a wild but good-natured scramble for the tables.

A long table had been arranged in the big dining-room for the officials and Janet's party to which Donald had invited Mr. Wainwright.

"Did you find Connie?" queried Wainwright.

"No," lied Donald, "I couldn't find her."

Janet's friends were having a merry time. There was laughter, jesting and gay repartee from all sides. Douglas was in his element, his quips and brilliant sallies keeping the diners in a continual uproar.

As Donald glanced around the big table at the laughing faces of the gay party, he tried to visualize Connie dressed as one of these fashionably-clad girls who represented Vancouver's "younger set." The vision he conjured caused him to smile dreamily.

Janet had manœuvred to secure a seat beside Donald. In spite of all her artful contriving, she had been unable to have more than a few words with her father's busy general superintendent since her arrival. She noticed the dreamy smile on his face and wondered what could be the cause.

"You seem rather distraught," she said with an arch smile, her dark eyes fixed on his face. "Aren't you enjoying yourself?"

"Oh yes," he replied absently.

"You were gone for some time this morning," she stated.

"Yes," he concurred, "I went up to bring Connie."

"Oh!"

Janet's fine eyebrows lifted slightly, and she looked at Donald with a curious intentness. "Why didn't she come?"

"She wasn't home."

Her woman's intuition long ago had told her that the "wood-sprite"—as Donald called Connie—was madly in love with him. As she looked at him now and noticed his pre-occupied air, a pang of jealousy shot through her heart like an arrow. Was it possible that he had begun to realise that the wild girl of the woods was not a child, and that a love for her had been kindled in his heart? The thought made her feel faint and she tried to put it from her mind.

Lunch was finished now and they were walking back to the lake. Douglas invited the party to take a trip around the lake in a motor-boat, to which they assented gleefully.

Janet hesitated as Donald turned away with Wainwright. "Aren't you coming, Mr. McLean?" she called.

Donald turned and shook his head. "I may be needed here," he said briefly.

Janet flushed to the roots of her dark hair and bit her lip in anger. She was not used to being thwarted in her desires.

Donald and Wainwright seated themselves on a bench under the willows and lighted cigarettes. Donald was ill at ease. The sound of Connie's tragic sobbing was ringing in his ears. He could see her little figure writhing on the ground in a tempest of grief that had torn at his heart-strings. He sprang involuntarily to his feet and began pacing the ground with quick, nervous strides. Wainwright glanced up at him interrogatively.

"You seem worried," he volunteered.

"I am," Donald admitted briefly.

"Can I assist you in any way?"

Donald was in a welter of indecision. How should he broach this delicate subject? Although poor as the proverbial church-mouse, Connie's father had the pride of Lucifer. There was natural dignity in his bearing, a certain aloofness in his manner, that in no way interfered with his unfailing courtesy, but had always precluded exchange of intimacies. He had resided in this wilderness for many years, but none could say that they had any more knowledge of his affairs at this moment than on the day of his arrival.

Donald decided to take the plunge. He sat down on the bench beside Connie's father and related the scene he had witnessed that morning—of Connie's preening before the mirror with the magazine page pinned to the logs; of the struggle with her hair; of the flour sack, and of the piteous sobbing of the heart-broken child.

Wainwright's face flushed painfully. There was a look of poignant suffering in his grave eyes. Of all the races in the world, the English—especially of the better class—fight most stoically to hide their distress.

Wainwright leaned forward, his throat working convulsively as he struggled to regain composure.

"I hope you do not consider me presumptuous," said Donald, a note of anxiety in his tone.

Wainwright's hand reached forth to clasp Donald's firmly. "No, I do not doubt your sincerity. An inordinate sense of pride has kept me in my present circumstances. This circumstance you have related has brought me to a realization that it is a selfish pride, as it has denied Connie the privileges to which she is entitled. There is nothing I can say," he went on in bitter self-condemnation, "that can even partially condone or palliate my stupidity. I should have known that she would require proper clothing now that she is grown up. As a matter of fact"—he paused, his distress acute—"my finances are at a very low ebb."

"How old is Connie?" asked Donald, hoping to relieve Wainwright's embarrassment.

"Nineteen."

Donald's head came up with a jerk. "What!" he almost shouted.

"She is nineteen," Wainwright reiterated, a peculiar expression in his eyes as he noticed Donald's bewilderment.

"Nineteen!" Donald re-echoed, a bemused look on his face. "Great Scot! This is a surprise. I thought of Connie as being not more than fourteen or fifteen."

“Connie’s healthful outdoor life has tended to keep her young, and her mode of dressing enchances the youthful effect,” said her father as he sat down wearily, a far-away look in his eyes. “Her mother,” he went on softly, a tremor in his voice, “was just like her; at the age of twenty-five she looked almost a child.” He turned to Donald. “No doubt you have wondered why I buried myself in this wilderness?”

Donald nodded. At this moment they were interrupted by members of the Sports Committee, who wanted Donald’s advice on a matter pertaining to the afternoon’s programme.

It was evident to Donald as he withdrew that Wainwright had been about to disclose his past history, a history which had been locked in his heart these many years.

At three o’clock the crowd began drifting toward the race-course. The centre of the valley had been cleared of under-brush, and the long grass burned under the watchful eye of the fire-ranger. A small creek and a few swampy places had been “corduroyed” with cedar poles and then covered with soil. A judges’ stand, with a few hastily erected seats for Janet’s party, stood near the finishing point. The horse-race, as has been said, was to be the feature event of the day. The crowd surged happily from the lake-shore to line up in orderly ranks about the oval.

The brilliant and diversified colours of the Klootchmen’s skirts and head-gear showed in bright contrast to the drab wearing apparel of the white men. The Siwash Indians were dressed in nondescript clothing as to trousers and coat, but one and all wore side-brimmed cowboy hats and displayed silk handkerchiefs of gorgeous hues, knotted at the throat to drape their shoulders carelessly.

Three husky farmers’ sons from Pemberton rode to the starting-line amid hearty hand-clapping and shouting from their friends. A swarthy-skinned rider, mounted on a spirited black cayuse, came prancing through the crowd. He lifted his hat and smiled in acknowledgment of the plaudits of the spectators. This was Joe Lafonte, the half-breed who had won first prize at the Lillooet races for the past two seasons.

The wise ones averred that Paul John, of the Indian contingent, would give him a hard race. Paul John’s cayuse was young, but the previous year he had run the half-breed’s horse a close second. Money was being placed on all sides, particularly by the Indians, who are inveterate gamblers. Amid an excited babble in Chinook, nine Indian riders came laughing and shouting, with much waving of hats, to prance about and display their horsemanship before the admiring crowd.

Donald, with Andy, Gillis and Wainwright, stood leaning over the edge of the judges' stand watching the animated scene below.

At this moment there was an agitation at the far end of the oval, where the crowd opened to admit a horse and rider that came tearing down the course like the wind.

"Look!" Donald shouted excitedly as he seized Wainwright's arm. "It's Connie!"

Down the course, riding like a spirit of the woods, came the girl, her golden hair blowing about her face, sitting astride her mettlesome horse and riding as if the wilderness belonged to her alone.

Pegasus was not used to crowds. With arched neck and quivering flanks he reared on his hindlegs to poise an instant, then leaped forward like a rabbit. Connie sat on the bare back of her adored cayuse as though a part of the animal, her slender body moving in gentle undulations in perfect co-ordination with the movements of the horse. She was hard set to keep from running over the other riders, who sat with mouths agape.

Connie was unknown to the greater part of the crowd. To them this child-like equestrienne, with her mass of shining hair, appeared as an apparition. Her firm little hands soon checked her turbulent mount, who stood trembling with nervousness. The crowd gave her a rousing welcome as soon as they had recovered from their astonishment.

"Who is she? Where does she come from?" they shouted.

Connie kept her eyes fixed on the ground. She was outwardly calm and serene; inwardly she was as nervous as her fretting cayuse, and did not dare raise her flushed face to meet the battery of eyes around her.

Donald turned to Wainwright. "Are you going to let her run? Is it safe for her to enter a race with all those men?"

"I couldn't stop her now, and besides," he added with a touch of pride, "she can hold her own with any of them."

The old trapper made his way to Donald's side. His leathery old face, with its multitudinous wrinkles, wore a perturbed expression. "That feller Lafonte is cultus. He's full of dirty tricks; 'tain't safe for Connie to ride."

Donald turned anxiously to Wainwright.

Connie's father shook his head. "I am afraid it is too late now." Then in a lower voice he added: "You must know the reason for her entering this race."

Donald looked puzzled for an instant. Suddenly it dawned on him. “The purse?”

Wainwright nodded. “It would break her heart if I forbade her to ride, now that she has gone this far. She must have decided suddenly, as she never mentioned it to me.”

The Rennie Company had put up a purse of two hundred and fifty dollars. There was to be a collection taken after the race to add to this purse.

The horses trotted down the course. Connie’s was rearing and prancing, and it was with difficulty that she managed to get him to join the others. She leaned forward to whisper words of quieting in his twitching ears. Down the course they came. They were in nice alignment as they passed the judges’ stand.

“Go!”

Connie on her spotted cayuse showed as a bright splash of colour in the midst of her darker competitors.

Lafonte’s dark face lighted with a savage gleam as he swung his horse to the inside or “pole.”

Running neck and neck with him was his hated rival, Paul John, leaning low on his horse’s neck and shouting unintelligibly in Chinook. Connie was with the stragglers five lengths in the rear. This was new to Pegasus, and he was bewildered by the crowding horses about him. As they turned the corner of the course, Lafonte’s horse stumbled, and before he righted Paul John had slipped into the lead. Cursing wildly, Lafonte settled himself in the saddle, his horse’s head at the flank of his rival.

Hundreds of times Pegasus had travelled this field with Connie clinging to his back, slowing up for shrubs and trees and making sudden bursts of speed in the open. That had been vastly different to being surrounded by running horses and listening to the wild cries of their riders and the roaring of the excited crowd.

At the moment Lafonte lost the point of vantage to his rival, Connie leaned forward and emitted a peculiar clucking sound, at the same time striking her moccasined feet into the horse’s sides. Pegasus’s ears twitched back at the sound of the voice he loved. “Now I know what you want,” he seemed to say, as his beautiful neck stretched out and his hoofs spurned the ground. His graceful body lowered until it appeared to the spectators as though he were just skimming the earth. He moved with a springy stride, the muscles of his sinewy frame working with a sliding movement beneath the

glossy skin. Gradually he drew away from the horses travelling with him. Foot by foot he crawled up on the leaders.

The party in the judges' stand came to their feet to shout approval. The girls were cheering wildly for Connie as she crept nearer the front.

Donald was leaning forward with flushed face, his eyes glued to the spotted cayuse, a deep admiration in his heart for the intrepid little rider.

Little Andy jumped on the rail. "Strike me pink!" he yelled, "look at that 'oss run!" His eyes were bright with excitement. "A 'undred dollars on the spotted 'oss!" he shouted hysterically.

"I'll take you," said a voice.

" 'Ere you are, mate; let's make 'er two 'undred. I'm for me 'ome girl. She saved me blinkin' life, God bless 'er!"

As they neared one of the corduroy bridges Connie was neck and neck with Lafonte. The latter glanced up as Pegasus came opposite. The roar of the crowd came dimly to Connie's ears above the swish of air and the rumble of hoofs as they struck the culvert. An evil look crossed the half-breed's face. He swung his horse sharply to the right. Connie's horse floundered. Struggling to right himself, he fell off the bridge and landed with a dull thud on the soft ground below. The forward motion of the cayuse had stopped so suddenly that Connie was thrown like a projectile to a clump of bushes fifteen feet distant.

For an instant the big crowd was paralyzed. Then there went up a great groan of horror. The old trapper came to his feet, his eyes flaming, a hectic flush on his cheeks. Like a flash his hand flew to his six-shooter, and the long-barrelled Colts was trained on Lafonte. As he pulled the trigger Douglas struck his arm and the bullet sped harmlessly over the horseman's head.

"My God!"

The words whistled through the set teeth of big Jack Gillis. "Let me get at him!" he cried hoarsely, as, pale of face, he struggled through the crowd. He would have thrown himself in front of the oncoming rider if strong hands had not clutched and held him. Connie's father fell back a step as if struck a sudden blow, his eyes wide and staring. Andy's head fell forward, and he groaned aloud. Janet covered her face with her hands and sat down weakly.

Donald leaned from the judges' stand, his face pale as death. A vision of Connie's broken body came before his eyes. "Oh, God!" he cried aloud in a voice vibrant with pain. He covered his eyes as though in dread of looking at the spot where she had fallen.

A shout came from the crowd—then a cheer that seemed to rock the hills. “Look! look!” they shouted.

Donald’s heart was beating tumultuously. Could he believe his eyes? Connie was standing upright. She appeared to sway slightly; then, like a flash, she was at her horse’s head.

Trembling and snorting, Pegasus came to his feet. With a bound she was on his back and seized the reins. Pegasus reared like a stag and was off down the course at the tail end of the race.

As Connie passed the judges’ stand she was well up with the tail-riders and gaining steadily. Her face was pale and tense. A smear of red showed on her arm, and a little stream of blood trickled down her forehead from the wound invisible in the thickness of her hair.

The crowd became suddenly quiet as Connie thundered past—a silent tribute to her glorious pluck. But as she crept toward her original position they roared their applause. Pegasus was showing an endurance and speed that had never been equalled in all of that district. As they turned to come down the home-stretch Connie was a good fifty yards behind the leaders. Lafonte’s wiry cayuse was again in the lead by a few feet.

The shock and strain were beginning to tell on Connie. She leaned forward and in a broken, trembling voice she cried: “Oh, Peggy! Win, Peggy! Please! Please! I don’t want to lose! I’ve got to win! Go! Go!” She was sobbing hysterically now, and her small hands were patting the horse’s neck.

Pegasus had never heard that tone of supplication in the sweet voice of his mistress before. Nobly he responded to the call. She felt his body lower under her as he set himself to the herculean task of overcoming his rival’s enormous lead.

Lafonte was using the whip. Paul John, hanging so persistently to his flank, angered him. They thundered across the corduroy, and at the sound of Pegasus’s hoofs on the cedar poles Lafonte turned to glance behind. A look of astonishment crossed his face as he saw the golden-haired rider so close. With a curse he struck his horse a brutal blow that caused the animal to lose its stride momentarily and fall back in line with Paul John.

Slowly, but surely, Connie’s spotted cayuse was closing the gap between himself and the two leaders, sweeping along at a terrific pace, his body and limbs moving with the rhythmic grace of a thoroughbred. Connie was leaning so low that the heavy white mane of her horse was brushing her face. Her hair was streaming in the wind like fine-spun gold. The party in

the judges' stand rushed to the railing, leaned anxiously forward to get a glimpse of the running horses as they turned the corner, and cheered lustily as the three riders thundered over the small bridge and came toward the finishing line. Connie was at Lafonte's flank now.

Pegasus's remarkable speed fanned the spectators' excitement to a fever heat. Andy had done so much shouting that his voice was reduced to a whisper. Standing on the top rail, his arms waving, he was shouting huskily, "Come on, Connie! Come on, Connie!"

Donald's dark eyes were glowing as he watched the slender figure clinging to the flying horse's bare back. "What a pity if she loses," he said under his breath. Leaping to the rail, he joined in the shouts of encouragement to the straining Pegasus.

With one hundred yards to go, Connie uttered one last appeal to her flying steed. Above the drumming of hoofs the spectators heard her voice ring in passionate entreaty. "Now, Peg! Now! Go! Go!"

With nostrils distended, his breath coming in choking gasps, his eyes bulging, and the voice of his adored mistress ringing in his ears, the gallant animal with a burst of speed that made the onlookers marvel, ranged himself alongside his labouring rivals.

Ten yards from the finish—five yards—they were neck and neck. Then, summoning his last ounce of strength, Pegasus leaped forward as though he would annihilate time and distance. With eyes nearly blinded with dirt, tears and the roaring air, Connie saw Pegasus hurl himself past the winning post —a winner by half a length!

The ear-splitting roar that went up from the race-mad crowd must have caused the marmots on the slides near the distant glaciers to seek their holes in terror. A flock of mallard ducks, which had floated peacefully near the centre of the placid lake throughout the day's commotion, rose with frightened cries to seek a more secluded spot in which to finish their afternoon's siesta.

The crowd had seemingly gone mad. The atmosphere pulsated with a wild tumult of sound. Hats were thrown in air and throats were strained with shouting.

Donald found himself with his arms about Andy, dancing and cheering in a frenzy of joy.

Connie made no attempt to check her cayuse's onward flight. She was in no mood to listen to the kudos of the admiring crowd; she wanted only to get away from the scene as quickly as possible. The movement toward the

centre gave her the opportunity she desired, and she urged the weary cayuse through an opening on her left. Many hands were reached up to congratulate her, but she pushed her way through to the trail.

At the sound of hoof-beats behind her she turned to see Lafonte urging his tired mount toward the Pemberton trail and looking back apprehensively over his shoulder.

Several men were running after him, shaking their fists and uttering loud imprecations. A man leaped from behind a jack-pine to land in the path in front of the half-breed, lunged for the reins, missed, then caught the stirrup. Lafonte struck the man a blow with his heavy whip that loosened his hold and felled him to the ground.

Connie saw Gillis break from the crowd, jump to the saddle of a cayuse and start after the fleeing man just as the latter disappeared in the woods. Gillis waved his hand to her and vanished in pursuit. She urged Pegasus to the shelter of the timber as she saw her father and Donald running toward her.

The strenuous race and the spectacular fall had left both horse and rider in a badly shaken condition. Connie's body was bruised and sore, and her head ached horribly. The cayuse's strained muscles were stiffening, he was limping badly, and his head drooped wearily as he dragged his tired limbs up the steep trail.

At the barn door Connie dismounted stiffly, removed the horse's bridle, then threw her arms passionately around his neck and stroked his symmetrical head with soft caresses. "I'm so sorry, Peggy darling," she said in a choking voice.

The horse nipped her shoulder in a weak attempt at playfulness, as if to signify that he quite understood.

Connie's eyes brightened at a sudden thought. "Peggy dear," she whispered softly as she nestled her cheek against his soft mane, "do you know that I can have some nice clothes now? Lots and lots of nice things. I am going to buy you a blanket—a nice thick one for winter—and some ribbons for your mane. And you, Peggy"—with a flood of tenderness in her voice—"you won all this for me."

She was crooning sweet nothings in his ear that only Pegasus could understand when her father appeared, breathless from running, his face grey and anxious.

"Are you all right, Constance darling?"

Connie stepped forward. She was pale and weak, but her colourless lips tried to form a smile.

“Yes, Daddy dear—I’m—all—ri——” Her voice trailed to a whisper and the blue eyes closed as darkness fell upon her like a cloud. Swaying uncertainly for an instant, she fell like a broken flower into her father’s outstretched arms. For the first time in her life Connie had fainted. She lay like a child in his trembling arms, her upturned face wearing the pallor of death.

With a prayer on his lips and an agony of fear in his heart, her father carried her to the cabin and tenderly stretched the bruised little body on the coarse blankets of her bunk.

CHAPTER XVIII

At the race-course the crowd eddied excitedly about the judges' stand, or stood in groups talking of the wonderful performance of the spotted cayuse that had made the erstwhile champion appear a mere tyro.

Gillis came riding slowly from the woods and was hailed by questioning shouts from a score of throats.

"Did you get him?"

A bloody handkerchief was wrapped around the big man's hand, and a livid welt showed on his forehead. He smiled grimly as he dismounted, "I got the d——d skunk," he answered savagely.

He turned to a group of Indians. "You fellers'd better look out for him when you go along; his eyesight's kinda bad."

Donald came to the front of the judges' stand and held up his hand for silence. Gradually the hum of voices died away and the crowd turned to face him.

"As you know, we are to take up a collection to add to the Company's purse. The gentleman below," pointing down at Andy, "will hold the hat. We have witnessed an exhibition of matchless skill and pluck. Give as you feel."

The crowd cheered lustily. Then, jostling each other good-naturedly like a lot of school-boys, they formed in a long queue.

Andy started the contribution by giving his whole roll of bills. Money showered upon him until he was forced to call for another hat.

"Fightin' " Jack came to Donald in great perturbation. "Say! Our gang's all stony broke. Can we sign a due-bill?"

Donald called the time-keeper.

"Make her out for twenty bucks for each of us," said "Fightin' " Jack.

Andy's spirits soared as the pile rose higher.

"God bless 'er little 'eart," he murmured, "she can 'ave an 'ole shipload of them blinkin' camisole things."

An hour later, as Donald climbed the hill to deliver the prize, he met Doctor Paul.

"How is she, Doctor?"

“She’s had a nasty shaking up, but there are no bones broken. She will have to remain in bed for a week or so.”

Wainwright saw Donald coming and stepped outside the door to meet him. “She’s sleeping,” he said in a low tone. He looked questioningly at Donald as the latter passed him the package of money.

“The prize money,” Donald explained.

Wainwright peeped at the contents and his face lit up with pleased astonishment. “I understood that the purse was to be a small one!”

When Donald told him of the collection, Wainwright’s face flushed hotly. “Is that the custom?” he questioned sharply.

Donald nodded.

Wainwright paced nervously with hands clasped behind his back. “Pardon my abrupt manner,” he said contritely, “I am a bit out of sorts to-day.”

Every evening Donald called at the Wainwright home, bringing little delicacies carefully prepared by Andy. Once he spoke to Connie from outside the door, and her answering voice gave him an odd thrill. He pondered over this as he made his way down the hill. He was struck by a sudden thought. His face broke into a smile and he shrugged his shoulders. “Nonsense,” he said aloud.

Janet remained several days after her friends had returned to the city. She had tried in vain to restore the familiar relations which formerly existed between herself and Donald. His evening visits to the cabin on the mountain deprived her of his company, and she, half-jestingly, reproved him for his inattention to her. With spirits depressed and a despondent look in her dark eyes, Janet returned to Vancouver.

One evening Wainwright gave Donald a letter to post, addressed to a big departmental store in Vancouver. A few days later there arrived numerous bundles and boxes, including a big trunk. Donald with the assistance of Gillis’s crew carried them up the hill.

“I’ve brought your big trunk with the ‘bulgy top,’ Miss Wainwright,” he called.

Connie sat up in her bunk so quickly that her head bumped the boards above. “Miss Wainwright” he had called her! Her eyes glowed in the dusky half-light. “Thank you so much,” she replied.

The next day Wainwright informed Donald that Connie was up and would see him.

“Just a minute, Dad,” she cried as she heard them approaching.

Feverishly she rushed to the small mirror to glance at her reflection. With nervous hands she fluffed the hair about her ears and smoothed imaginary wrinkles from the collar of her dress. Then she sat down gravely and arranged her skirts about her.

“Come in,” she called.

Donald followed Wainwright, his heart-beats peculiarly accelerated. For an instant he could not distinguish objects in the dim interior. Then his eyes rested on Connie, sitting demurely in the corner. She wore a gingham dress of blue, with white collar and cuffs. A dark belt was fastened snugly at her slender waist. Tiny high-heeled shoes peeped from below the hem of her skirt. Her beautiful hair hung down her back in a huge braid that fastened at the nape of her slim, round neck with a narrow black bow. She rose and crossed the room to meet him, her high heels making her lithe little body appear much taller. There was something fragile about her beauty, some of the colour gone from her cheeks, and just a hint of shadows under her eyes.

Donald held out his hand. “Good evening, I’m glad to see that you are better,” he said awkwardly.

A slender, warm hand crept timidly into his, and his fingers closed on it gently as on a flower. He stared down at her, thrilled by her loveliness. She raised her eyes with their bewilderingly long lashes slowly to his face. With a sudden leaping of his heart, Donald realized that he was in love.

They talked desultorily while Connie sat timidly on the edge of the uncomfortable chair. She could not feel at ease in the high, narrow shoes and the enveloping skirts. And as she essayed to cross the rough floor with an assumed air of ease, her ankle turned and she would have fallen had not Donald caught her in his arms.

As he raised her to her feet she blushed furiously, and he fancied he could feel the warm beating of her heart. With an embarrassed apology, she slipped from him, crossed to the table and lighted a candle. And presently he took his leave, Wainwright walking with him down the darkening trail.

Wainwright was in one of his brooding moods. For a few minutes he was silent. As they neared the bluff he spoke.

“After witnessing my daughter’s distress the morning of the race I am afraid that you feel harshly toward me for allowing her to be placed in such a humiliating position. You have been exceedingly kind to us; therefore, I feel that I should relate the circumstances which have placed me in my

present position. As I told you that day, I have allowed my pride to withhold from my daughter her inherited rights. I will be as brief as possible.

"My father, who took great pride in the family name, planned a political career for me even from the day of my birth. By natural taste and temperament I was quite unfitted for public life. I must have been a great trial to him, as from early boyhood I evinced a great love for the study of botany and ornithology. He would go into a red rage when he found me in the garden studying flowers under a microscope or stalking birds in the shrubbery.

"At college I was not a success, either socially or in my class. Always of a retiring nature, I did not enter social life or college sports, and the course of study set for me by my father bored me extremely.

"During my third year at college I met Connie's mother. Until that time no woman had entered my life, although my father had hinted his plans for my marriage as soon as I had finished my course.

"To me any flower shop, however small, acted as a magnet. One day I stood gazing in the window of a tiny florist's shop on the Strand. A girl was kneeling among the flowers, and as she lifted her head our eyes met. She was like a golden lily. Her hair was like Connie's hair, and the blue of her eyes was the blue of the pansies she held in her hand. And her name was Constance."

He paused for an instant.

"Her father, who had been a rector in a small parish in the south of England, died just previous to our meeting, leaving his motherless child without kith or kin. Lest I weary you I may say briefly that we were married. My father would not even grant me an interview, but wrote to me saying that marrying as I had done had barred me forever from his door. I did not care. I was happy—completely, supremely happy. I sold a small estate bequeathed to me by my mother, and we set out for British Columbia.

"Ah!" he breathed softly, "that voyage! We could not afford it, but we travelled first-class—it was our honeymoon and we were young. We had never been to sea before, and the novelty of it all wove a spell about us. As we walked the deck we talked joyously of our wonderful future in the mysterious Great West.

"Our first year in Vancouver was one of blessed content. There is no love that could be greater than ours. Clerical work was scarce, so I took any job that offered. I would come home black with coal-dust or white with

lime, and my wife would cry out merrily as she threw herself into my arms. We turned our hardships into jests."

A smile of infinite tenderness played about his eyes as memory recalled the golden days with the woman he loved.

"The next winter I was taken grievously ill. I lay helplessly on my back while my tender wife tramped from house to house teaching painting and music. Day after day through all kinds of weather she made her daily rounds to keep us in the bare necessities of life, and pay the doctor's bills."

Wainwright's voice sank and almost failed him for a moment. Recovering himself, he resumed his story.

"She would come home at night, tired and worn, to fall asleep in a chair by my bedside, while I raved in a fever. She went without food to buy dainties for me. She never lost her cheery smile—but it killed her! She died giving birth to—to—Constance."

Tears rose to his eyes, and for a moment he covered them with his hand. With a great effort he continued.

"I became embittered, changed completely out of any semblance to my former self. I cursed my father. I cursed the world. I would have welcomed death, but as I looked down at the tiny mite by my dead wife's side, I knew that I must fight to live.

"A short time after, I received from my father a letter in which he asked my forgiveness. I was unfitted to make my own way in the world, yet my father had turned me brutally away. My wife had died from overwork and lack of food. I wrote to him in a black rage a letter that must have scorched his soul.

"For four years I eked out a miserable existence in the City. My health broke down again, and my doctor warned me that I must get to a higher altitude. I learned of this place, turned everything into cash, and came here, bringing Connie with me.

"My sole income has been derived from writing articles on Nature for the newspapers and magazines. Several times my father has advertised in the newspapers, asking me to return. I read of his death two weeks ago. For Constance's sake, I am going to start for England to-morrow."

Wainwright's head drooped listlessly as he concluded his story. All energy, all strength of bearing, seemed to have gone from him. The bitter remembrances he had voiced had brought a look of mental anguish to his face. He stood staring mutely before him.

Donald's heart ached for this man, whose great love for his wife was as passionate at this moment as when she was living. "How he loved her!" he thought.

When Wainwright spoke again his voice was spiritless. "You are the first person to whom I have spoken of my past; even Constance does not know." As he turned to leave Donald gripped his hand in silence, but with a pressure eloquent of heart-felt sympathy.

Andy had noticed Donald's increasing interest in Connie and had wisely refrained from accompanying him on his nightly visits. On this particular night Donald came into the kitchen whistling a lively air, his face wreathed in smiles. He slapped Andy heartily on the back as he asked him for a lunch. His gaiety was so pronounced that Andy studied him closely.

"You look 'appy, Donnie," he remarked.

"I am, Andy; I'm the happiest man in the world."

He finished eating, then sat staring dreamily at the smoke of his cigarette as it circled about his head. Andy discoursed lightly on various subjects, but Donald did not seem to hear him. After he left Andy heard him singing merrily in his cabin.

"Strike me pink, but I do 'ope Donnie has waked up! What a pair, what a pair!" he said to himself.

In the morning Donald rode north on the gas-car to the scene of logging operations near the upper lake. He left orders with the men to bring Wainwright's baggage to the station. What Connie's absence would mean was brought forcibly to him as he met the trapper leading Pegasus and her pet deer down the trail to his cabin.

Two hours later Connie and her father stood on the station platform. Connie was dressed in an inexpensive blue suit, and wore a neat blue hat with a jaunty feather. Her golden hair was piled high in loops and coils that held a sheen of brightness like the shine of metal where the sun touched it. She appeared mystified and confused as the time for the train to pull out drew near. Andy, standing by her side, cursed softly as he saw her looking toward the mill, a look of poignant disappointment in her eyes.

"Donald 'ad to go up the line, Connie; guess something 'as 'appened," he mumbled.

At that moment Donald was heaping opprobrium on a recalcitrant gas-car that had died on his hands.

The conductor called "All aboard!" Connie turned to Andy. "Good-bye, Andy," she said sweetly, her eyes swimming with tears.

Andy took her gloved hand. “Good-bye, Connie,” he returned, attempting a brave smile. “When are you coming back?”

“Maybe never.” She choked as she stumbled up the car steps.

As the train started to move Connie came to the rear platform. A small, pathetic figure she seemed to Andy as she strained her eyes toward the north in a vain hope that she would see Donald. Andy stood in the centre of the track waving his hat until the flutter of Connie’s little handkerchief vanished around a curve.

As the train roared through the cut, the last view of her loved valley flashed before her eyes. Her face strangely white, she clung to the brass rail and gazed with tearful eyes at the only home she had ever known.

As they passed the trapper’s cabin, the noise of the rushing train sent Pegasus galloping madly about the pasture. With flying hoofs that tore up the sod he circled around the field, then came to the fence and with his beautiful head held high on the arched neck he looked with startled eyes at the speeding train.

With a gesture intensely eloquent, Connie flung out her arms. “Good-bye, Peggy! Good-bye!” She found her way to a seat and covered her face with her hands.

Donald flung himself from the gas-car before it had ceased moving. “Train gone, Andy?” he shouted.

Andy stood with arms folded. “Gone?” he yelled, “of course it’s gone. Why in ’ell wasn’t you ’ere?”

“I had to go up the line to look over some logs, and the car broke down,” replied Donald bitterly.

“Of course,” said Andy with withering sarcasm, “the timber couldn’t ’ave waited another day.”

“Andy,” asked Donald excitedly, ignoring the remark, “did Connie leave you her address?”

“Why the ’ell should she give me ’er address? ’Aven’t you ’er address?” was Andy’s unaccommodating reply.

“No, I haven’t, I know that they are going to England, and that is all.”

Donald sat down dejectedly.

Andy’s face softened. “Do you like Connie?” he queried.

“Like her? I love her!”

“In that case I don’t see ’ow she didn’t let you know where to find ’er,” puzzled Andy.

“She doesn’t know that I care for her,” said Donald gloomily.

Andy’s mouth opened. He seized Donald by the shoulder. “Do you mean to tell me that you let that girl get away from you without letting ’er know that you wanted ’er?” he demanded incredulously. “Strike me ’andsome,” blazed Andy, “of all the blinkin’ mutts in this ’ere world—you—you——” Speech failed him for a moment. “You let that dear little girl go away broken-’earted. . . .”

“Andy,” interrupted Donald eagerly, “do you think Connie cares for me?”

For a moment, as he looked into his friend’s face, Andy was tempted to tell him of the scene after his fight with Hand. But the promise to Connie sealed his lips.

“ ’Ow the ’ell should I know?” he mumbled. “But,” he added with fine sarcasm, “if bone was ten cents a cubic foot you’d be a multi-millionaire, you blinkin’ pie-eyed nincompoop—you—you——” He clapped a tragic hand to his brow. “You give me a ’eadache,” and muttering to himself, he trudged up the hill.

The next day Donald went to Vancouver. He scanned the registers in hotels, inquired at docks and depots, but no trace of the Wainwrights could he find. He walked the streets with a forlorn hope that he might meet them. The hearts of many slender golden-haired girls were set fluttering that day as a tall, handsome young man subjected them to close scrutiny.

Two days later he returned to the lake. That night he switched off the light and sat by the open window looking out on a night of stars, with a new moon making a ghostly light on the lake. An owl’s mournful hoot was answered by the uncanny cry of a heron. The faint sighing sound of streams in distant gorges became a haunting chorus to this duet. He thought of Connie’s cabin up the mountain, now cold and dark. How he would miss her! What an idiot he had been not to have known long ago that he loved her. He knew now that he had loved her from the first. Dear little Connie!

Donald walked the floor until midnight. Once in bed, he tossed restlessly until the early morning, then fell into a fitful sleep in which he dreamed of a small, winsome face and big blue eyes surrounded by a wealth of golden hair.

September with its days of mellow sunshine passed. October brought heavy hoar frosts that covered the earth with a robe of diamonds, and

formed ice in the small pools and marshes. Winter comes early in the mountains. In mid-winter the valleys between the peaks of the Coast Range will have five feet of snow when, a few hundred feet below, where the warm waters of the Pacific lap the gentle slopes, the grass is green and there is none of the chilly whiteness that mantles the towering hills above.

There came a day in November when the air held a solemn stillness. The firs and pines pointed straight to the sky without a quiver in their branches. The brown earth seemed to say, "I am ready." The cry of the loon in it had a dreary sound, a note which seemed to say that winter was coming. Squirrels working in the tops of big pines increased their efforts. The cones, nipped off by their sharp teeth fell pattering to the ground, to be garnered by these busy little workers and secreted in their nests in hollow trees. The bear of the hillsides ate the frozen berry or the pulp of rotten log to cleanse its stomach before starting its long winter sleep in windfall or cave. Thus does Nature give to the wild things of the forest an instinct unknown to man.

The rush of wings sounded high in air as wild ducks passed in swift flight on their yearly pilgrimage to the south. Occasionally a flock would lower in gradually narrowing circles to land with a splash in the restful waters of the lake, then to stretch tired wings, the while bobbing their heads and quacking contentedly. Flocks of geese passed in wedge-shaped formation, their honking coming faintly from a dizzy height. A flock of Arctic swans, skimming so low that the crisp rustle of their wings could be heard, landed in the centre of the lake with a great commotion. There with their beautiful necks proudly arched they floated like white ghosts throughout the night. The red and yellow leaves, like gaudy curtains draped the deciduous trees. The wild crab-apple and high-bush cranberry hung frozen on the naked branches. The sun was surrounded by a ring and shone weakly through a misty haze. The unmistakable breath of the north wind was in the air.

Old John took his traps down from the loft and oiled them. A patch was found needed on a worn moccasin, and new laces were inserted in his snowshoes. "Winter's comin', ol' timer, and we're goin' to have a heavy fall of snow," he mused to himself. For two days Nature gave warning, then on the second night the storm came.

A roaring wind came bellowing from the north, lashing the waters of the lake to foam, tearing at Donald's cabin with the strength of invisible giant hands, and howling through the forest with shrieking wails. Gust came upon gust with increasing strength, and in the short lulls could be heard the swish of the sleety snow against the windows.

The big trees creaked as they swayed in the gale, and with a loud groan, as if in mortal pain, a huge forest monarch, as its roots gave way, fell crushing down the smaller trees to smite the earth with a resounding crash.

The wind went down through the night, but the snow fell steadily. When Donald opened his door next morning he looked out on a new world. The wizardry of frost and snow had given the earth a blanket of white that was eye-blinding in its brilliancy under the bright morning sun. The keen frost had locked the lake tight under a coating of clear ice.

CHAPTER XIX

WITH a fond hope that he would receive word of the Wainwrights, Donald eagerly awaited the coming of each mail; but after a month of disappointment he became less sanguine, and threw himself desperately into work in a vain attempt to allay his heartache.

During the long winter the mill continued operations in spite of heavy snows, the roads being kept open by the continual traffic.

Janet came twice with gay parties to enjoy the ski-ing and snowshoeing. She found that she loved Donald, and decided that any uncertainty as to his past was as nothing when weighed against her need of him. Bitterly she reproached herself for allowing her pride to estrange him from her, and with all the arts of a beautiful and cultured woman she sought to regain the power she once held over him.

On one occasion, when Janet mentioned his "wood-sprite," she saw a rapt look in his eyes and caught her breath sharply. The very thought of losing him stabbed her like a knife-thrust.

With the coming of March a change came over the earth. Winter shivered and reluctantly loosed his hold. Gentle showers and warm winds from the south honeycombed the ice on the lake; snowdrifts faded away, and the frost-bound soil gave forth earthy odours to replace the keen smell of the snow.

One morning a song-sparrow under Donald's window sent out its sweet "chip-chip-che-char-che-wiss-wiss," and from the top of a swaying alder a wren carolled his joy of living in full-throated tones that said that spring was here. Stirred by the warmth and cleaving buds, the frogs came from the mud, where they had lain dormant all winter, and with swelling throats and bulging cheeks sent out their cheerful "k'tun, k'chunk."

Mists covered the lake, and in an open spot near the mouth of the creek a flock of ducks disported themselves happily. The sun grew higher with every dawn, gaining strength each day until its warming energy spread the beauty of colour and fragrance over all.

One afternoon, when the air pulsated with the song of birds, and newly-opened buds burdened the atmosphere with perfume, Donald walked up the hill to Wainwright's cabin.

Scores of birds, returned from their yearly pilgrimage to the south, flitted about the deserted buildings, but there was no golden-haired girl with a welcoming smile to greet them. Rivulets from the melting snows had gouged channels in the once neatly kept plots of wild flowers, and the roof of one of the smaller huts had fallen in.

Donald pushed open the door of the main building and entered. The air felt chill and dank. He experienced a quick depression of spirits, and his heart ached as he surveyed the gloomy interior. He shivered as a pack-rat scuttled across the floor and disappeared under Connie's bunk. With a heavy heart he returned to the bright sunshine, sat down, and gave himself over to a period of melancholy retrospection.

His mind went back to his first meeting with Connie, then on through the many thrilling episodes of the summer. She belonged to high mountains, to deep forest glades, to companionship with the birds, flowers and trees of God's wild outdoors. She would never be content with the bad air and the cramped conventions of cities. He suddenly remembered the words she had used that day by the stream near her nest in the cedars. He seemed to hear her sweet, hesitating voice with its pleasant English accent.

"And," she had said, "six months out of every year I'd come right here and live in these mountains."

"She'll come back," he said aloud. The thought cheered him. "She'll come back," he repeated to Andy that night.

"I 'ope so, Donnie."

A week later, Robert Rennie, accompanied by his daughter, arrived at Summit Lake. The owner was in high spirits. "I am pleased with the excellent work you are doing here," he said, as he placed a hand in friendly fashion on Donald's arm. "The mill is a success—a huge success—and I know who deserves the greater share of the credit!" He smiled up at Donald. "Next week," he went on, "an event of importance to the lumber industry takes place. The Government is to entertain a party of Eastern lumbermen. I will admit that I was proud when the chief forester called at my office to tell me that this mill had been selected as the most modern and efficient in the Province, and requested permission to bring the Government's guests here.

"They are to stay here a few days, but you will not be inconvenienced, as the train will be equipped with dining and sleeping-cars, loaned for the occasion by the C.P.R. I will come with them, but I am leaving it to you to arrange for their entertainment and to see that everything is in tip-top shape for their arrival."

As Robert Rennie was leaving the next morning he turned to Donald. “By the way,” he said casually, “I have decided to add a yearly bonus to your salary, based on the profits of this mill. I have made it retroactive from the time you took charge.” Before Donald had time to express his thanks his employer swung aboard the train.

Expressing a desire to be at the lake on the arrival of the excursion, Janet remained.

On the day set for the visit of the Eastern capitalists the sun rose in radiant promise of a typical June day. The leaves were now fully matured, and the willows and maples rustled under the soft, warm winds. All the valley was clothed in a verdant, quivering, gently pulsating life.

The long train drew slowly into the depot. Its occupants poured out until the small platform was filled to overcrowding. Robert Rennie, accompanied by a slender man dressed in a tweed suit and cap, pushed his way through the crowd to Donald’s side.

Donald greeted his employer, then glanced casually at Mr. Rennie’s companion. His eyes widened. “Mr. Wainwright!” he gasped.

Wainwright laughed happily as he wrung Donald’s hand.

“Is—is Con—Miss Wainwright with you?” stuttered Donald.

Then he saw her.

Connie had rehearsed this moment a thousand times. She stood quietly on the steps for a moment, then slipped gracefully to the platform, Connie herself could not have imagined how changed she was. From coiffure to dainty French heels she was dressed as if fresh from the hands of an expert Parisian costumer. So dazzling was she that she positively took Donald’s breath away. It seemed to him that she had grown like a magic rose, all at once from a tiny bud to a full blossom. No fault could be found with the perfect oval of her face, or with the delicate white rose skin, from which every trace of tan had gone. The long lashes that fringed her big blue eyes had turned a shade darker than the curling waves of her abundant golden hair.

Andy, whose small form had been hidden in the rear, moved bashfully forward, fumbling the wide hat held in his hand. “ ’Ello, Connie,” he blurted, his lips parted in a wide smile of welcome.

Instantly Connie forgot her assumed dignity and became her warm, impulsive little self. With a glad cry she flung her arms about Andy’s neck and kissed him.

“Strike me pink!” breathed Andy, as his hand stole up to touch the spot where Connie’s lips had brushed his cheek.

Connie turned to face the lake. “Oh, Dad!” she cried in ecstasy, “isn’t it good to be back here again?” She stretched her arms toward the ice-clad peaks. A gentle breeze swept down the wooded slope to fan her face as though in welcome. The blood surged beneath her smooth white skin and went singing through every vein. “Ah!” she sighed happily, as she inhaled a deep breath of air laden with the odour of pine from the hills she loved. Donald, gazing at her hungrily, saw tears brimming under her long lashes.

From the far end of the train a tall, grey-haired man assisted a slender sweet-faced woman to the ground, and then walked towards the station. As they stepped to the platform the woman’s eyes rested on Donald, who stood with his back to her. Instantly she became rooted to the spot, eyes wide, one hand fluttering toward her heart. With the supreme, wondrous mother-love shining in her eyes, she held out her arms.

“Donald!” she cried passionately, “Donald!”

Donald whirled at the sound of the loved voice calling his name. His heart throbbed wildly, his throat felt constricted and his face paled under stress of strong emotion.

“Mother!”

His arms were around his mother, yearning, tender, hungry, after these long months of separation. Her face upturned to his was white and drawn, but her eyes shone with hallowed joy. He felt his hand gripped in his father’s strong fingers, and saw his eyes shining with tears. John McLean patted his boy’s dark head with a shaking hand.

“Donnie! My boy, Donnie!”

For some time Donald was oblivious to all save the great happiness of meeting his parents. His mother’s embrace almost unmanned him, and it was with difficulty that he kept back the sobs that tightened his throat.

He led his parents to the other end of the platform and introduced them to his friends.

Robert Rennie’s comments were simply gasps and a reiterated, “Well! Well!”

Andy offered his usual contribution. “Strike me pink!” he said.

Connie’s eyes were filled with soft eagerness as she greeted Donald’s mother. The glow in Donald’s face as he spoke to Connie was poignantly

significant of his deep love for her. But Connie, to his consternation and dismay, met his ardent glances with a look of cold indifference.

Since Connie's arrival Janet's features held a look of disquietude, but she acknowledged the introduction to Donald's parents with a radiant smile.

A moment later, Connie, with skirts held high, was running down the railroad track.

"Going after her horse," smiled Wainwright in answer to Donald's question.

"Will you have dinner with us?" invited Donald.

"Yes, thank you," responded Wainwright. "We will sleep in the car tonight," he continued, "but Constance insists that we must return to the old home as soon as possible. She has been busy drawing plans for a chalet she intends building on the bluff."

Connie returned with the old trapper, the latter leading Pegasus.

At dinner Connie showed no signs of her former shyness. She was as self-possessed, calm and perfectly poised as a goddess. A glad light filled her eyes as Gillis and his crew of "redshirts" filed into the big dining-room. She sprang to her feet and greeted them joyfully, shaking hands with each and everyone.

"I'm so glad to see you, Jack," she smiled.

The big logger took her tiny hand in his. "We're sure glad to have you with us agin, Connie."

"May I bring Andy in to dine with us, Mr. McLean?" she asked as she came back to the table.

Donald nodded assent. She ran gleefully to the kitchen, and a moment later the loggers grinned broadly as she came through the door leading the protesting cook by the arm.

"Now," she said as Andy sat down, "we're all here." She looked about her and clasped her hands rapturously. "It seems as though I had been gone for years. And oh, it is so nice to be home again!" She sank to a chair between Andy and the trapper. "Do you remember, Andy, when you were dressed as a butler and danced with John at your party?" She threw back her golden head and her silvery laughter filled the room.

Janet was unhappy from the moment of Connie's arrival. She had caught the look of adoration in Donald's eyes as Connie stepped to the station platform. Standing there then she had quite definitely abandoned any hope

of winning him. And Janet had been so sure that once she had held a place in his heart. A great depression, a great weariness of spirit, settled upon her.

That evening, as Donald walked with his parents by the lake-shore, he turned to his father. "Dad," he said anxiously, "do you think I have made good? Will you forgive me for—for——"

John McLean's eyes grew suddenly misty. "Donnie," he began gently, "Mr. Rennie has told us all about you. And no man could speak more highly of another." He drew a newspaper from his pocket. "Haven't you seen this?"

It was Vancouver's morning paper, with a full-page devoted to the visit of the Eastern lumbermen. There were several photographs of the Summit Mill and one of Donald. The paper spoke of him as "the able young engineer whose modern ideas and energy had given to British Columbia a logging plant and mill that were a credit to the Province."

Donald saw the proud light in his father's eyes, and his heart was filled with a great peace.

The next day carpenters and material arrived for the construction of Wainwright's new home. That afternoon Connie, clad in fashionable riding habit, came to the mill office with her foreman to place an order for lumber. Pegasus in silver-mounted bridle and English saddle was proudly restive. With neck arched he curvetted and rocked while Connie sat on his back with that complete lack of self-consciousness that is the heritage of a born horsewoman. Before leaving she rode up the hill among the toiling workers, her irresistible smile bringing an answering grin from the "redshirts," who doffed their big hats and shouted a joyous greeting.

All day pack-horses and men struggled up the hill, staggering under the weight of building material. But although Donald strained his eyes for a glimpse of the golden-haired rider, he saw her no more that day.

As dusk fell over lake and mountain, Donald returned from Wainwright's cabin. Andy glanced up expectantly as his friend appeared, but quickly averted his face as he saw the look of settled melancholy shrouding Donald's features. Donald sank disconsolately to a seat outside the kitchen door. He had found Wainwright alone and wondered if Connie had purposely absented herself. Her treatment of him since her return puzzled him sorely and had filled him with a great despondency. As he rose and walked toward his cabin, Andy gazed after the retreating figure, eyes filled with compassion, then turned to speak to one of his helpers in such an irritable tone that the flunkey's mouth opened in astonishment.

For three evenings it was the same. Donald failed to find Connie at home; nor did she come to the mill. He regretfully decided that it was no coincidence, but that she was deliberately avoiding him.

On a Sunday afternoon Andy saw Donald gaze yearningly toward the bluff, then turn up the trail leading to the dam.

At Donald's request Gillis had diverted logging operations to circle the little oasis in the heavy timber, so that Connie's sylvan glade still held its primeval charm and beauty.

Donald stood for a moment gazing reflectively into the white foam at the foot of the tiny cataract, then threw himself on the soft bed of moss and closed his eyes. But this time the fairy spot did not bring the usual delicious languor to his harassed spirit. Birds sang as sweetly; flowers filled the air with the same odour; the wind sighed as softly through the tree-tops, and the small brook still sang its rippling song. The rapid tattoo of a woodpecker's bill on a hollow tree jarred his nerves and he tossed restlessly.

A cedar tip floated through the air. Blown by the wind, it fluttered in circles, then landed gently on the hands lying on his chest. His eyes opened, then, with trembling limbs he came to his feet.

Connie, clad in faded overalls and cotton shirt, stood on the edge of the "nest." Her breast was heaving, her loosened golden hair flying in the wind. The softness in her blue eyes made Donald gasp, and his heart thumped as though it were in his throat.

"Connie!" he cried huskily, "I love you, dear! Don't you care for me even a little?"

She sprang lightly to the ground and came toward him, her arms outstretched. Tears of joy coursed down her cheeks. "Oh, Donald, Donald, you big stupid!" she sobbed, "I have been waiting here for you every day. I —I have loved you always."

With a shock of incredible rapture Donald gathered her in his strong arms, where she cuddled like a weeping child. He kissed her red lips, her eyes, hair and throbbing throat. "My little Connie," he said, in a voice vibrant with feeling, "do you really love me?" He pressed his cheek to hers and felt the flutter of her long lashes as she pressed the softness of her own closer. The quick, exquisite indrawing of her sobbing breath were lovely answering things, and he thrilled to hear her whisper: "Yes, Donald! Yes, Donald!"

Andy came walking meditatively up the path, his hands clasped behind him, his blond head bowed in deep thought. Not finding Donald at the dam,

he walked up the hill to enter the meadow just as Donald clasped Connie in his arms. For an instant the little Australian stood rigid, his eyes bulging, then retreated hastily to the shelter of the trees. Anyone seeing Andy at that moment would have thought him suddenly gone mad. He whirled about in a wild dance, hugging himself in an ecstasy of joy. Ceasing his mad gyrations, he dashed his hand across his eyes and bolted like a runaway down the hill.

Gillis and his "redshirts" sat sunning themselves on the steps of the dining-room. They sprang to their feet as Andy came tearing down the hill. Breathlessly Andy told them of the scene he had witnessed. "We'll give them a blinkin' good reception when they come down," he panted. He issued several sharp orders and the men scurried happily to execute his commands.

The train that was to carry the excursionists to the Coast was being made up on the siding. While they were awaiting this, the visitors watched with curious interest the mysterious preparations being made by the loggers.

At this moment, hand in hand, Donald and Connie turned the corner of the building. As they did so they came to a sudden halt and stared at the odd scene before them. The men stood in two orderly rows. The ground between was carpeted with wild flowers, and each logger held a mass of blooms in his hand. At the far end of this lane of men stood Andy, a wide smile on his droll face. Connie lowered her eyes in confusion. Donald shook his fist at Andy. "You little beggar! You are responsible for this."

Andy chuckled. "Come on, Donnie, be a sport," he coaxed.

With flushed faces Donald and Connie walked down the aisle, while the men pelted them with flowers. The crowd of visitors clapped their hands in appreciation of this beautiful scene. As they neared the end of the gauntlet, Andy sprang to a stump.

"Three cheers for the 'appy couple!" he yelled. A roar of cheering followed. "A tiger!" shouted Andy. And again the air trembled to the hoarse shout of brawny throats.

Donald led Connie straight to his mother. "Mother," he said bashfully, "meet your future daughter."

Quick tears came to his mother's eyes as Donald made this announcement. "My dear," she said tenderly, as her arms folded about Connie, "you are all love and tenderness."

The train's whistle screeched its warning and the crowd moved down to the station.

“Will you be coming home to us soon, Donnie?” asked his father as he was leaving. Donald looked down at Connie.

“We’ll visit you on our honeymoon, Dad,” responded Donald happily. He swept his arm toward the mountains. “I could never leave this. The spell of the Great West has entered my blood.”

Janet had spent the afternoon paddling idly on the lake. When she received the news of Donald’s engagement she concealed the ache in her heart by an outward air of indifference. The pretence of a headache enabled her to keep in her cabin and she did not appear for dinner. She wanted to be alone with her thoughts.

When the shadows lengthened, Donald and Connie moved slowly along the path toward the bluff. As they turned a curve in the trail Janet came to the window of her cabin and stood watching them until they disappeared from sight.

Andy, sitting a few feet distant with his back against a tree, noted the look of despondency on Janet’s face. He came to his feet and walked slowly toward the kitchen. “As Methusalem said through ’is whiskers, ‘ ’e who ’olds ’is ’ead too ’igh will ’t ’is blinkin’ toe.’ ”

As the lovers were about to turn up the mountain trail, the trapper emerged from the woods with his old pack-horse. The cayuse was piled high with luggage.

“Where are you going, John?” queried Donald.

“I’m hittin’ the trail, ol’ timer.”

“I hope you are not leaving us,” said Connie.

“Yes, I’m quittin’ the country.”

“Why?” questioned Donald.

“Gittin’ too thickly settled. I feel that I ain’t got room to breathe. I’m goin’ way back into the Cariboo somewhere so’s I kin be by myself.”

The race of mediæval hermits is not dead. The spirit that led the first pioneers into the forest guides others there to-day. There are men whose souls long for a place untamed, who yearn to breathe the wild free air. They want a home straight from the hands of the Creator, unspoiled by man. They may be trappers, who brave cold and hardships to clothe milady in warm furs; they may be prospectors, who search out the hidden gold for others to use. Whatever they may be, these hardy men blaze the trail for others to follow.

When Donald told the trapper of the coming wedding the old man's eyes softened. "I'm glad. It's jest right. I hoped you two would git married." He shook hands gravely, then clucked to his horse.

"Good-bye, Connie! Good-bye, ol' timer! God bless ye!" he shouted over his shoulder.

Donald and Connie stood watching the patient old figure as he trudged behind his cayuse. At a turn of the trail he stopped and for a long interval gazed back at the log cabin by the stream, which had been his home for so many years. He waved his hand in farewell, then horse and man disappeared from view.

When Donald and Connie reached the bluff the sun had sunk in the crimson west, leaving a rich afterglow that spread across the horizon from west to east, the rich colours merging by slow degrees into that pure pearl-grey which makes the long and lovely twilight of the British Columbia mountains. Down on the lake mists were gathering, but in the upper sky and on the glaciers a vivid orange glow still lingered. The trees stood stiff and motionless in the quiet air. From afar, subdued but clear, came the hoot of a blue-grouse, and from mountain gorges came the faint sighing sound of distant waterfalls. Sweet and pungent odours of wild flowers came from the woods about them. A star of silver brilliancy sparkled suddenly out in the sky over the massive snow-clad peaks.

"Venus," whispered Connie.

Donald's gaze swept from the camp, nestled at their feet, to the darkening heavens, to the star of love, then down to the girl by his side.

There are moments in the lives of all men—regardless of creed or religion—when they feel the nearness of God. Such a moment came to Donald. He uttered no sound, yet his soul was crying out its great thankfulness.

Connie sensed his feeling. She bowed her head, her eyes misty with joy and gratitude. "Oh, God," she murmured softly, "we thank Thee for Thy many blessings."

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A cover was created for this eBook and is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *The Crimson West* by Alex. Philip]