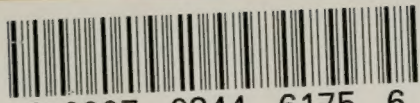


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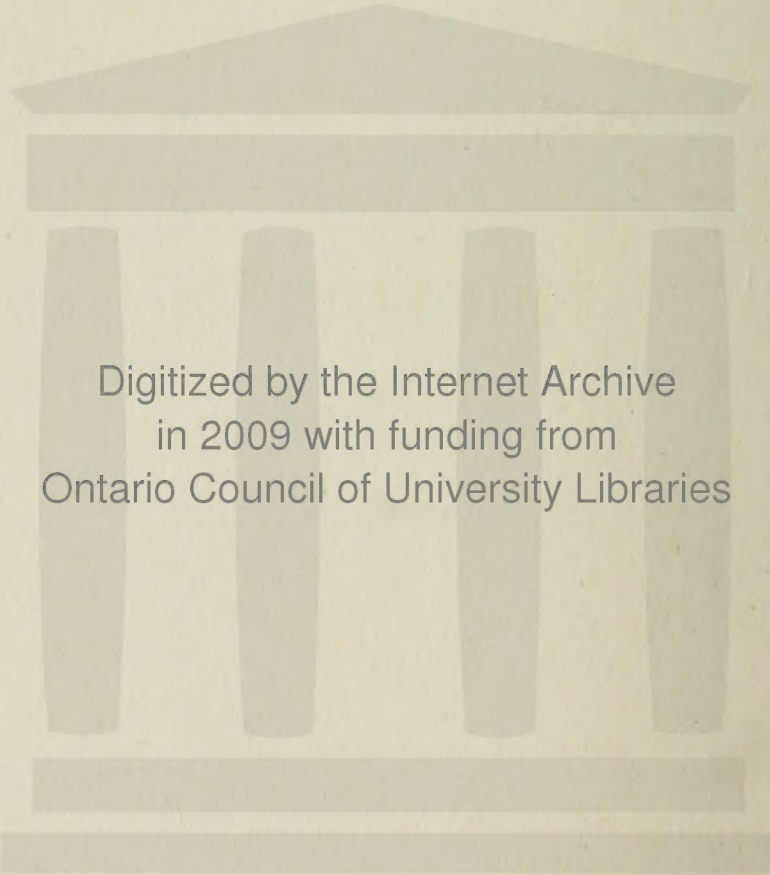
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BOOKS BY
CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND

THE SOURCE

SUDDEN JIM. Illustrated.

THE HIDDEN SPRING. Illustrated.

MARK TIDD. Illustrated.

MARK TIDD IN THE BACKWOODS. Illustrated.

MARK TIDD IN BUSINESS. Illustrated.

MARK TIDD'S CITADEL. Illustrated.

MARK TIDD, EDITOR

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER. Illustrated. Cloth.
Illustrated. Leather.

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK
ESTABLISHED 1817



“HOW COULD YOU DO IT WHEN WE TRUSTED YOU?”

THE SOURCE

A NOVEL

BY

CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND

Author of "The Hidden Spring"

"Sudden Jim" etc.



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CHAPTER I

FOUR men were loading a flat-car. They worked in pairs, going two by two into an adjacent shed to reappear with an object similar to a sack of flour between them—only the object was longer and somewhat limper. They would then approach the car, swing their burden back and forth a time or two to gain momentum, and hurl it with enthusiasm to the planking of the car. Sometimes the load lay perfectly still where it fell—sometimes it twitched uneasily or gave forth sound similar to human grunt or groan.

The burdens possessed other points of similarity to humankind. For instance, each had two arms and two legs, each had shoulders which continued upward into something unpleasant to see which might have been compared to a human head. There the similarity ended.

Sixteen of them were loaded onto the flat-car,

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then the largest of the four loaders vaulted up beside them and regarded them dispassionately.

“Sweet lot of birds,” said he, and then proceeded deliberately to walk from one end of the car to the other upon the bodies. He had no end to serve in doing this. It would have been easier to drop to the ground and walk, but the thing was characteristic of the man. It was his fashion of advertising his wares, for he was one who aspired to rule by fear and left undone no act which might inflate the legend fast growing up about him in the Vermont woods.

“Where’d these here come from, Langlois?” asked one of the loaders.

“Bums out of the Boston gutter,” said the big man, in a soft voice. “Them’s the kind of woodsmen we’re calc’lated to git out thirty thousand cord of pulp wood with this year. Huh!”

It was so. Aboard that car were sixteen bits of human wreckage from our most polished of cities, who, unfortunately for them, had been cast up on the unfriendly beach of a certain bums’ lodging-house. The proprietor of the lodging-house had profitable arrangements with an employment agency which included the sale of his boarders into bondage. The boarders were given drink to insensibility, were loaded on cars with a competent guard to see that none became sober and escaped,

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and were shipped where there was present need of them.

This time the shipment was made to the Green Mountain Pulp Company, where it was hoped it might be whipped into something resembling a company of lumberjacks.

Lumberjacks! There was hardly a man among them that had ever seen a tree not growing behind an iron park fence, or between sidewalk and pavement!

The race of lumberjacks has vanished from the hills; from time to time a few are imported at great pains from Canada or from Maine. Hitherto these had been pieced out with day laborers, with Italians, Polacks, anything that could be made to do. Now, with the Great War moving toward its second year, the laborers departed from the mountains, lured to steel-mill, munition-factory, industrial plant by promise of undreamed-of wages, and *their* places must be filled, for spruce must be cut, must be converted into pulp, or a public hungry for news, hungry for magazines or books, must go with appetite gnawing. For the spruce-tree is literature at its ultimate source.

Therefore sodden bums from Boston!

Toward the middle of that squalid mass of creatures a bearded, dead-eyed face arose slowly. Its owner blinked, looked owlshly about to find

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that his elbow was resting on a neighbor's ribs. He shifted, sat more erect, and bobbed his head in what must have been intended for a bow in the direction of the owner of the ribs.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I rested—my—elbow on you—inadvertently."

Then he sank back with mutterings to brutish sleep.

Langlois looked down at him and then looked at his helpers. "My Gawd!" said he. "Did you get that? What 'll be comin' up to us next? 'Inadvertently,' says he. 'I beg your pardon,' he says." Quite evidently the big man was non-plussed, for he remained silent a moment, staring at the bum. "Now hain't that a sweet piece of meat to whittle into a lumberjack!"

Presently an excitable little narrow-gauge engine came fussing onto the switch and attached itself to the flat-car and an accompanying train of timber trucks. Langlois and his men sat on the flat, their feet dangling over, and settled themselves for their twenty-mile ride back into the hills. The little engine bustled away with them.

Soon they passed out from the mills and yards, and the laborers' shacks about the mills, and rolled along the river's edge. Below, white water boiled and rushed over a rocky bed; above, the mountain, forest-clad, rose upward and upward.

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Over them blew the breath of the spruce woods; over the bums on the flat-car it blew as well, for it did not discriminate, and they drew it into their abused lungs. Such tonic had never before been theirs. There was a tingle to it, a life, a cleanness that could not but leave something of itself. It carried away fumes of cheap liquor; worked on them to awaken them and refresh them.

They began to seethe, to roll, to toss and flounder. One by one they sat up dazedly, clutching throbbing heads, peering about dully, affrightedly, curiously, as was the nature of each individual. Then they began to take stock of themselves, of one another and of their situation, mumbling to one another suspiciously, eying Langlois and his men furtively.

“Say, pardner,” said one, emboldened by his curiosity, “where are we at?”

“None of your business,” said Langlois, dispassionately. “Lay down and shut up.”

The man who had astounded Langlois by his use of the word “inadvertently” spoke again. “It seems to me,” he said, in a well-modulated, if somewhat hoarse, voice, a voice still capable of expressing courtesy, “that we are entitled to so much. Why not satisfy our natural curiosity?”

“Because I hain’t goin’ to,” said Langlois.

“Then,” said the man, “I will guess. I should

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say we were either in New Hampshire or Vermont, and I imagine we are on our way to the lumber-camps. I guess lumber-camps because of your manners. They seem to be that kind."

Langlois turned and glared at the man. In the glare were both ferocity and appraisal, for one who aspires to lead men must know those whom he leads. He saw a face covered with many days' beard, a fair Anglo-Saxon beard. The face seemed to belong to a man of middle life, in the forties at least, but Langlois was able to make some discount for alcoholic excesses and the beard. His guess was thirty. As a matter of fact the man was twenty-nine. He was lean, tall; in their natural condition his eyes were blue.

Chins were a specialty of Langlois's. They went far with him when estimating a man's potentialities, and this man had a chin that gave promise, or that had given promise. Langlois's eyes roved over the remainder of the bums—they were just bums, rabbits to be dealt with as rabbits, all of a piece. This man might be no better, indeed, might prove more useless, but at least he was different.

"Well?" said the man.

"I'm figgerin'," said Langlois, "if it's worth the trouble to come back there and teach you to keep your mouth shut."

"The way I feel at this minute," said the man,

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“it would be a sort of favor if you would beat me into insensibility.”

Langlois grinned. “If you need it I can tend to it later when I won’t have to walk so far.”

The man lowered himself to the floor and pillowed his head on his arms, nor did he give other signs of life till the train came to a stop an hour later at woods headquarters, a farm-house in a pleasant valley where lived the woods superintendent, John Nord.

From headquarters the narrow-gauge radiated up branching valleys to the six lumber-camps; it was the handle of a fan, from which Nord could keep in touch with the workings.

Nord, a short, stocky Dane, came out on his piazza and walked slowly down to the track, nodding to Langlois.

“What you got?” he asked, sententiously.

“Bums,” said Langlois. “Sixteen.”

Nord shrugged his shoulders. “Send ten of them to Six; you take the rest at Four. Go to Six first, then come back here after yours.”

Langlois turned to his cargo of derelicts. “You,” he said to the courteous young man, “git off here. And you two, and you and you and you.”

The men scrambled off, and with unanimity sank to the soft grass. Langlois leaped aboard

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again, signaled the engineer, and the train pulled away up the line to Camp Six.

Presently there came around the corner of the farm-house a young woman, hatless, so that her northern yellow hair blew enticingly about her face. She wore a gray flannel waist, a short corduroy skirt of the same color. The young man raised himself on his elbow and gazed at her; then quickly removed the battered derby hat from his head and hurled it from him. He ran his fingers through his hair with some anxiety, then passed his hand over his chin ruefully.

“The Goddess Freya shows herself to men,” said he to himself, “and me two weeks away from a razor.”

The girl walked past the men with no more than a passing, disinterested glance. The young man’s eyes followed her to the ample kitchen garden, where she filled a basket with fresh vegetables for the noonday meal. The basket seemed heavy as she started back, for she repeatedly changed it from hand to hand.

The young man leaped to his feet and approached her.

“May I?” he said, extending his hand for the basket.

The girl stopped, drew back a step, but eyed him without alarm—only with repugnance and

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curiosity. Men of his stripe were new to her. She had known rough men, tough men—the product of the lumber-camps—but until lately she had never encountered the bum of the city slums.

“May I carry your basket?” he said. “It seems too heavy for you.”

“Set it outside the kitchen door,” she replied, as though the thing were matter of course, and turned away. But curiosity overcame repugnance. The man’s voice, though hoarse, was courteous, carrying the inflection of the born gentleman. There had been little room for grammatical error in what he said, but his few words convinced her that he was not one to be guilty of uncouth speech. She wondered how he came there, and why? She wondered if there was not a story in this derelict that the sea of chance had cast up on her beach.

“I have never spoken to one of you—you—” she hesitated over the only word she had ever heard applied to these wrecks from Boston.

“Bums?” he said.

She nodded her head. “Are all of you polite and—grammatical?”

“I’m afraid not,” he said. “I am grammatical by habit, but I am afraid it needs inspiration nowadays to make me polite.”

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“That, I suppose, was intended for a compliment.”

“In its poor way it *was* a compliment.”

“Don’t you see,” she said, without haughtiness, without affectation, without even the appearance of striving to administer a rebuke, but as one stating a fact that should be patent, “that a compliment from a man like you is an impertinence?”

“I know,” he said, quietly, outwardly unhurt by her words, yet she saw that he lifted his hand to his lips and that the hand trembled, “but I—forgot. Pardon me.”

“You are forgetting my basket,” she said, and moved away toward the house as though eliminating him from her consciousness.

As he returned to his companions, after placing the basket at the kitchen door, one of them blinked and asked, “Did you get a hand-out, pardner?”

“Such a hand-out, friend, as would satisfy no appetite known to you,” he said, and rolled over upon his face. Thus he lay prone until Langlois and the train returned to bear him to Camp Four.

CHAPTER II

THE returning train excited no interest in the six prone figures beside the track, for they were asleep. Langlois found it no difficult matter to awaken them, for his shoes were thick of sole. One after another he grasped them by the shoulders and hoisted them to their feet, where they stood tottering, blinking.

“Git aboard there!” he ordered.

Their scramble to obey held elements of pitifulness; their clumsiness, their ineffectualness of control over their members, had to tell its story of physical abuse. One cannot become a bum of the streets and keep intact the body of a man.

“You,” said Langlois to the young man, “what’s your name?”

The young man regarded him blinkingly. It required seconds for the demand to penetrate to his consciousness.

“Van Twiller Yard,” he said, mouthing his words.

“*What?*” roared Langlois.

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"Van Twiller Yard," repeated the young man. "Generally called Van." He smiled ingratiatingly.

"Gawd!" exclaimed the boss. "'Van Twiller Yard—beg your pardon—inadvertently. . . .' Gawd!" He was lost in amazement and contempt. "What was you before you come up here to be a lumberjack? Eh? Dancin'-teacher? Lemme see your hands."

Yard extended them. They were not immaculate, but, what was less to Langlois's liking, they showed no sign of callous. They were hands unacquainted with labor.

"Know what an ax is?" The boss's voice indicated pent-up emotion.

"An ax," said Yard, speaking carefully, "is an implement used for chopping wood."

"Huh! Ever seen one?"

"Only," said Yard, "at a distance—a considerable distance."

"Well," snapped Langlois, "you're goin' to see one clost. You and an ax," said he, "is goin' to git to be what you might call companions. . . . Forty bucks a month and *board* for *that!*" The last sentence was addressed to the overshadowing mountain.

Five miles of silence ensued. The train pulled in upon a siding to give right of way to a downcoming train of logs. Yard sat up again, looked

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at Langlois, who was regarding with astonishment and animosity a figure that reclined beside the track. It was a long figure, beginning with dilapidated shoes and white woolen socks, and ending with a shock of colorless hair which rested on a cheap paper suit-case for a pillow. Overalls cut off just below the knee covered its legs; the trunk was sheltered by a woolen shirt. The man did not move, did not pay the train so much as the compliment of a glance. He was reading a magazine with the picture of a beautiful young woman on the cover.

"Hey!" Langlois exploded the word. He was, take him day in and day out, an explosive sort of individual; one who burst suddenly into words—more suddenly into action.

The reclining man did not move. Langlois sprang to the ground and stood over him threateningly.

"What you doin' here?" he demanded.

"Lit'ry pursoots," said the man, looking up mildly. "Figger later on follerin' up this railroad till I git to a camp. Figger on askin' for a job."

"Doin' what?"

"Choppin'."

"You're hired. Throw your turkey aboard and git on after it. What's your name?"

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“Sim Samuels.” It was a name destined speedily to be contracted to Sim-sam by the population of Camp Four.

The man clambered aboard and sat beside Yard. He opened his magazine again, and appeared to be swallowed up in the interest of its contents.

“Good story?” asked Yard.

Sim-sam regarded him with mild sheepishness before replying, then carefully turned down the corner of a page.

“I hain’t exactly sure,” said he. “You see, it’s like this: I hain’t what you’d call a readin’ man. No, I hain’t. To git right down to facts, I hain’t able to tell one letter from t’other.”

“But you appeared to be reading.”

“What I call readin’,” said Sim-sam. “I always hankered to read, but somehow I never made out to catch on how to do it. But I git the sensation, so to speak. Yes, sir. I git me these little books and I open ’em up and look ’em over. Then I take her line by line, jest like I *was* readin’, and make her up as I go along. I pertend I’m a-readin’ what’s wrote on the page, when the fact is I’m a-makin’ it all up in my head. Powerful useful makeshift, say I.”

“Shut up!” whipped Langlois’s voice.

“Cert’nly, cert’nly,” said Sim-sam.

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Presently clanked by another little engine pulling eleven trucks piled high with spruce logs. Langlois's train backed out on the line and started once more for Camp Four.

The train rounded a curve and came to a stop on the east bank of the river. Below and across, Van Twiller Yard saw for the first time a lumber-camp, and it did not entice him. From the open-front depot a sturdy bridge of poles—a corduroy bridge—led across the swift water to a squat group of buildings, black and uninviting, their sides and roofs covered with building-paper. There stood the cook-shanty; at its rear the bunk-house, and beyond that the stables—with the exception of the scaler's shanty, the only log structure in camp. Facing the cook-shanty was the wanigan, and next it a small house, evidently a habitation, for it owned a piazza of sorts and a child played on the piazza. Yard was to learn that here lived Billings, the walker over the East Branch camps.

A number of youthful pigs rooted between the buildings; the ground was of black muck, littered, wheel-rutted, an offense to the eye. It occupied a semicircle of perhaps an acre—beyond that was forest.

“They're eatin' in there,” whispered Sim-sam.
“*Eatin'!*”

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Yard had not been conscious of hunger before, but now a faint odor of cookery flavored the air, and straightway he desired greatly to eat. Another matter gave him occasion for surprise—he had not felt that stabbing demand for stimulant which comes on the morning after a debauch. He was in no mental condition to study over this, or to tag it with a reason—he simply noted it as an unusual fact, and wondered at it.

Langlois herded them across the bridge and into the cook-shanty, where sixty men sat on wooden benches along rude tables which sprouted like fingers from the west side of the room. On the east side were the big stoves with their huge kettles and pots, and along the wall shelving and drawers made from starch-boxes, constituting the pantry. At the far end water poured from a tap into a barrel—clear, cold water piped from a nearby spring.

As Yard stood there the relic of a refined stomach turned against the food he expected to find. On this matter he was about to receive a lesson.

“Git down there and fill up,” said Langlois. Then, with a surly grin, “You’re goin’ to need it ’fore night.”

“I should like,” said Yard, “to wash first, if I may.”

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Langlois jerked his thumb toward the water-barrel and took an unoccupied place at one of the tables. Yard walked to the barrel, filled the rust-spotted tin wash-pan with water with the chill of ice on it, and laved hands and face. It was as though he had taken into his veins an injection of some powerful elixir. He seized the cup and drank rapidly, thirstily, as the chill of the water would permit. Then he turned to the table.

His relic of a refined stomach figuratively sat back on its haunches with surprise. What he had expected to find in the way of food he did not exactly know, but his certainty was it would be uncouth, unappetizing, filthy. It was no dainty luncheon served on Sèvres; the dishes were of tin or granite ware, but they were clean. The table was clean—and the food! There were beef and pork and headcheese; there were potatoes and baked beans; there was tea; there were pie, stewed prunes, doughnuts, plates of cake, three varieties of cookies. But first of all there was pea soup!

Yard filled his tin plate with it, tasted with some apprehension, and then ate soup as few Bostonians have ever eaten it. . . . As for the bums, his companions, it was undoubtedly the finest repast they had ever seated themselves before.

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“Forty a month and board,” said Sim-sam. “And *board!*”

Yard finished his dinner and drew from a coat pocket a box of cigarettes, which he examined and, to his satisfaction, found half full. He lighted one.

Instantly it was slapped from his lips and he saw Langlois grinding it under his “corked” shoe.

“I don’t allow them things in this camp,” he said.

Yard did not resent the affront; instead, he cringed, as it is the nature of the bum to cringe, and backed away.

Langlois sneered. “Out of here and git to work,” he ordered. Then his eyes caught Sim-sam. “Chopper, eh? We’ll darn soon see.”

Yard found himself with a double-bitted ax in his hand, being led with his fellow-bums back over a tote-road which he did not recognize as a road at all. What city-dweller would? It wound up the hillside, turning out for neither boulder nor stump. In spots one sank to the knees in black muck; in other spots the road canted almost on edge as it skirted a ledge of granite. It seemed impossible a team could keep its feet there, let alone haul a load. No wagon could have continued whole if it traveled a hundred yards of it.

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Presently they reached the end of this; the road vanished in saplings, dead logs, underbrush. There appeared here and there the top of a stump, freshly cut.

“Here, you bums,” said Langlois, “swamp out this road. Clean her out *right*.” He turned from Yard and his companions looking helplessly at their axes and wondering what one did when he swamped a road, to Sim-sam.

“Chopper, eh? Here.” He patted the bole of a fine spruce, then walked straight away from it and pushed a small stake into the ground. “Drive that,” he sneered.

Sim-sam walked to the tree, cast his eye casually toward the stake, swung his ax and began notching the tree. When his notch was a matter of three inches deep he paused and glanced again at the stake, then removed a few more chips from the further side of the notch.

“Saw,” he said.

A man was waiting with a cross-cut; he passed one end to Sim-sam and retained the other, passing the blade across the tree on the side opposite the notch. Rhythmically the pair began to draw it back and forth, and Yard marveled to see how sweetly and smoothly it melted into the wood. The tree creaked, cracked, swayed. Then with a mighty rush, as of a giant bird swooping on its

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prey, it fell, ripping, smashing through the branches of tree or sapling in its way, to strike the ground with a hollow boom—precisely upon Langlois's stake, driving it into the earth.

“Huh!” Langlois grunted, and walked away. There was one authentic lumberjack in camp, at least.

Yard was speedily informed that swamping a road means to clear it of underbrush, saplings, rotten stumps, fallen limbs. It requires little skill, but is no task for a man without physical stamina. In half an hour Yard's palms were blistered; his back, shoulders, legs, felt as though some practical joker had knotted them like one small boy, safely garbed, will knot the clothes of his friends at the swimming-hole. He dropped his ax and sat down.

It was at an unfortunate moment, for Langlois had just come up behind him. The boss cuffed him to his feet. “Pick up that ax,” he said. “Drop it again, and I'll drop you—so you won't git up without bein' h'isted.”

Yard recovered his ax and went dizzily to work again; he dared not rest. The soul of a rabbit and the soul of a bum are strangely alike. He worked on and on, haggling through saplings, tugging pitifully at roots that a healthy boy could have torn from the ground, staggering

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under weights that a man would have tossed out of the way. It became mechanical, subconscious. He labored blindly, with but two matters piercing sharply to his consciousness: that he was in torment, and that he was afraid to rest. He groped about, accomplishing little with a maximum of effort.

It seemed to him he was going on endlessly, that he had been working, not hours, but days, weeks. His hands bled; his feet, shod in dilapidated shoes, were gouged and torn by sharp roots, stones. But he dared not stop. Always he felt Langlois behind him, though Langlois was not there. He was afraid of Langlois, physically afraid, but more afraid of the impact of that dynamic will.

At last it was over and Yard was staggering back to camp, his ax dragging after him, held by his hand whose fingers feared to let go. Men were rushing and jostling into the cook-shanty and he followed them. Not because he wanted food, but because others were going, because he was too weary to make a decision for himself.

He began to eat mechanically. The warm food, more especially the hot coffee, gave him back something of what the toil had taken away. His head cleared. But his body—it was borne down by a weariness such as he had never known.

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Why not? Van Twiller Yard had just completed the first half-day of labor he had ever done.

He sat, with the other bums, about the end of a table. They had automatically segregated themselves a little from the rest, for they were in an alien place, among aliens.

The man next Yard looked furtively about, whispered cautiously: "We got to beat it out of here. This here's hell."

"You know it!" responded another, fervently. "I got enough."

"Plant some grub in your pockets," said a third. "It's a long drill to town, and no hand-outs on the way."

They laid their plans in an undertone, Yard taking no part.

"Say, pal," said the man next him, "hain't you got nothin' to say? You're with us, hain't you?"

Yard looked up from his plate, peered from one to the other of his companions slowly, then turned his head and looked about the big room. He sighed, moved his arms painfully.

"No, I thank you," he said. "I think I shall stay."

"Stay! What's the matter with you, bo? Crazy? This here 'll *kill* a man in a week. Sneak some grub into your pocket and beat it with us to-night."

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Yard shook his head. "I shall stay," he said.
"What's the idea?"

"I think," said Yard, "that I have found it."

With which cryptic saying, the meaning of which was, perhaps, not objectively clear even to himself, he struggled to his feet.

"I'm very tired," said he. "Will some one show me where I am to sleep?"

CHAPTER III

IT was faint daylight when Yard was jerked out of his bunk, clothed even to the shoes, as he had crawled in the night before.

"*You're* here, eh?" snarled Langlois. "Where's them other bums?"

"I don't know."

"Well," said Langlois, "I'll find out—and Gawd help 'em then."

To Yard every movement brought a pang of sharpest pain. He shivered in the chill of the morning; shifted from one foot to the other, for to stand on his feet was not pleasurable.

"Mr. Langlois," he said, "can I get suitable clothing, especially shoes, in this place? You see"—he extended his foot—"that these were not made for use in the woods."

Langlois stared. "You hain't figgerin' on stayin'—voluntary?"

"Yes."

Langlois snorted. "Go to the wanigan. You can draw ag'in' your pay."

"Would you mind going with me? I do not

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know what to select." This was asked so courteously that even Langlois could find no excuse to refuse. He moved off brusquely.

"Come on," he said.

"I should like a razor, too, if possible," said Yard.

Presently Yard limped into the woods after the other men, outfitted for the work he was to do. He began with suppressed groans, blundered along until noon with the feeling that every movement was the last possible to make. Strengthened by food and a moment of rest at noon, he went back. At nightfall he was barely able to drag himself into camp.

The third day was little better, but on the fourth the torment was less keen; for the first time he was able to bring something besides futile physical effort to his work. For the first time he was able to think about something besides his suffering. He began to appreciate how futile he was, how little he accomplished.

On the fifth day he began to regard his ax with interest. At no distance Sim-sam was notching a tree. Yard left his swamping and walked toward the old lumberjack.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "I wonder if you could give me a little instruction in the use of this—ax. I am—exceedingly clumsy with it."

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Sim-sam was delighted, first, at having some one to talk to; second, at the opportunity to show his skill. He began with the rudiments, showing Yard how to grasp the ax, how to balance it, talking a great deal that was unintelligible to Yard, but dropping much helpful information.

“Now,” he said, “come and see what you’ve learned.”

He led Yard to a ten-inch spruce, pointed out the spot to notch, and told him to go ahead. Yard swung the ax high and brought it down so that it bit into the tree a liberal six inches from the point aimed at.

“No, no! Gimme that ax. You’ll hack off your head. Back off there, now. . . . Look!”

The lesson proceeded a quarter of an hour, both teacher and pupil lost in the interest of it. Langlois interrupted it.

“Here, you bum, git to your work. You hain’t hired for an audience.”

Yard looked furtively at his boss, cringed back a step, but said: “Mr. Langlois, this man is showing me how to use an ax. I have never used one, and waste much time. I cannot become really useful until I learn. I think I am getting the idea, and if you will allow us to go on with the lesson I shall be much more valuable.

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The time taken up by the instruction will be more than made up by my added efficiency."

Langlois loved to rule by fear; he preferred cruelty to anything remotely resembling gentleness; but he was a capable camp boss. It was his effort to get the most out of his men, and his intelligence was not rated cheaply by his superiors.

"Go to it," he said, grudgingly, "but don't ride a good thing to death."

So the lesson went forward—that lesson and other lessons.

At the end of two weeks Yard actually was able to take some pleasure in his work. The soreness had vanished from his muscles; he was able to eat three times daily such meals as he would not have believed it possible for a human being to consume. His face no longer favored in color a toad's belly; it was taking on a tinge of brown. The repulsive sacs which had served for eyelids were vanishing. But something of the old furtiveness, something of the old carriage of the city bum, remained. A man is not made over in a fortnight. He shaved each night, no matter how weary he returned to camp. He still started when Langlois spoke near him. . . .

"I think I've found it," he said to himself more than once.

The second Sunday of his residence in camp

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he drew Sim-sam aside. "I'd like to see what work I'd make of cutting down a tree," he said. "Do you imagine Langlois would object if we took a saw and ax back to the cutting?"

"Him? Ever hear him raise his voice ag'in' anybody workin'?"

So they went back a short distance and selected a spruce. Yard walked off from it as he had once seen Langlois do, and pushed the point of a small stake into the ground. Then he went back to his tree and commenced to cut the notch. He was slow about it, not skilful, but he studied each stroke of the ax.

"Now," he said, "if you please, we'll take the saw."

Sim-sam obeyed, grinning broadly, and they began drawing the cross-cut back and forth.

"Hey," Sim-sam complained, "we're sawin', boy! You hain't supposed to ride on that end of her."

There is an art to the saw as well as the ax.

It was not long before the tree groaned, cracked, fell. It boomed to the ground a generous six feet away from the stake. Yard looked at it ruefully; Sim-sam with a grin. Then, to Yard's bewilderment, he began suddenly to bow and scrape and duck his head in the direction of camp. Yard turned and saw standing in the tote-road, watching them, the youthful Mrs. Billings, wife

THE SOURCE

to the walking boss, and another young woman whose northern yellow hair blew enticingly about her face. She wore the same gray flannel waist, the same corduroy skirt, she had worn the morning Yard first saw her at woods headquarters. He breathed deeply—once.

“Freya!” he said, aloud, speaking the name of the fair-haired goddess of Viking lore whose personification she seemed to be, and the sound of the word startled him, for he had not willed to speak.

She wrinkled her brow and peered at him, advanced a step, hesitated, then spoke. “Are you the man who carried my basket?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“You have changed,” she said. “Besides, I thought all the—” she hesitated.

“Bums,” he said.

“—had run away from camp,” she finished her sentence.

“All but myself.”

“Why did you stay?” she asked, curiously.

“It’s hard to say,” he responded, thoughtfully. “It is not pleasant here. Men like myself are not supposed to like such work as this—but I found I wanted to stay. It is the first work, I think, that I ever wanted to stay with. . . . It seems worth doing.”

THE SOURCE

“You had never found a worth-while occupation before?” she said, half in question, half in stating a thought of her own.

“No,” he replied. “The profession I was educated for, and the trades and businesses I knew anything about, were dull. When your work was done—it was done. That was all there was to it. They were gray. I don’t know why, but I always looked for color in my work, for colors that changed and wove patterns. There was nothing to interest a man and make him want to go on, not merely to earn a living, but for the interest there was in what he did. So I grew tired of looking for it. . . . My great-grandfather followed the sea. There is no sea for Americans to follow nowadays.”

“I have thought it must be like that to live in a city,” she said.

“I really tried to find something—that was worth working at,” he said, defensively, “but it wasn’t there. Now I seem to have found it—but I’m a bum,” he ended, with some bitterness.

“You *were* a bum,” she said.

He looked at her eagerly, and she found his eyes pitiful. “You see a change?”

“A great change.”

“Then you think a bum—need not always be a bum?”

THE SOURCE

“Why should he? If he wants to become something else he can. I think it is all a question of what a person wants to be. You can be almost anything—if you want hard enough.”

He shook his head doubtfully. “I don’t know,” he said, slowly, thinking aloud and not consciously talking to her. “With plenty of will a man might stop being the things which make him a bum, but, having been one, he never could climb up to a place where a woman like you would forget he *had* been one.”

She flushed, but replied evenly, “I think he could.”

He turned his back abruptly, walked away a few steps, and stood looking through a rift in the forest to the valley beneath. When he turned his eyes were bright with a hope that had long been dead; his jaw—the jaw that Langlois had appraised as worthy of attention, was set. “I—I thank you,” he said, in a voice so low it hardly carried to her ears. . . . And then Langlois strode into view.

The boss saw the little group, increased his pace, and advanced savagely. Yard tried to maintain the bearing of a man—but it was not yet his time. . . . He cringed.

“You bum!” snarled Langlois. “How dast you speak to them ladies? I’ll teach you!” His fist

THE SOURCE

snapped from his side to Yard's jaw, and the young man sprawled on the ground, nor did he attempt to rise. He shielded his face with his hands. Langlois turned his back, knowing well his man. He would not have to strike again.

"I'm sorry he was disturbin' you, Miss Nord," he said, "but I calc'late he won't do it again."

Miss Nord stood frowning, looking expectantly at Yard. Presently she turned to Langlois. "Is that—all?" she said. "Isn't he—going to resent that—blow?"

"Him?" Langlois grinned at the thought. "He hain't nothin' but a bum."

"And for a bum," said Miss Nord, clearly, "who is also a coward there isn't much hope. . . . Come, Nell," she said to Mrs. Billings, and, turning, they walked down the road. Langlois followed them, satisfaction warming his heart. He had shown his prowess before the woman he aspired to impress.

Sim-sam bent over Yard. "Hurt much?" he asked. "That was a reg'lar wallop."

"The blow—didn't hurt."

"What did, then, for Gawd's sake?"

"Not—daring—to fight back. And with *her* looking on."

"Hum! . . . Wasn't exactly the way to git a young woman excited about you. Funny

THE SOURCE

about 'em, hain't it? Abhor fightin', every one, but not a girl but expects her feller to be able and willin' to lick all comers. A homely fightin' man's got more chance every time than a peaceful fellow that's as handsome as a actor."

"'A bum who is also a coward,'" Yard quoted.

"That was rubbin' it in. . . . Was you always afraid of fightin'?"

"There was a time—" said Yard, gritting his teeth.

"Well, then," said Sim-sam, "I figger there can git to be a time ag'in. This here's the way I look at it, when you got to be a bum, you sort of let go all holts, and darin' to fight was one of 'em. I've seen consid'able of them bums, and they're all alike. Got the bum-disease, so to speak. Bein' scairt of folks is jest a symptom of it. See? Well, it looks to me like the last couple weeks got you to convalescin' like. You hain't near so sick with bein' a bum as you was, but neither be you cured yet. Sev'ral more doses of the same ol' medicine necessary. When you git the measles you're all spotty. When you git well of 'em them spots go away. That's how it 'll be with that there timidity of yourn. Sure."

"I'm afraid not, Sim-sam."

"Now hold on. If you git a relapse now, it 'll go hard with you—always does. Maybe you

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won't git well a-tall. Once I heard tell of a feller that was sick, and up and died because he jest wasn't able to *want* to git well. Don't you git that way. You keep right on *wantin'* to git over bein' sick with this bum-sickness, and the chances is with you. Keep on a-wantin'."

Yard turned his face to the ground and lay silent for a long time. Sim-sam sat beside him, also silent, watching with real sympathy while the young man fought his fight. Presently he touched him on the shoulder.

"Boy," he said, gently.

"Yes, Sim-sam."

"You hain't goin' to give it up? Seems like I'd be mighty disapp'inted if you was to do that—me that's been teachin' you to be a lumberjack. Maybe I'd take to drink, or somethin'. . . . I hain't never had no—babies. So there wasn't no way for me to have a growed son, was there, eh? . . . Well, I've sort of, after a fashion, took that kind of a int'rest in you, boy, and it's almost what you might call damn necessary for me to see you pull through. . . . Eh, boy?"

Yard got slowly to his feet and began to walk away.

"Boy," said Sim-sam, "you hain't mad with me?"

"No, Sim-sam. You've thrown me a rope,

THE SOURCE

and I've caught it. Now I want to go back in the woods and—be ashamed alone.”

Sim-sam stood looking after him until he disappeared among the trees. “I never yet got me a pet, cat, dog, man, or rabbit, that it didn't up and die on me jest as I was gittin' attached to it.” He wagged his head dolefully and plodded back to camp.

CHAPTER IV

BIG John Beaumont, who owned the Green Mountain Pulp Company with all its ramifications, including thousands of acres of timbered mountains, and a sawmill with a capacity of fifty thousand feet a day, went seldom into the woods nowadays. It was not his fault, for he was a woodsman, but the possession of much money and property required his presence to guard it. He had been more contented in less opulent days.

On a Sunday early in October, when Van Twiller Yard had been in the woods a matter of three months, Big John went over questionable roads in his big automobile, to woods headquarters.

There he leaped out, eager as a boy, for all his sixty-two years, sniffing the odors of the forest joyously. Nord came out to meet him, and though the woods boss was a man who outweighed most, though his shoulders were the shoulders of a blacksmith, Big John made him appear puny, so huge was his bulk.

THE SOURCE

“Nord,” he said, “the row’s on. They’ve started making trouble at the new mill.”

“Who?” asked Nord.

“The Swedes—the Swedes,” said Beaumont, impatiently. “You know, or ought to know, the situation. New mill is to make Swedish sulphite-pulp, isn’t it? Foundation for Kraft paper. Before the war Sweden had a monopoly of it, practically. Few mills in Canada. No substitute for Kraft. Sweden has put an embargo on exports. Canadian mills closed down for want of labor—all in the army. Saw it all coming. Hired an expert and started to run up this mill. Does Sweden like it? Well, rather not. Those manufacturers have had a sweet thing, and they want it again. Don’t blame ’em. They don’t want America in the game, and they’ll keep us out if they can. We’re their biggest customer. Awhile back I get a letter advising me to keep out of it—in fact, offering to buy me off. I answered and told them to go to blazes. They came back with what amounted to a threat to see to it I didn’t make good. . . . And they’ve started at the mill. Next they’ll start in the woods. That’s why I’m here. I need a man.”

“You need a man.”

“A man I can depend on if I need him—de-

THE SOURCE

pend on for brains and knowledge and fight. Got any suggestions?"

Nord thought a moment, wagging his head, as was his habit.

"How about that fellow you told me of a while back?" asked Beaumont. "That bum, I mean, who's been studying the game, who took lessons in chopping, and sits under the scaler nights to learn timber, and that sort of thing?"

"Don't know much about him. My daughter told me that."

"Ask her out, please."

"Svea," called Nord, and presently his daughter appeared on the piazza, with a smile of welcome for Beaumont.

"I'm curious about that lumberjack of yours—the Boston bum with ambitions, so to speak. Tell me about him."

Svea flushed, and was angry with herself for flushing. Why should she do so at mention of a common lumberjack, at forty a month and board—who wasn't really a lumberjack—and who was a coward to boot? However, she told what she knew, ending with the statement that she had not seen the man for two months and had her later information from Mrs. Billings. It appeared Mrs. Billings had the notion Svea would be interested to hear about the fellow.

THE SOURCE

“Has he brains?” Beaumont asked.

“Yes, and I am sure education. I don’t mean just schooling, but a real education. Before he got to be what he was—he must have been a—gentleman.”

“Huh! . . . Honest? Dependable?”

“I don’t know. I think he was once.”

“Fighter?”

Svea flushed again and bit her lips. The recollection of the last time she had seen Yard, cringing on the ground, covering his face in fear of another blow from Langlois’s fist, was painful to her. It had been to her a sickening glimpse of a human soul, ulcer-eaten.

“No,” she said, almost in a whisper.

“Why do you say so?”

She told him briefly, honestly, omitting no part of the matter.

“Hum!” said he. “Hand-car here, Nord?”

“Yes.”

“Come with me to Camp Four. Will you come, too, Miss Nord? I have a special reason for asking.”

“Surely,” she said, and went inside the house for a cap.

“Now,” said Beaumont, “we’re going to look over this fellow. But keep quiet about it. Don’t want him nor anybody else to suspect it. I’ll

THE SOURCE

find out about him. Questions 'll get at what he knows; his eyes 'll tell if he's on the square; and a little test, sort of laboratory assay, as it were, will give us a line on his fighting spirit."

When they arrived at Camp Four Beaumont said to Svea: "Run over now and visit with Billings's wife. But come out on their fancy piazza to do it. Just sit there and keep your eyes open."

Big John and Nord found Langlois in the barn and talked woods matters with him for some time; then Beaumont left Nord with him, saying, "Guess I'll stroll around a bit and talk to the boys."

He had a very special pride in his judgment of men, and felt sure he would be able to pick out the one he wanted without assistance. So he moved from group to group, scrutinizing the men he talked with, but found none to fit his requirements. At last he opened the door of the scaler's shanty and saw three men inside, O'Toole, the scaler, whom he knew, Sim-sam, whom he had never seen, and a tall, lean young man who leaned against the wall and listened to the talk of the others. The face of the young man was brown, the eyes were clear. There was no slouch to his shoulders now, no hint of the bum of three months ago.

THE SOURCE

Beaumont took stock of his features in one swift appraising glance. They were the features of a man with generations of gentlemen behind him; they told of culture, of intelligence. They were pleasing features, and the smile that came to the lips and eyes was winning. Altogether Big John was pleased.

“H’m!” he said.

O’Toole jumped to his feet. “Come in, Mr. Beaumont, and set,” he said. “These here is Sim-sam and Van Yard.”

Beaumont nodded to them and joined in their conversation as one of themselves. It was a knack he possessed. They were talking of timber, of log-hauls, of skidways, of steam-loaders. It was shop talk to the *n*th power—and all for the benefit of Van Twiller Yard. He was taking his Sabbath lesson.

Presently Beaumont edged further into the conversation; began to question Yard as though he were a reluctant witness and he a clever cross-examiner. He found Yard well grounded in the theory of the felling and loading of logs, of the arts of the woodsman.

“You came up in that assignment of bums from Boston?” he asked, bluntly.

“Yes,” said Yard.

“Ever been in the woods before?”

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“Never.”

“Seem to catch on pretty well. Like it?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“It’s real,” said Yard, after a second’s pause. “It’s work for a man. We aren’t parasites here, living on other folks’ quarrels or on middlemen’s profits, but we’re at the very source of the industry. We’re taking from nature with our hands.” His eyes sparkled, his voice took on a tone of enthusiasm. “Think,” he said, “we stand at the very fountain-head of human knowledge. Without us there would be no daily papers, no magazines. To-day we fell a tree; a month hence, on the paper manufactured from that spruce, the country may read the news of a great battle or learn of a great new thought; may read a book of science. Beyond us the art of the preservation of human knowledge cannot go. It all derives from us. To me the woods are not the woods. These mountain-sides of spruce are something more. It may sound impractical and a great deal more like a dreamer than a lumber-jack—but to me they are The Source—just that.”

“H’m!” said Big John. “Shouldn’t be surprised if you grew up to be a real chopper.” His big, red, smooth-shaven face grew stern. “Young

THE SOURCE

man, how came you to land here with a cargo of bums?"

"Because," said Yard, "it didn't seem as if there was anything to do that was worth the bother of doing. So I did nothing—but become a polite sort of bum . . . and then an impolite sort of bum."

"How about the booze?"

"I never had a real desire for it—haven't thought about a drink since I came here."

"H'm! Just took to it, failing any other occupation, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Well," said Big John, moving to the door, "I shall keep my eye on you. You're going at it right."

He stepped outside. The others followed. Big John had timed his movements to fit his design, for Nord and Langlois were just coming around from the barn. Beaumont walked to meet them, frowning. In an instant, it appeared, something had put him in a savage humor. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Mrs. Billings and Svea Nord on the piazza.

He was gnawing his lip by the time he reached Langlois, and breathing as a man breathes who holds in check his temper. "What's the matter, Langlois?" he said, angrily. "Can't you put the

THE SOURCE

fear of God into your men? Some of 'em getting pretty cocky. Who's the tall young fellow there?" He jerked his head toward Yard.

"One of them bums," said Langlois. "Been gettin' fresh?"

"Used his mouth considerable," said Beaumont.

Langlois showed his teeth. "Thought I'd showed that bird, but if he needs more here's where he gets it. Don't worry none about me puttin' the fear of God into him. Jest watch."

He strode to Yard, clutched his shoulder, and swung him around so that they stood face to face.

"What's your game?" he snarled. "Hain't I taught you manners? Eh? Seems like you need another lesson." He clenched his fist for the blow.

This time Yard did not flinch or cringe. He too had seen Svea Nord, and the recollection of their last meeting was like a brand applied to his naked flesh. She had seen his degradation; it was a spectacle she would not witness again. He stepped one pace closer to Langlois, so that their bodies touched.

"Langlois," he said, almost in a whisper, but steadily, "there's been a change in the last two months. It's fair to you to tell you. If you're looking for trouble with me I want you to know that this will be no one-punch affair. Before I

THE SOURCE

got to be a bum I was middling fair with my fists. . . . How about it?"

"I'm goin' to bust you open," grated Langlois.

"One moment, then."

He wheeled and strode to the piazza, Langlois staring after him, unable to comprehend what was passing. "Miss Nord," he said, "two months ago you saw that man knock me down and saw me afraid to return the blow. I was still a bum. . . . Your opinion is of value to me. It was no fault of mine that you saw that episode, but you saw it. Now, in fairness to me, I ask you to see the one about to happen. It will not be pleasant. I ask you to see it out." With that he turned and walked back to Langlois. "Ready," he said.

Langlois, now heated with rage, struck. Yard laid his head quickly on his shoulder, and the fist passed his ear. Then he countered and his knuckles bruised themselves on Langlois's teeth; he uttered a sound—a sound that was not a laugh, but kin to it, for there was joy in it. Twice more he struck before Langlois could recover himself, and the boss went down. Yard stepped back and waited for him to rise. The boss got to his hands and knees and launched himself on the young man from that position, both arms driving viciously. Yard met him half-way, giving blow for blow. Breast to breast they stood, striking

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from the shoulder, with the desire to maim behind each blow.

Suddenly Langlois sought to clinch and trip, but Yard's fist, coming up from his knee in a wicked upper-cut, met him full on the jaw and again he went down.

It was a savage creature, not human, that flew at Yard now. Not fists alone, but feet and teeth were ready for use. A wicked kick missed the young man's knee-cap, and he sank his fist in Langlois's stomach. The boss grunted, but came on. Now, with skill that was beautiful to see, that rejoiced the hearts of the men who watched, Yard began to cut the boss to ribbons. He fought not to exterminate with a blow, but to punish while he himself went unpunished. In and out he danced, chopping his adversary's face, and leaping away from the counter. Again and again he struck. Langlois's face took on queer contours. His lips were shredded, his eyes closing; he bellowed with insane rage.

Suddenly he darted to one side and snatched an ax from the woodpile. Yard was conscious of a woman's scream; then he was on his man before the ax could be swung aloft, and struck, once, twice, with all his strength. Then as Langlois, lifted from his feet, was actually in the air, Yard struck again.

THE SOURCE

He did not wait to see the result. He knew. Abruptly he turned toward the piazza without a glance at the man who lay motionless on the ground.

"I'm—sorry—Miss Nord," he said. "But you had to see."

"Yes," she replied, her voice but a breath, "I had to see—and I am—glad I saw." . . .

"Thank you," he said, gravely.

"I think," she said, mastering a matter-of-fact tone, "that you need a little attention. Cold water—"

He trod heavily toward the bunk-house, for the intense exertion had taken its toll of him. Simsam met him, took his arm.

"Boy," the old lumberjack said, tremulously, "I knowed it! . . . I knowed it!"

They passed Nord and Beaumont. "When you are washed up," said Big John, "come here. Bring your turkey."

It was the formula of dismissal in the woods, for a man's turkey is his personal effects. To be ordered to get it is to be ordered to move out.

In fifteen minutes Yard returned, not immaculate, not without Langlois's handiwork plain to be seen.

"Yes, sir," he said to Beaumont.

"From now on," said Big John, "you're my

THE SOURCE

man. Responsible to me. I need you. You go down with me.”

“But the woods—”

“You will come back. It is here I shall need you.”

“I have a friend,” said Yard, diffidently. “Is it— Can I not take him with me?”

“Can you trust him?”

“I am not sure I can trust myself without him.”

“Fetch him,” said Big John, for he knew men.

So it was that Big John Beaumont found his man; so it was that Van Twiller Yard and Samsam left Camp Four; so it was that a new figure to be reckoned with arose in the mountains of Vermont—a man who was but ninety days distant from free lunches and a bums’ lodging-house.

CHAPTER V

NEXT day Big John Beaumont sat in his office, talking pulp with Van Twiller Yard.

“I brought you down to the mill because I wanted you to know what we are up against and what we are trying to do. . . . This morning the president of the largest user of sulphite-pulp in America will be here. He wants to contract for our output, and I want you to hear what he has to say. I want you to hear, because I want you to do some dreaming about pulp—like you did about spruce. The Source—that was a good notion, young fellow.”

Yard nodded.

“But sulphite is something else, again. What do you know about it?”

“Only what you told me the other day.”

“But you know it’s different from the pulp we’ve been making before—different process—different result. Ground wood-pulp makes print paper and the cheaper grades of papers. Sulphite goes to the making of Kraft, and Kraft is the toughest,

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firmest, most dependable wrapping-paper in the world. It has strength. It stands strain, and that's why it is used in making all fiber and currugated-board containers. There's no substitute. And it's a virgin industry in America. We're building up something new. We're helping to make America independent. Now's our chance. Imports are shut off, or practically shut off. Our manufacturers must have a lot of things that they have depended on foreign manufacturers to get, and now it's up to Americans to manufacture those things for themselves. Somehow, young fellow, it looks to me like a sort of patriotism to go after that stuff, eh?"

"It does," said Yard.

"Also," said Beaumont, with a twinkle in his gray eyes, "it's a matter of profit. When I started building this new mill sulphite-pulp sold at thirty dollars a ton. To-day it's sixty-five. In six months it 'll be a hundred. We made a nice profit at thirty. . . . See?"

"It's enormous," Yard said, and felt it.

"Our capacity will be fifty tons a day. . . . Looks pretty sweet, eh? . . . The mill will be ready to start in a month—I hope. You never can tell about mills. That day we shut down and begin to dismantle the ground-wood-pulp mill. We're through with it. . . . But you're

THE SOURCE

still at your Source—the Source of a new industry. Can you dream about that?”

“I think,” said Yard, speaking carefully, as was his custom, “that it is better stuff for dreams than the other.”

“Good. . . . Now Swedish manufacturers, as I said, want to keep the game in their own hands. They were a bit late getting on to me, but they started at me hard. Their representatives are in this country—and they’ve made trouble. Already, in one way and another, they’ve cost us a month’s delay, and twenty-five thousand dollars’ extra cost.” His jaws shut down with the firmness of steel doors closing. “But we’ve got away with it so far. . . . Now their game will be to make a failure of the mill, and there are two ways to go at it: first, by messing up the manufacture, and, second, by gumming up the woods end so we don’t get enough pulp wood to manufacture on. . . . And that’s why I needed a man. You’re him.”

There seemed to be no necessity for reply, so Yard made none.

In half an hour the morning train arrived, bringing Mr. Knowles, president of the Republic Corrugated Container Company. Beaumont introduced Yard, and immediately the two older men fell upon their business like hounds upon a rabbit.

THE SOURCE

"I want your output, Beaumont, and I'm going to have it," commenced Knowles. "You know the situation. The cards are on the table. I've got to have sulphite to keep in business—and I'll pay for it—through the nose, probably."

"You want a contract at a stated price?"

"Yes. I'm tired of this shilly-shallying. Half the time our mills are down. Strawboard manufacturers, who have no reason in the world for it, are holding us up. There are seven of them, and they're in a tight combine. Got bids from the whole of them the other day. Seven men in the office. I took them into my room one at a time, and each made a price of twenty-seven dollars—and grinned in my face. . . . And this sulphite thing. We used to buy all of one brand. Now brands have disappeared, and such shipments as come through are without brands. We get a wire to-day from a broker in Baltimore saying a certain vessel is about to dock with a lot of pulp—to be had at such and such a price. No matter what it is, I wire back to ship it. Immediately we get a wire saying that lot was sold ahead of us, but that another will land in a week—at five dollars more a ton. And there you are. I want to get into a chair where I can sit tight."

"What's your proposition?"

"You to guarantee delivery of three hundred

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tons of sulphite a week—average for two years. Bonus at the end of each year—or penalty. Stiff ones. Price to be flat.”

“Good! We’ll go you. Market on sulphite to-day is sixty-five dollars. In a couple of months it ’ll be a hundred or more. I’m no hog. Make a flat price of ninety dollars. Penalty or bonus of a hundred thousand a year.”

“That makes about a million and a half a year.”

“Counting the bonus, exactly a million five hundred and four thousand.”

“Get your papers ready.”

“Got ’em,” said Beaumont. “Never waste time.” He went to the door and called the bookkeeper, directing him to bring the contracts. They were duly signed, witnessed, delivered—and the deal was made. Deliveries to commence not later than ninety days from date.

When Knowles was gone that afternoon, after inspecting the plant and dining with Beaumont and Yard, Big John said to the young man: “You see. That’s what we’re up against. I stand to make a profit of upward of a million on that deal—or to lose half a million if we fall down. Your job is to see to it the woods end makes good.”

“But,” said Yard, “how about Nord? Isn’t he

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woods boss? Won't he resent my meddling in his affairs?"

"Nord and I have talked this over. He'll be busy with the details. It's up to you to watch out for the Swedes. There won't be any clash."

"Then I'll—tackle the job."

Beaumont smiled a little, for the last three words were not characteristic of Yard. They were too colloquial, too rough-and-tumble for that young man of culture—as he had been. But already the change had set in. It was only the beginning.

"Your salary," said Big John, "will be fifteen hundred a year—and board. . . . But make good—well—make good and drop in in a year. We'll make that fifteen hundred look like a plugged copper. We've been getting out thirty thousand cords of pulp wood a year. It's up to the woods end to double it now. . . . I'm through with you, young man. Your title is assistant woods boss, but you're responsible to me—and only me. Use your judgment when you have any. If you run out—run down and spill it to me. Don't override an order given by Nord unless it's necessary—and be diplomatic if it *is* necessary. Nord's a good man—but limited. Now go to it."

The next few days were full of motion for Van

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Twiller Yard. In them he tried to become acquainted with the whole woods situation; the lay of the land; what to demand from each camp; where possible danger lay. He began at Camp Eight.

This remotest camp lay in the heart of the forest, to be reached only by the narrow-gauge railroad. It was "above the dam"—that is, it lay beyond the point where the Eastern States Power Company had erected a huge dam across the East Branch—a storage dam, creating a lake where had once been a stream hidden by forest. The lake was a matter of ten miles long by a mile wide, and in it the Power Company stored water in spring, winter, and fall, to be fed down the East Branch as needed in the months of drought, to its power stations below.

The track reaching to Camps Seven and Eight lay along this lake to the dam, then branched off in a huge curve to Five and Six and finally to woods headquarters. All logs from these camps must go by rail to the mills; there was no river to float them down. The logs from Seven and Eight, the two largest camps, must pass over the little railroad along the verge of the pond.

Here was a matter that Yard studied carefully. It seemed to him the railroad ran perilously near the water-level. Now the water was some six

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feet lower, but, Yard thought, it might be made to rise three or even four feet above the tracks. There were three trestles, too, crossing arms of the lake. It was a remote possibility, an improbability, but it found a place in Yard's mental warehouse, and did not rest easily there.

Camps One, Two, Three, and Four were set upon the banks of the tortuous East Branch—and the East Branch derived from the big pond. Its waters were the waters loosed by the Power Company to operate its turbines below, and down that river went most, if not all, the pulp wood from the four camps. The hardwood, for the sawmill, was transported by rail—for hardwood logs cannot well be floated.

“Sim-sam,” said Yard, “what would happen if the Power Company closed the tunnel at the dam—and kept it closed? Where would the East Branch go?”

“I calc'late there wouldn't be enough of it left to float a chip,” said the old fellow.

“In which case,” said Yard, “it would be up to the railroad to haul both pulp wood and hardwood—which it couldn't do. . . . What do you know about this Power Company, Sim-sam?”

“Nothin' 'ceptin' it's got power-plants all over the States hereabouts, and that a feller by name of Ekstrom is boss of it.”

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“Named what?”

“Ekstrom.”

“H’m!” said Yard. “Sounds Swedish.”

“Almighty Swedish,” agreed Sim-sam.

“It looks to me, Sim-sam, as if we ought to find out more about this concern. It has a gun pointed at our head—and the gun’s loaded. When a thing like that is apparent, one wishes to know the disposition of the man holding the gun—if he’s likely to shoot.”

That evening Van Yard arrived at woods headquarters in time for supper. His first act was to telephone Big John Beaumont.

“Get me all the information possible about the Power Company,” he said. “About its officers and stockholders—and where the bonds are owned. Especially their nationality.”

“All right, Yard,” said Big John, asking no questions. But his face, if Yard could have seen it, expressed notable satisfaction. “I knew it,” he said to his stenographer, who did not in the least comprehend what he was talking about. “I’ve got a real man. He has the kind of eyes that see.”

As for Yard, he went from the telephone to sit at table with Svea Nord. It was the first time he had dined with a young woman in more than one year. More important with that, it was the

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first time he was to meet that especial young woman on terms of social equality—as a man, trusted, in position of importance; not as a bum out of the gutter. It is only natural that he should not have been wholly at his ease.

Her manner was guiltless of constraint. She arose to meet him in the home-like parlor, and extended her hand. He took it, and not for days, not while memory remained, did he forget that first touch—it was only a touch, for he did not dare clasp her hand in firm handshake as he might another's.

“Mr. Yard,” said she, gravely, “I cannot tell you how glad I am to be able to welcome you here, and I can't tell you how wonderful it seems that you have made it possible.”

Yard wished to say something, but hesitated, fearing to offend her. “I don't think I could have done it if it hadn't been for you,” he said, finally, with boyish diffidence.

“I had nothing to do with it,” she said, but not unkindly—merely in a matter-of-fact tone.

“You had a great deal to do with it,” he said, stubbornly.

“I'd rather you didn't say so. It seems so like the obvious thing for you to say. A sort of society compliment.”

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“The women I used to know liked compliments,” he said.

“I don’t. So many men seem to think they have to say pretty things to every woman they meet, and it’s silly.”

“But if a compliment is sincere, Miss Nord?”

“I think there is only one man who has a right to say those things to a woman. It would be sweet to hear one’s husband say them.”

“Most men have a theory that women like to hear pleasant things, and that to say them is to win approval.”

“Not with me,” she said, simply. “I think only one thing will count, and words will have nothing to do with it. It will be the man himself, as he is every day. I shouldn’t look for him to do wonderful things, but just to do what he had to do. . . . To be true and trustworthy. . . . I think supper is ready. You must be hungry.”

That evening Yard sought out Sim-sam. “You’ve had experience, Sim-sam,” he said. “You must know a great deal about women.”

“I know consid’able about three. Two I’ve buried; one I got left back in town. I had to learn the first one, and it was a chore. When I took me the second, I says to myself: ‘This ’ll be easy. I got ’em learned.’ But I had to start the job all over. Then when I come to the third

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I felt perty sure I was eddicated right up to the hilt, but I fetched up again' another disapp'intment. There was more to learn about her than about the other two put together. . . . Sure I know about wimmin—them three. You kin learn one of 'em by livin' with her for years—but what you learn hain't worth a darn to commence business with another. Boy, there hain't no sich thing as knowin' 'em in bulk."

"She said actions alone would count with her," Yard said, more than half to himself.

"Ho!" said Sim-sam. "Ketched, be you? Dum it all, if it don't happen to everybody! Well, young feller, if she says actions is what 'll count, my advice to you is to be doggone active. If they want a thing, give it to 'em—and plenty."

"Just doing what a man has to do," said Yard. "That's sound. Not great deeds. That makes it some easier. . . . True and trustworthy. That's my job, Sim-sam. True and trustworthy—and me just graduated from a bum. . . . It 'll take a lot of doing what a man has to do to wipe that off the slate. If only she hadn't seen me then, Sim-sam."

"Dunno about that, boy. Calc'late seein' you then, and seein' how you clambered out of it, 'll do more good 'n harm. It's got her int'rested. That's a p'int. Now you *keep* her int'rested, like

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I keep myself int'rested in them stories I make up when I'm follerin' lit'ry pursoots—and work up till you git darn int'restin'. Keep her thinkin' about you and figgerin' you over in her mind. Like one of them proverbs: 'Count that day lost whose low-descendin' sun sees no darned int'restin' action done.' Make a sort of a kind of a story out of yourself for her to keep readin'—and have it look all the time like it was goin' to end well. . . . Now, that's all you git out of me. I hain't no expert, but knowin' I hain't sort of qualifies me to pass out advice. Better git to bed so's to be fresh for them noble acts to-morrow."

Yard took the advice. "True and trustworthy," he said over and over again before he slept. "That would be a mighty pleasant thing to have written on a fellow's tombstone."

CHAPTER VI

BEAUMONT'S reply to Yard's telephone request was prompt.

"The Power Company," it read, "was financed by Ekstrom, its president, largely in Sweden. Sixty per cent. of the bonds are owned there and probably a third of the stock. Four members of the board are Swedish-Americans. They show a marked preference for employing Swedes in various positions. We have a lawsuit against them for damages caused by flowing our timberlands when the dam was built. The attitude of the concern toward us is not friendly."

Yard's reply to this was: "Buy and ship to Camp Eight a motor-boat. Anything with an engine that will pull will do."

So, in due time, a thirty-foot boat came up on the narrow-gauge, carefully covered with canvas so as to pass unrecognized, and was stored in a shed at Camp Eight.

Yard went to Nord, too, in the matter. "I want to make some transfers among the men,"

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he said. "Gradually. I want to get picked crews in Seven and Eight—the cream of the men."

It was all preparation against a possibility—preparation by guesswork against an attack that might not come, or that might be delivered by some adversary not entering at all into Van Yard's present calculations. But it was all he could do. He must be ready for the expected and the foreseen; at the same time he must take such measures as his intelligence indicated against the coming of the unforeseen emergency; against the unexpected shock of attack by an unsuspected enemy.

As matters stood Van believed the machinery of the Power Company would be at the disposal of the Swedish manufacturers. It was ready to hand; its strategical position was little short of overwhelming. But that a concern of its pretentious character should strike openly, save in face of necessity, he did not believe. Therefore it was not against the closing of the dam, the flooding of the railroad, the shutting off of water from the East Branch, that he must guard at the beginning. There would be more subtle manœvering, no such high-handed use of power. It was not the large thing he must fear, but a multiplication of small things which, each con-

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tributing its bit, would hamper the work of the camps, curtail their output, and turn the flow of logs to the mill into a trickle.

Now, with the leaves not wholly fallen from the trees and with snow many weeks distant, it was a trickle at best. Logging without snow, especially in that rugged, uneven country, was no joyous labor. It was drudgery. The cold of winter was not there to push the men to effort; when the thermometer stood at zero or below, the labor contributed by each man would increase by a third. But most heartbreaking of all was "snaking" the logs to the skidways.

Four horses panted and snorted and slipped where two horses would haul with ease over an iced road. Wheels were an impossibility. A couple of logs would be chained to a sled at one end, leaving the other ends to drag eccentrically on the ground, and so the sweating teams would be forced to drag them over roads that were no roads at all, jutting with boulders and stumps, down mountain grades to the hungry skidways. The labor that in winter brought five logs found it not easy now to account for one.

Then there was the matter of labor, that shortage of man power which had brought Van Yard, unwilling, to the woods and to what, with honesty, might be called his resurrection. Men

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were hard to come by, and their quality was what Sim-sam called "number three common and culls." Weekly arrived consignments of bums from Boston, of the sweepings and scourgings and refuse of humanity—who looked upon the work with wry faces and silently faded from view.

It seemed to Van there was a constant procession of men "going out." Always, by the smile of good fortune, there remained a sturdy, dependable nucleus of lumberjacks, some indigenous to the locality, others imported from Quebec, New Brunswick, even Minnesota and Michigan. These men knew their work and, what was of infinitely greater value, they knew loyalty to their employer. These were the backbone of the organization. Without them it could not have persisted.

Even the most hungry of fighting-men would have been satisfied with his struggle in the conditions that existed—war-made conditions, the hardships worked on America by Europe's madness—but augment those conditions by an individual struggle for life by a new industry against the wealth and jealousy of its foreign rival, and the matter became such as to surfeit the veriest glutton for battle.

Van threw himself into his endeavors, sparing

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neither body nor mind. He became obsessed with his work. In one thing he differed from the most faithful employees of Big John Beaumont—Van's work was a religion to him. He was not working for Beaumont; not working for wages; not working merely to supply the mills with hard wood and pulp—he labored with the art of the sharer in creation. He was assisting to bring something into being—a new industry. He felt himself to be important in it. He felt the forests to be overwhelmingly important. To him they were, in this industry as they had been in the old, The Source.

“Sim-sam,” he said, one night, after a long silence, “these trees were grown here to be turned into sulphite-pulp.” It was so that his mind worked these days. He was aiding in a law of nature—to use a product of nature and to help to transmute it into the finished article for which nature intended it should be used when the seed was planted. It might have made some men laugh. There is a species of man who would have thought him very humorous—and a bit awry in the head.

It was not long before he realized that an insidious force was working against him—a force that seemed to know his intentions as soon as they became intentions. If, for some reason, he

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desired to push the work at Camp Five, the work at Camp Five declined. If he required that Camp Five should turn out a certain quantity of timber or pulp wood, that was the very camp that fell below its normal output. Mysteriously there would be an exodus of labor thence. Teams would go lame. Quarrels would arise among the men. Everybody would find fault with the cook. Once, in Camp Six, the men awoke in the morning to find the cook vanished wholly, and no one to get their breakfast.

Each thing was tiny in itself, but they made, when bulked, for inefficiency. It was not that the things occurred that troubled Yard, so much as that they occurred in the manner they did. Whoever was working to bring them about exerted himself as if he knew Yard's plans. Gradually Van became convinced that this was so. He *knew* it, and, knowing it, he knew there must be some one, somewhere, in a place of trust who was giving information to the invisible enemy.

In November Yard was in the village. At noon he lunched at the hotel with Big John, who asked few questions because he knew that, were there information to give, Van would produce it. That was his way. When he trusted a man he trusted him. Not only trusted him so far as

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concerned his moral equipment, but with respect to his common sense. Which, after all, is a rarer confidence.

“We’ve got to have more men,” said Yard. He did not, it will be noticed, recite a more carefully worded sentence such as, “It is essential that we increase our force of employees,” as he would have done four months ago—or four years ago. Physically, mentally, Yard was stripped to essentials.

“I’m sending in an average of two dozen a week.”

“I said *men*,” replied Yard, with no thought of brusqueness. “Every time one of those bums quits it’s an improvement.”

“*One of those bums!*” Beaumont’s cheeks twitched to hear those words coming from the lips of one of those bums. “Some of ’em turn out pretty fair,” he said, quizzically.

Yard looked at him blankly, then smiled the shadow of a smile. “I’m losing my sense of humor,” he said. “But, Mr. Beaumont, I’ve found out one thing about myself. I wasn’t even a *bona fide* bum. I was an imitation. A sophomoric imitation.”

“It was a darn impressive performance, from all accounts.”

“About those men?” Yard persisted.

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"I'll do what I can—I have been doing what I could."

"Thanks. . . . Next, somebody's not playing square. Somebody close to me. The other side know what I plan as soon as I've planned it."

"Hate to hear it. Whom do you suspect?"

"Everybody," said Yard, gloomily.

Beaumont looked at the young man's face. It was tired, older by days of labor and nights of anxiety, but its most notable change was to be found in its austerity, its asceticism. At times Yard's eyes glowed with the fire of one who marches forward with a new creed. Big John Beaumont had seen such a look before on the faces of workers—but rarely. It was the face of a man to whom his work had become a religion, a philosophy, the working out of a creed. And the creed of this young man was that it had been ordained by the ruling powers of the universe that growing spruce should be transmuted into sulphite-pulp through his instrumentality.

"What do you want?" Big John asked.

"I want what the old Romans used to give a selected man when the state was threatened."

"That was when they created a dictator?"

"Yes."

Beaumont considered. "You want to replace Nord?"

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“No. There’s no reason for it. But I want the power to replace him if I need to. Give me a letter to Nord, and to everybody it may concern, saying that the ultimate authority back there in the woods belongs to me, and that I may hire and fire from top to bottom—that what I say *goes*, without appeal or reference to anybody.”

“You’re asking quite some mouthful, young man.”

“I tell you,” said Yard, with the impatience of a man engrossed by a dominating intention, “that I can’t trust anybody. I sha’n’t use that letter unless it comes to a matter of make or break. It may be Nord need never know it exists. I hope so—” His voice halted, trailed into silence, and then he repeated to himself, forgetful of Big John: “My God! I hope so—it’s *got* to be so.”

“Why?” The tone aroused Beaumont’s curiosity. “Are you so friendly with Nord? Do you like the man that much?”

“Like Nord?” Yard said, bewilderment in his eyes. “Why, I’ve never thought about that. I— He’s a good sort, I expect.”

“Why, then, the near-prayer that you won’t have to do it?”

“It would break *her* heart,” he said. “‘True and trustworthy.’ She abhors anything not true and trustworthy.”

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“Oh,” said Beaumont, openly grinning now, “she does, does she? Well, well! . . . Philandering with Svea Nord, eh? Look out, son, heaps of boys have tried it. She doesn’t seem to take to it.”

Yard would have replied, but his attention was arrested by the stare of a man at a table across the dining-room. The man was small, blond, with whitish hair parted down the middle and flattened to his head. He was dressed, and pressed, and manicured. One foot protruding into the aisle was clad in a patent-leather shoe and gray spat. Yard thought him the most perfectly insignificant-looking individual he had ever seen.

“Who,” he asked, “is that man? He’s been staring at me ever since we sat down.”

Beaumont glanced over his shoulder. “That’s Holmquist, Ekstrom’s fixer. Little pussy-cat.”

“Looks like a parlor pet.”

“Don’t imagine he shoots a very big bullet,” said Big John, with the genuine contempt which his sort must always hold toward the Holmquists of this world—an undervaluation often to their undoing.

Presently he said: “I’ve got an appointment, Van. You sit here and finish your lunch in comfort. Haven’t taken much time for meals

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lately, have you? . . . Drop in the office before you go out. The letter will be ready for you.”

Beaumont had been gone from the room but a couple of minutes when Yard looked up from a cup of first-rate coffee and a piece of superlative apple pie to see Holmquist standing beside his table, wearing a smile that verged upon a simper.

“Mr. Yard?” he asked, mincing his words.

Van nodded.

“My card,” said Holmquist, presenting a correct bit of engraving. “I’ve heard—er—considerable about you of late. Glad to have—er—an opportunity to know you. May I sit down?”

Van nodded again.

“Not many personalities hereabouts,” said the man, at each word becoming more objectionable to Yard, “so when a new one—er—arises, we have to know him. Eh? Pretty near right, what?”

“I suppose so,” said Yard.

“I’m in the employ of the Power Company—er—field work, you might say. Big concern.”

“Yes,” agreed Yard. He was afraid the man would commence to purr and put out his head to be scratched.

“Mighty generous with its employees,” said Holmquist.

“Glad to hear it,” said Yard.

“But a bad concern to—er—buck against.”

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“No doubt.”

“It’s always on the lookout for good men. Indeed, right now I know of a twenty-five-hundred-dollar job that’s going begging. Legal department.”

“I hope you succeed in filling it.”

“Yes, oh yes! To be sure. I think we shall. We—er—have our eyes on a man. Twenty-five hundred dollars a year. And chances.” Holmquist rolled his eyes as if overwhelmed by the thought of the chances. “Studied law yourself, didn’t you?”

“Yes.”

Silence ensued.

“Couldn’t recommend anybody—er—offhand, could you?”

“No.”

“Could you at—say—three thousand?”

“No,” said Yard, impatiently, “nor at thirty thousand.”

“The company might pay a bang-up, first-class man as high as thirty-five hundred.”

Yard found no reply necessary.

“Thirty-five hundred. Headquarters in Boston. . . . Some different—er—from sleeping in a bunk-house and eating beans in a lumber-camp.”

It was apparent to Yard that Holmquist con-

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sidered beans as an article of food not to be undertaken by a gentleman.

"Look here," said Yard, "I don't know whether I understand you or not. Are you trying to offer *me* that job?"

"Er—why, not *exactly*. Not precisely. Merely—ah—sounding you out, as it were. Sounding you out."

"Such thirty-five-hundred-dollar jobs," said Yard, "are offered only when the men like you want to buy—not hire—men like me. If that's what you're trying to do, you infernal Persian pussy-cat, it may, or may not, gladden you to know that I used to put the shot, and that on a bet I could probably put you through that window. It isn't more than ten feet away. If you're not trying to buy me up, why, I apologize for the Persian pussy-cat, and for boasting about my athletic ability. . . . Sit *down!*"

Holmquist complied with promptness.

"It looks," said Van, "as if the Power Company felt—er—unfriendly toward Mr. Beaumont." His imitation of Holmquist's mincing speech did not draw so much as a glare from that gentleman. Certainly he made no reply.

"I've had a fat, well-fed suspicion of your outfit," Yard went on, "but I needed confirmation. I'm indebted to you. Now, then, I don't

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want to ruffle your pretty fur, nor soil the dainty ribbon your master's tied around your neck, but you may trot back to him and tell him from me that if he ever sends you to me again with a message like this, I'll—I'll drown you in a pail of water. . . . And tell him that from to-day our camps are closed to outsiders, and our woods become a private park. Anybody found trespassing, who can't hand in to teacher a mighty substantial excuse, will have imperative cause to hunt for a bone-setter. . . . One thing I wish you'd do for me before you go away from here—just tell me which of my men you've grabbed off the bargain-counter. You've got one of 'em, and pretty soon I'll find out which one. When I do," and Van's voice sounded decidedly as if he meant literally what he said, "I'll send you his skin for a weskit. Now—*scat!*"

Holmquist departed, not hastily—it must be admitted in no panic, but treading daintily like the most aristocratic of pet kittens.

"Anyhow," said Yard to himself, presently, "I know now who's going to hit, and how much of a punch he carries. But when and where will he land on me?"

It was a question which was to remain unanswered fully for some time.

CHAPTER VII

THE thing the woods end of the business must accomplish was this: First, it must accumulate in the big pond beside the mills sufficient pulp wood to run the mills through the winter, with what might be dribbled down in addition on the rails; second, it must pile on rollways and skidways and landings a matter of eight to ten million feet of hardwood for the sawmill; third, it must haul out to the skidways and to the river and cut and pile enough spruce to equal thirty thousand cords when cut to four-foot lengths. The first requirement must be fulfilled before ice covered the pond, so the bolts could be barked in the big barker and piled ready for winter use. The whole winter lay before to meet the other two demands.

To do this would require the labor of upward of six hundred men—and Van Yard found the camps a hundred men short.

Everywhere the work dragged; nowhere did the men exhibit that loyalty of thought and

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effort necessary to the best results. The whole woods machinery was inchoate; it rattled and rumbled and groaned. Camp bosses failed to work together.

“The woods are disorganized,” he said to Nord, in his intense way. “The camps are like a raw bunch of football men—they don’t play low and charge together. It’s every camp for itself—and everybody goes at his work as if he were bored. Can’t they see? Can’t they understand what this thing means? Or don’t they care?”

“Forty a month and board is all they care for,” said Nord.

“I’m going to tell them,” said Yard, with a light in his eyes that might well have shone from the eyes of a missionary bearing a new gospel, “they’re not working just for wages. It isn’t just for Mr. Beaumont and the Pulp Company—it’s for more than that. They’re giving something to our country. I can’t believe that patriotism is dead among such men—among any men. It must be there. It lies dormant, but the spirit that fought our Revolution, that carried men through Valley Forge, and that urged them into the Civil War to hold the nation together, must exist. We’re in another war for independence, Mr. Nord—commercial independence. Our chance has come. Why, can’t you see that every

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new industry like this one is adding a new star to the flag? That's what I'm going to talk to the men."

"Might as well talk astronomy," said Nord.

"I don't believe it, and I'm going to try."

He did try. Night after night he sat in this bunk-house or that preaching his gospel—and because he talked plain language well he was listened to. But that seemed to be all—he was listened to, yet conditions kept on as they were.

Beaumont kept a stream of men flowing toward the woods; something that Yard could not explain kept a counter-stream surging out again. He was facing a condition that every employer of labor from ocean to ocean was facing. For the first time in many years labor could pick and choose where and how it would work. Wages were high, which in the case of thousands of common laborers meant, not greater earnings and greater comforts and greater savings—but days to lay off. If, a year before, a man could live on a dollar and seventy-five cents a day, working six days a week, now he could live on two dollars a day and work only five days.

When there are more jobs than men labor becomes independent. That labor should be independent, Yard recognized, was just and good;

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but that labor should feel no responsibility to employers was neither just nor good.

Yard was, after a fashion, a socialist. He was wholly a humanitarian. But his dominating note was loyalty, loyalty to friends, loyalty to his work and his wage, loyalty to his cause—which was this battle to establish for all time a new industry to the profit and honor and safety of his country. So he felt that labor was not behaving fairly. Well, labor has felt, since labor was first ordained to man, that it was not treated fairly, with much justice. Now it seemed as if labor's day was arrived—and who shall blame it for making what it could of the circumstance?

In the old days lumberjacks would work without food or sleep to accomplish a feat of labor. They labored that they might boast of their accomplishments, and the wage was a small matter to them—a thing to be carried in the pocket when spring came, and blown in a single night or week of wild dissipation. It was the work they loved. The breed is well-nigh extinct. To them Yard could have talked as he talked to his men, and they would have followed him into battle joyously. Eighty per cent. of Yard's men were lumberjacks only in name. They were common laborers who worked in the woods—that was all. Many of them would have been more

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at home on a railroad grade, in the trench of a sewer, with pick and shovel rather than ax and saw. In such men it was hard to light the spark of enthusiasm.

But there were some of the other stripe, and gradually Yard concentrated them in Camps Seven and Eight—where he worked upon them mightily.

Sometimes he found time to talk to Svea Nord about his work—and found her interested. It was his part to do the talking, hers to do the listening, but it was plain to Yard that his point of view pleased her. She responded to it, not with external show of enthusiasm, for that would have been impossible to her, but with quiet, steady approval. That was a word he applied to her in his thoughts many times—steady. She was just that. She appeared never to be excited, never thrown off her poise. He had a feeling that if he rushed in to her saying the forest was burning and that escape from the flames was impossible, she would look at him calmly with her unfathomable blue eyes and say, “I shall see about that presently—when I have finished dusting the parlor.”

Then she would have dusted the parlor, and without flurry would have found an impossible way to safety. And Yard knew he would have

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waited for her to finish her dusting, alarm quieted, excitement quenched, certainty of rescue assured.

When he talked to her he weighed his words meticulously, taking care neither to exaggerate nor to underestimate—to tell the thing as it was. He did not seek to put himself forward, to magnify his importance, nor to impress her with his ability. Somehow he was certain that she would satisfy herself on those points and would resent keenly any direct effort on his part to give himself stature in her eyes.

True and trustworthy—that was what he had to become, and if he attained to it she would know. He knew she would know, and the matter gave him no worry. What troubled him was, would she care? He had not the slightest knowledge of how he stood in her sight, whether she liked him, was attracted to him, approved of him, allowed him to talk to her because she was interested in him as that quaint and curious thing, a man resurrected, or what her attitude might be. She was always courteous. When she had a word to say it was said plainly and directly—and after thought. Serenity—that was another word that belonged to her. She was steady; she was serene.

One might have thought he or another man would have been in some awe of her, but it was

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not so. She inspired a deep-set respect first of all; then, in Van Yard, she kindled a sort of worship which he had not known it was possible for a man to hold for a woman. Love he thought he knew something about—from books, from youthful excursions into that land. He had seen men in love, but they had not acted at all as he felt now. Those men had been attracted by beauty; they seemed obsessed with a desire to talk about their ladies; their sole hope was to possess and wear. Van's case was not as these.

His first sentiment toward Svea was, as has been recorded, one of profound respect. His second was one of reverence such as one might bestow upon a mother of the highest type. His third was worship such as might be given to a real goddess Freya sitting in a Norse paradise. Then came love for her as a young woman, delight in her beauty, a desire to have her for his own, sustained by an unflagging hope and by a determination to stand the test in the laboratory of her heart—and to assay high in truth and trustworthiness.

Elsewhere he forgot it, forgot for days at a time, when he mixed with men and labored, that he had but shortly ago been a bum in the gutter. With Svea it stood always between himself and her, a veil separating them from each

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other. He could not see her save through its obscurity.

“Do you think,” he asked her, almost timidly, “that you can ever forget that I was a—bum?”

“No,” she said, honestly.

“Never?”

“Never,” she replied.

“Nor how I looked that first day you saw me?”

“No,” she said.

“That,” he said, quite unable to conceal his pain, “is not—pleasant to hear.”

“Why should I forget?” she asked, looking at him with eyes that told of some surprise.

“Because—” he said, then clamped tight his jaws, for a flood of words urged to be out and away, words that would lay bare his heart, that could never be withdrawn, that he must stand upon—and fall with. He knew the time was not yet when he might speak to her of love.

“There are worse things than being a bum. A bum is nothing in itself but a man who is either weak by nature or who has allowed himself to be weak. One can’t respect a bum, but neither does one abhor him as one does, for instance, a man who cheats another, or who is not true to a trust, or who accepts a bribe.”

“Could you”—his voice was strained—“could

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you—you—ever trust or respect a man who had once been a bum?”

“Perhaps,” said she, thoughtfully, “more than one who had not. Don’t you think it requires greater powers to—climb up from the depths than it does just to remain safely on the heights? I do.”

His eyes shone. “Svea—” he said, and halted himself again.

It was as if she had not heard him. “Now yourself, for instance,” she said, impersonally. “I have seen something of what you have done. I saw you at your worst, and I see you now. I think in your place I should be rather—proud—that I had once been a bum. It would be a satisfaction to me to feel I had the strength that would lift me out of it. Yes—that is the way I should feel.”

“Do you mean you could ever be real friends with a man who had been a bum?”

“Of course,” she said. “Why not?”

“Miss Nord, I want to tell you something. And I want you to listen and to remember. I am asking nothing. The time may never come when I can with decency ask anything. This is just so you will know. Do you understand what I mean?”

“I think so,” she said, without embarrassment.

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“When I got off that train here and lay with the other five bums beside the track I had no idea I should be—ever—anything but what I was. I didn’t care much. But a girl came out and passed me and went into the garden, and I watched her. That made me see things. I was a man at the bottom of a well looking up at a star. It made me do more than see things—it made me want—things. For the first time in many months I had a desire that could not be expressed in terms of material wants. I wanted, Miss Nord, to be again fit to look into the eyes of such a woman, and have her eyes look back into mine without—abhorrence. It was not a resolve then—merely a wish.” He paused and looked at her as if for permission to proceed.

“Yes,” she said, quietly.

“You were not *you* that day, you were merely a sign that stood for something. But when I got back there in camp I thought about you a great deal, and when I thought about you the wish became stronger. It became a wish to look into *your* eyes—unafraid. So I made my effort.”

“Yes,” she said.

“It was not easy going. You think you know what it is to be a bum, but you don’t. Before anything else a bum is contemptible. He is a rat. He has no soul and no courage. I knew

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that until I could take *fear* and hold it at arm's length I couldn't rise an inch. . . . You saw me once when I was afraid."

"Yes."

"So I had to show you there was some man left in me yet."

She nodded understandingly.

"Then I knew I could do it—and I have done it. I am not a bum to-day. I shall never be one again. . . . Because I have found two things to love—a woman and my work."

Svea did not answer, but her eyes did not leave his face. They seemed to study *him* rather than his words.

"That is what I wanted to tell you—that I have found a woman to love." He had been speaking with his eyes on the floor. Now he lifted them to her face. "You know the woman?"

"Yes," she said, simply, without pretense.

"I think that is all," he said. "I wanted you to know. I wanted you to know that I love you; that you are the most important thing in the world to me."

"More important than your work?" she asked, but the question was not coquettish. It was serious.

He replied, seriously, after a pause. "You are more important than my work because you are

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you. Because you would not stand in the way of my work, but would help me in it. I have heard that men have given up everything—even betrayed their countries—for women. Somehow I do not think I should do that.” He did not say this boastfully, but rather as if he were asking the question of his soul and receiving its answer. “But the women who could ask that do not cause the sort of love I have for you. Yes, you are more important than my work.” He was not conscious that he had made a reservation, but Svea was conscious of it, and put that consciousness away in a safe, secret place, to be brought out some day with pride—if this should prove to be the man.

“I had to tell you,” he said, as if in extenuation.

“It was your right,” she said. “If such a man as you are loves a woman, she owes him the privilege of telling her—whether she admires him or not. You have asked no question and want no answer?”

“No,” he said, well knowing what the answer must be. “But some day I shall ask.”

“Yes,” she said, “but not before I am ready to answer. I do not think you will ask too soon. We shall not refer to this again, shall we? But I shall think of you, Van”—it was the first time

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she had ever used that name—"and I shall think of what you have said. I shall be thinking a great deal."

The telephone rang in the next room. In a moment Nord called, "Yard! On the 'phone!"

It was Sim-sam, calling from Camp Four.

"Mr. Yard?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Hustle. Somebody's give the boys booze—by the barrel. Whole camp's lit up, from Langlois to the cook, and they're bustin' her loose. There won't be no camp left if you don't hurry."

"Where are you?"

"Locked in the cook-shanty, and they're tryin' to bust in the door—and there she goes."

Indistinctly Yard heard sounds of violence, and judged that Sim-sam was enjoying ungentle attentions. At the same time he heard the front door of the house open, and was conscious that some one had entered and was being received by Svea. He went into the next room.

"Haven't meant to neglect you, Svea," a man whose back was turned to Yard was saying. "Been pretty busy. But I'll make up for it. Here's a box of flowers I had sent on from Boston. Thought you might like 'em, now your garden's gone for the year."

"I do like them—very much," said Svea.

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Then she saw Yard and turned to him without flush or embarrassment.

“Mr. Yard,” she said, “this is Mr. Holmquist, a very old friend.”

Holmquist, the Power Company’s “fixer”—the man who had tried to bribe him with the offer of a doubled salary. Yard advanced mechanically and bowed, but did not offer his hand. “Mr. Holmquist and I,” he said, “have met. . . . I’m sorry, Miss Nord, but I have rather a troublesome situation in one of the camps, and I’ve got to go. Good night.” He said this so coolly and formally that Svea allowed her gaze to rest on him a second longer than necessary.

“Hope it’s not serious, Yard,” said Holmquist.

“It is,” said Yard, “very serious. And when I lay hands on the man who’s to blame for it—God help him.”

Then he went out abruptly.

CHAPTER VIII

VAN had more time than was comfortable to think while his gasolene hand-car carried him to Camp Four. The thing that most occupied his mind was not what would happen to him when he got there, but what Holmquist's call upon Svea meant—and how much it meant. It did not seem possible a girl like Svea could be attracted by Holmquist's type—but Yard knew well that types which men abhor sometimes hold their appeal for women. Also the man might exhibit a counterfeit front to her which would deceive her.

Of one thing Yard was certain: if Holmquist was there he was there with a purpose—a purpose not connected with the courting of Svea Nord. That he should appear on the moment of the first serious trouble in the woods bore no resemblance to coincidence in Yard's calculations. He connected the events as cause and effect.

As he approached the camp it was impossible it should not have demanded his attention. It

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may truthfully be said that none of the Yards of Boston had ever sallied forth to quell a drunken lumber-camp. But there had been grandfathers and great-grandfathers who had quelled mutinies in their fo'castles, a fact which Yard recollected with some glimmer of encouragement.

He was alone. The night was black. He was urging ahead into a very real danger and a situation which his training, or lack of training, had not prepared him to handle. It was a splendid opportunity for a man to lose his courage—Yard thought he had never seen a better opportunity. Frankly, he did not like it. Equally frankly he was afraid. Any human being with the power of reason in working order would have been afraid. The pit of his stomach was chill within him and he felt a tingling of nerves from head to foot. Ahead there were seventy-five men, drunk, doubtless savage, undoubtedly reckless and riotous and not likely to regard with satisfaction an interruption of their orgy. And there was one of Van Yard. The mathematical chances were overwhelmingly in favor of an unpleasant outcome so far as he himself was concerned.

He considered going for help, but recognized it as merely an excuse to keep out of the thing himself. He even considered allowing something to happen to the mechanism of the motor-car so

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he could not get there. But he allowed nothing to happen to it. It was not lack of fear that restrained him. He knew he was afraid, and was afraid of his fear. The possibility that he might flunk the thing when he faced it weighed upon him. But he kept on going.

Gradually the crisis took shape in his mind. He saw himself not as a mere woods boss going out to prevent damage to property; but as one of the leaders of an army on his way to combat a stratagem of the enemy. He saw himself serving, not Big John Beaumont, but American sulphite-pulp—a cause. His duty was a duty to his country as he perceived it. He was fighting to retain something for his country as important to it as territory. He knew he was serving his land as well to-night as he could serve it by fighting in the trenches against a foreign invader.

But still he was afraid. There crept insidiously into his mind the thought that he might revert—might in emergency become once more the furtive, cringing bum. He shut his eyes and his teeth sank into his lip.

One sees more visions with the eyes closed than when he opens them to look on the finite world. Perhaps that minute action was the salvation of Van Yard; perhaps he did not actually stand in need of salvation. At any rate, he saw as plainly

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as though she stood before him the calm, dependable face of Svea Nord. Her eyes looked into his without question, without doubt. There was trust and confidence in them.

“True and trustworthy,” he said, aloud, and opened his eyes. “You’ve done your part,” he said to her. “Steadying—that’s how I’ve thought of you, and you’ve steadied me. I—I am much indebted to you, my dear. Now you may go back home. I sha’n’t need you again to-night. There’ll be no collapse.”

He was still afraid; still he appreciated the danger he was to encounter, but he did not fear his fear. He knew he could push it aside, for Svea had given him the strength to that end.

Yard stopped his car at the end of the bridge and walked rapidly across to the camp. Then, for the first time, he thought of Mrs. Billings. He went at once to the walking boss’s house, past the deserted cook-shanty, disregarding the din of hilarity and riot ripping forth from the bunk-house.

Billings’s house was dark. Yard walked around to the back door and knocked softly.

“Who’s there?” challenged Billings.

“Yard. Just got here. Mrs. Billings all right?”

“Yes, and she’ll be all right as long as this shot-gun holds together.”

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“Good boy! What’s happened?”

“Somebody sneaked in enough booze to drive logs on. Every man has a bottle and I guess Langlois has two. There was no concealment about it. Everybody was drinking in the cook-shanty at supper. The excitement started up right after.”

“Any idea where the stuff came from?”

“None at all, but there must have been a wagon-load of it. Listen to that! They’re tearing things to pieces, all right.”

“Well,” said Van, “I’ll go over and see what’s to be done.”

“How many men you got?”

“Men? . . . None.” Then he remembered that he had forgotten to tell even Nord what was wrong, and most positively it had been Nord’s right to know, for this was his business as much as Yard’s.

“You came batting into this alone?”

“Yes,” said Yard, not feeling easy in his mind.

“Wait a minute. I’ll go along.”

“You’ll stay right where you are. Mrs. Billings needs you. Your job is cut out for you. . . . I’ll tend to the rest.”

As Yard strode toward the bunk-house he calculated the problem. Among the revelers were two dozen real woodsmen, lumberjacks,

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fighters of the old school. These were the men most to be feared. The remainder were Poles, Italians, a few transplanted farm-hands, and a smattering of bums from Boston. These Yard considered as close to negligibility. It was with Langlois and the two dozen he would have to deal.

He found the door of the bunk-house closed and fastened within. The door opened outward. Yard hesitated a moment, then picked up the cookee's ax, which stood against the wall, and struck a splintering blow, destroying the flimsy catch. With his foot he jerked the door toward him and stepped over the threshold.

The inside of the bunk-house was chaotic. Supports had been knocked from under bunks which lopped drunkenly downward; the stove had been overturned; the floor was covered with a litter of blankets, clothing, bottles, rubbish, and at the far end the major part of the men were grouped about a man who sang a song, the first verse of which was:

Frankie and Nellie were lovers.

Oh, my Gawd! how they loved!

They vowed to be true to each other,

As true as the stars above.

At which sixty hoarse voices crashed into the choral line, shouting it manfully:

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But he done her wrong,
He done her wrong.

Even the noise of Yard's forced entrance had not attracted their attention, but speedily an eye discovered him standing framed in the doorway; then other eyes; then the song stopped and silence descended, thick as fog, watchful, portentous.

The men stared at Yard; Yard stared at the men.

A very drunken man laughed. There was one roar of laughter from all, and again silence. It was like a blow upon a nerve center. Then, without warning, some one threw a bottle. It hurtled through the air, end over end, whistling ominously at each revolution, and smashed harmless against the wall. Yard took one step into the room.

"Langlois, you swine," he said, evenly, "come here."

"Listen to the bum!" Langlois roared, savagely. "Leave me at him! He's my meat."

"Sure you can chaw him?" asked a voice, and another roar of laughter exploded.

Nothing could delight such a crowd more than a fight—not a fight ordered by prize-ring rules, but a rough-and-tumble whose object was to

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destroy one's antagonist utterly in any way that opened itself—with teeth, calked boots, fists, nails. The men waited, expecting much of the occasion. It was clearly up to Langlois.

Since Yard thrashed him the camp boss had been sullen, but not threatening. Yard fancied the man recognized him as his master, and accepted the thrashing in a resentful, but not revengeful spirit. Apparently this was erroneous.

“Lemme git my corks in his face!” shouted Langlois. “Lemme stomp him into the floor.” He uttered a hoarse shout to startle his enemy or to bring his own courage to the flood, and advanced. “You bum!” he derided, leering at Yard. “You got me unexpected. I got you now.” He raised the bottle in his hand to his lips and drank.

Yard stood motionless. Langlois came closer, then crouched and began to tiptoe forward tigerishly. The man was a cat in movement, graceful, dangerous, equally without mercy. The men watched, breathless, motionless. Langlois stopped six feet away, twitching for the leap.

Equally cat-like was Yard's quickness. He snatched the ax which he had leaned against the back of his leg and struck. He did not strike to kill, though the men could not know that, nor could they know he struck with the flat. The

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iron spatted against the side of Langlois's head, and the camp boss retreated a step before he slumped to the floor and lay inert.

"I'm sorry," said Van, reverting in voice and diction to the Yard of Boston who had once been, "but I haven't time to fight to-night. I'm otherwise occupied."

Even a wolf pack may be appalled and held in check by a man who brains one of themselves with an ax. The men saw Yard strike, and by that token knew he would strike again, and more than one of them looked at his fellows uneasily. Yard did not look at them, but stooped, picked up Langlois's bottle and smashed it against the wall. Then he advanced, trailing his ax.

"Into bed with you!" he said, in no wise lifting his voice.

Not a man moved; the moment of real crisis was come.

Yard came on slowly, without hurry, but with ominous steadiness. The men in front felt a willingness to surrender their places of honor to those behind, for an ax is not a pleasant weapon to encounter. They gave back. Still Yard advanced. Suddenly a Pole in the front rank emitted an animal cry and broke for the rear. The foreigners and bums caught the panic. Not so the lumberjacks, but they were caught in the

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rush for the back door, a rush which halted suddenly, for Billings stepped into view, shotgun at shoulder, and gave mute notice that here was no thoroughfare.

“Give it to ’em, Yard!” he called.

And Yard gave it to them. He was on them striking, shaking, pummeling, and wherever he struck a man went down. From clutching hands he snatched half-empty bottles and more than one man discovered that the skull was not intended by nature to break glass upon. Then Yard backed off, dragging a man, and slammed him into a bunk.

And so Yard and Billings dragged and drove the men to their beds. After the first dozen there was little need for violence. They were cowed, not so much by force as by Yard’s blazing ruthlessness, by that one sudden remorseless blow of an ax.

From each man was snatched his store of liquor, and bottles were smashed against walls and floor until the bunk-house reeked and stunk with the fumes of it.

“Get padlocks and hasps from the wanigan,” said Yard to Billings, and with these fastened to the outside of the doors, they locked the crew in.

“We need ’em,” Yard said, quietly. “Can’t afford to lose any men now.”

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“Did you kill Langlois?”

“No. Drag him to your house, if Mrs. Billings won't mind, and we'll bring him to. I want to give that citizen the third degree.”

Langlois's limp body was carried to the house and there securely tied in an arm-chair, after which precaution Yard labored to restore the man to consciousness.

“I thought I told you to stay with your wife, Billings.”

“She told me to go after you—and she's a bigger boss than you are.”

Yard turned to Mrs. Billings and regarded her gravely an instant before he spoke. “Thank you,” he said, simply. “That is what I should like *my* wife to do.”

Mrs. Billings colored with pleasure, for she recognized a rare compliment.

Langlois regained consciousness slowly, but at last he sat in his chair, fully aware of his surroundings, glowering at Yard with the eyes of a trapped cat.

“You'd better go now, Mrs. Billings,” said Yard. “This will not be pretty to watch.”

She obeyed without question or protest.

“Langlois,” said Yard, “where did you get that booze?”

Langlois merely snarled.

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“Where did you get that booze?” repeated Billings from the other side.

No other words were uttered by the two men than those. “Where did you get that booze? Where did you get that booze?” They continued it steadily, unremittingly, unpityingly. At first Langlois remained dumb, defiant. Then he began to strain at his bonds; then he lifted up his voice in revilings, but still those calm voices beat against his will. “Where did you get that booze? Where did you get that booze?”

It became maddening, unbearable. He writhed, cursed, howled like an animal, but they did not stop for an instant. As one man completed the question the other uttered the first word of it again.

An hour it continued, two hours, and Langlois’s will and venom withstood the pounding of it. Then came the inevitable weakening, a weakening which might not have come to another of slighter physique, of slighter physical courage, of more highly developed mind.

“I got it!” he shouted. “I got it, and I put it there, a bottle in every bunk—in every bunk. And there’s more where that came from—more, more, more!” His voice trailed off and his eyes closed with a terrible, vital-gnawing sleepiness.

But they would not let him sleep. They shook

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him awake and pelted the question in his face with machine-gun rapidity. Suddenly the man screamed and slumped forward against the ropes that held him.

“He’s broken,” said Yard, steadily. “Some water.”

They brought him to again, and as his eyelids flickered his first consciousness was of that question battering, burning his brain. “Where did you get that booze? Where did you get that booze?”

Then—it was a terrible thing to see—Langlois collapsed, and cried—*cried!* Billings turned away his face, for he could not bear to see it, but not so Yard.

“Did Holmquist get it to you?” he demanded.

“Yes, yes, yes, yes,” and Langlois sobbed and choked upon vitriolic, barbarous cursings.

“He paid you to do it?”

“Yes—yes—yes. Lemme go. Lemme go, Mr. Yard. Aa-aaagh! I’ll tell. Lemme git to sleep—to sleep.”

“Who else was in it with you?”

“No—body.” The man’s head dropped, his eyes closed even as he spoke, and he slept—a sight to affect strong men with embarrassment, a thing not to be lightly looked upon.

“God!” said Billings, and breathed deeply.

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“I couldn’t have done it. I— Mr. Yard—I was sorry for him.”

There was no sympathy in Yard’s face or voice. “Outside with him. Let him sleep in the air. He ought to stand up before a firing squad—or do they hang traitors?”

Before that night Billings had spoken to Van as “Yard.” From that night onward, though there grew up friendship between them, he never omitted the “Mister.” There was something in Yard that had made its impress on the walking boss, something he could never cast aside so long as he remembered that scene—and that scene was one not to be dimmed by years.

“He’s a big man,” Billings said to his wife, who was waiting for him in their room. “I’m—yes—I’m a little afraid of him. He’s ruthless. He’s like steel.”

His wife smiled at him wearily. “Men don’t understand,” she said. “He’s not ruthless—he’s *driven*.”

“Driven?”

“Yes. The thing he has to do, the thing he *believes* in, drives him. He—he’s almost a fanatic. This new sulphate industry is a religion to him, and he worships it almost like a god.”

“How do you know that?”

“Svea Nord told me,” said Mrs. Billings, a

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circumstance which would have been a drop of sweet water on Van Twiller Yard's tongue. Svea Nord thought about him; analyzed him; *knew* him.

“And something else—he's fighting to get as far away from what he was—as there is room in the world. Because the farther he gets away from that the nearer he comes to Svea.”

“Did she tell you that?” asked Billings.

“It's printed on him,” she said. “Any woman can read it.”

“Huh!” said Billings in some dismay, wondering just how much of a man's soul a woman could really read if she set her mind to the matter. It was a disquieting speculation even for the most faithful of husbands.

CHAPTER IX

YARD slept but a couple of hours and was up before daylight. Langlois lay where he had been tossed in the sort of sleep that carries a man around the clock; no signs of life were yet apparent in the bunk-house. Van sat down on the piazza to wait, and then, for the first time, he wondered what had befallen Sim-sam. The night before had been so occupied that thought of his eccentric friend had been impossible, or, had it been possible, there was no opportunity to give attention. Yard was not the man to desert a friend or to be careless of a friend, but the Cause came first. It was bigger than one man, than many men.

But his fears were needless, for presently Sim-sam emerged from the underbrush, peering about him cautiously. He would have been welcome in no parlor, for besides having slept in the woods his face had been so worked upon by willing hands that it did not charm the eye. Sim-sam had been manhandled.

“Mornin’, boy,” said Sim-sam, unconcernedly.

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“If they’d got you, Sim-sam,” said Yard, with intention, “somebody would have wished his birth had been omitted.”

“Git *me!* Huh! Think this old bird never seen a fracas before? Say! If I had a dollar for every fist my face has stopped I’d buy me a hotel for my wife to run. Me, I got mashed some—not to speak of—but I gits in a few licks personal, and then I up and ducks through the door. I wasn’t hankerin’ none to come back, neither. I kept on a-goin’. . . . Say, boy, ever meet up with the postmaster?”

“What postmaster?”

“Reg’lar one, down to the post-office.”

“Don’t think I ever saw him.”

“See him, then,” said Sim-sam, wagging his head. “You git to see him. ’Cause why? ’Cause, boy, he’s the dum’dest postmaster in these here U-nited States. Hain’t what you’d call pleasin’ to the eye, and he’s got a sweet natur’ like a bear stung by a bee, but there’s a clock in his head that keeps a-tickin’ thirty hours out of twenty-four, and p’intz plumb to the right time every whack. You mind what I say, boy, and git yourself all acquainted with him.”

“Sleep out?”

“I got me under some young spruce, carryin’ one of them magazines in my pocket, and there

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was a moon givin' light to see the pictures by. Some story, boy. That was a reg'lar magazine. Don't think I ever made up no better story than that one was. Couldn't git to sleep for it. Kept me awake till nigh mornin'. Excitin'! Say, boy, that yarn was a ring-dinger."

Now the bunk-house began to come to life. Yard got up and unlocked the door.

"Good morning, boys!" he said, as if nothing had happened.

The men, rubbing their eyes and feeling, not with enjoyment, of their heads, peered at him sullenly.

"Listen," said Yard. "Last night was last night. To-day is to-day. I'm not blaming you boys for what happened. It was shoved under your noses. There'll be a new boss to-day—but an old crew. I'm depending on you boys to stick by me. I'm in a fight, and it's going to be a big fight. I shouldn't wonder if you saw a lot of fun before spring, and the men who stick by me won't regret it. You've had a chance to look me over. I've had some chance to look you over. Now make up your minds quick. Do you stick or do you walk out?"

A big Frenchman jumped to his feet. "By gar! I stick!" he shouted. "Eh, boys? W'at? I work for some boss' and den maybe some more boss',

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you bet, but Misser Yard, she's a daisy! I stick."

"Count me in," bellowed another, "and say, Mr. Yard, if you got any friends you want beat up, you call on me. And I got this to say, any bird here that quits you comes ag'in' me prompt. That goes."

"No coercion," laughed Yard. "How about the rest of you?"

There was a brief consultation, enlivened by loud words from the two men who had spoken their minds; then the second speaker took the floor again.

"You're elected, Mr. Yard. You git the u-nanimous vote. I guess the fellers has took a likin' to your way of doin' business."

Yard scrutinized the man. He was big, rough, but there was undoubted intelligence and power of will within him. That he was a thorough woodsman Yard knew by visual evidence.

"Good!" he said. "Thank you, boys. Thank you, Meggs. Can you run this camp?"

"I can give her a hell of a rassel," said Meggs.

"Then you're it. Boys, Meggs is boss of Camp Four. You're in charge *now*. I'm going back where I came from, and I'm expecting Camp Four to give the rest of the camps a mark to shoot at."

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“Watch us,” said Meggs. That the man was delighted at his promotion and at the trust reposed in him was evident. Yard knew he had one camp boss to be depended on through thick and thin. “Where’s that cook?” shouted Meggs. “Git busy, there. You fellers hump some. This here day’s half gone and not a tree notched.”

Yard smiled and went his way. The matter had turned out to his complete satisfaction. He had labored better than he knew, for the story of that night traveled far through the mountains, and expanded and ramified to legendary quality. Yard was endowed with characteristics something more than human; men discussed him. It was even a fact that men journeyed from distances to work under such an individual—which brought into those woods more than one good lumberjack. It had been a profitable night’s work.

As Yard was crossing the bridge to his motor-hand-car Sim-sam trotted after him.

“When you git to see the Postmaster”—he pronounced the word with a capital letter, thus setting the subject apart from all other postmasters—“don’t let on you come to see him special. Go in casual-like, to buy a chaw of gum or somethin’. The more cantankerous he acts to you the more, prob’ly, he takes to you.”

As Yard rattled down the track he wondered

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what Sim-sam's anxiety to have him meet the postmaster could mean. This became active curiosity, which took form as an impulse to visit the post-office. This lay below woods headquarters and not distant from the track. Yard had seen it more than once, and, being city bred and not acquainted with the ways of the world, had marveled at it.

It would be complimentary exaggeration to call the post-office a shanty. It would have required considerable remodeling to make it into a shanty. It filled the description of no building known to man. It was "the post-office"—a type apart.

High above the road it sat, as inaccessible to visitors as ingenuity could make it. It looked as if particularly unskilful boys had built it and tired of the job before they were through. It covered a space approximating ten feet by eight, and if there were two boards of a length or size in it that fact could not have been intentional. The roof was covered with black paper; the door was held on by leather hinges made from the upper of a cast-off shoe. There was one window—a stationary one—intended solely to admit light, but deprived of the pleasure of doing so by long accumulation of dust, cobwebs, and the deposit of inclement weather. Finally it slanted toward the hill as if it were tired and wanted something

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substantial to lean against. You knew immediately it was a post-office, because a hand-made sign over the door announced the fact. However, you had a choice of believing the sign or of surmising that somebody was allowing a bent for humor to roam at large.

Yard stopped the motor-car and crossed the river on the stones. The first thing he noticed was a rope leading away from the post-office into the woods, leading from a sign which said, "If you want the postmaster when he's out, jerk." There was a suspicion that the rope rang a bell somewhere up the slope, but its whereabouts was a mystery.

However, the door of the edifice was open and the postmaster was inside. So was another individual. As Yard entered the individual cleared his throat and said:

"Gimme a nickel plug, Postmaster."

Behind the counter an old man was sorting letters. He was bent and withered, and whiskers dangled rather than hung from his chin. He was an emaciated sparrow of an old man—a sparrow dressed for a masquerade. When he stood to his full height the crown of his head was all of five feet and an inch or two away from the floor. Every motion he made reminded one of a sparrow scratching for insects, and pecking hungrily at

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those he uncovered. Let it be mentioned again, he was sorting letters; sorting them with abandon, so to speak, and a degree of concentration that should have endeared him to the postal department.

"Gimme a nickel plug," repeated the individual, with impatience.

The postmaster suspended operations with one thumb an inch from the tongue which was about to dampen it.

"Don't hender the U-nited States mail," he said, fiercely.

"Can't I git it myself? It lays right there, Postmaster."

"Don't allow nobody behind my counter. When I git through servin' the Gove'ment I'll 'tend to you. Calc'late you weigh heavy ag'in' Gove'ment business? Now shet up and stay shet up."

Presently the sorting was completed and the postmaster grudgingly sold the individual his five-cent plug. Then, when the individual had withdrawn, he turned to Yard.

"Name's Yard, hain't it?" he snapped.

"Yes."

"Don't show no signs of bein' a bum." The postmaster studied Van belligerently.

"I hope they've worn off," said Yard.

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“What made you come in here? Eh? Curiosity, I’ll warrant. Sight-seein’. I’ll have you know the U-nited States mail hain’t no side-show.”

“I came,” said Van, “to buy some stamps.”

“Didn’t, neither. You come to see me. *Me!* You dunno why, but you did. Hain’t no use hedgin’ around.”

“All right, Mr. Postmaster, I came to see you. What did I come to see you for?”

“ ’Cause I sent for you, that’s why. ’Cause I heard that there talk you’re makin’ about servin’ the country, and a new industry’s wuth as much as a new State, and sich. Kinder int’rested in the Gove’ment myself. Mean what you been sayin’? Eh? Jest talk and wind, or was there somethin’ to it?”

“I meant it,” said Yard.

“Huh! Kinder snappish about it, hain’t you? . . . That cart-load of booze do much damage?”

Yard was startled. He looked at the postmaster with increased interest. “How did you hear of it?” he asked.

“ ’S my business to hear—and keep my mouth shet. Might hear somethin’ useful to the Gove’ment. Might hear somethin’ useful to me. Might hear somethin’ useful to you, if there was any reason for tellin’ you about it.”

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The postmaster moved a little closer to gain a better view of Yard, and peered at him in frowning silence.

“Calc’late,” he said, after a moment, “that John Beaumont hain’t no bigger fool’n he used to be . . . which wasn’t very darn big.” Then again: “When John picks a man, that man’s int’restin’ to me.” After another pause: “Calc’late you and me kin give them furriners and Swedes and sich a tussle if we set to it. Powerful combination, you and me—pervidin’ I decide to go into it. Me with the brains and you with your fists, eh? . . . Not that you don’t appear to have *some* brains—some. Hain’t seasoned, though. Don’t find the Gove’ment makin’ you postmaster nowheres, do you, like they done me? Gove’ment don’t repose no confidence in a feller till he’s had experience. Young feller, I don’t presume there’s many men the Postmaster-General’s got more confidence in than me. And why? I hain’t never failed him, and I hain’t likely to. Let me come slap up ag’in’ a problem that ’d flatten out an ordinary man. Does it flatten me? Not a mite. ’Cause I’ve had experience. If I can’t reason a thing out I set and fish back into my recollection—and I git a nibble. Every time. And there, sure enough, I haul out that same problem, lookin’ a mite different,

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maybe, but the same, for all that—and ready solved. That's my strong holt."

The thing about this harangue that interested Yard was the postmaster's evident acquaintance with the situation. He was certain Mr. Beaumont had not talked about the opposition from Swedish sources. He was sure he had not done so. It was far from being a matter of common knowledge—yet the postmaster knew it. Yard wondered how much more he knew.

"Well," said the postmaster, "want me in it? Feel the need of a guidin' brain?"

"I should be glad to have your help—and guidance," said Van, not amused as it might seem he would be. He felt there was something in that little wizened head, and that a great deal of eccentric talk perhaps masked a battery of deadly acuteness.

"It's honorin' a young feller like you to associate him with a trusted servant of the Gove'ment," said the postmaster, dubiously, "but I'm dum'ed if I don't try it a spell. I may throw you over, though," he warned. "Got a motor-boat up to Camp Eight, hain't you?" the little man asked, suddenly.

"Yes," said Van, really startled now.

"Goin' to need it. Goin' to need it. Got boom logs ready, eh? Boat hain't no good without boom logs."

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“No,” said Van, “but work will start on them to-day.” Here was a valuable suggestion at the first discharge.

“Holmquist was at Nord’s last night, wasn’t he? Seen him, didn’t you? Who d’you s’pose he wanted to see most, Svea or her dad? Ever ask yourself that?”

“What do you mean?”

“Tried to bribe you, didn’t he? His business, hain’t it? Not that he hain’t hankerin’ after Svea consid’able. Can’t understand it. Can’t see how that girl ’ll let that insec’ buzz around her, but wimmin is past human understandin’. What *you’d* figger that *they’d* figger was pizen to ’em, why, they jest up and wallers in it sometimes. About ninety-nine per cent. of a rattlin’ good woman is too doggone wonderful for anythin’ under a seraphim or a archangel to understand, but there’s one per cent. in every one of ’em that’s plain imbecile. Never knowed it to fail. And sometimes, young feller, that one per cent. jest raises hell.”

There seemed to be nothing Yard could say that would help the conversation at this point.

“Kinder hankerin’ after Svea Nord yourself, hain’t you?”

Van admitted it without embarrassment.

“I’ll see about it,” said the postmaster. “Maybe

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you hain't fit for her. If you hain't you won't git her—I'll see to that—but if you be—" He left this sentence unfinished, and Yard wondered if the postmaster had been on the point of promising to act the efficient Cupid if it seemed advisable.

"Now you git along. I got U-nited States business to 'tend to. Nothin' much 'll happen before spring, but we got to be ready. When I need you I'll send for you. If you git pinched—why, come and I'll see what kin be done. . . . And when you git a chance study up on dams. Particular on dams like the big one the Power Company's got up here. Git so's you know all about 'em. It 'll come handy, besides increasin' your general store of knowledge. . . . Go on out of here."

Van went obediently, wonderingly. Where did this peculiar little person fit into the puzzle picture? he wondered. Of one thing he carried away an abiding certainty—the postmaster could and would fit into an important place.

CHAPTER X

THE new mill was at last in operation, and Big John Beaumont called Van Twiller Yard in to town to see them operate—ostensibly—but in reality to talk to the young man, to look him over and see how he was wearing.

“We’re started,” he said, “and we’re pretty safe for winter. We figure there’s close to enough pulp wood in the pond to keep us going till spring. But we’re shy of hardwood. Got to have sawlogs to keep the sawmill going, and we’ve got to have slabs and sawdust and edgings from the sawmill for fuel to keep the pulp-mill going. Bear that in mind.”

“I’ve been giving too much attention to the pulp,” said Yard.

“No. Keep on giving the pulp all you’ve got—and then give just as much to the beech, birch, and maple.” Big John grinned boyishly. “All I ask of you is every ounce you’ve got in you—and then just as much again on the side. I’m not unreasonable, you see.”

Van was in no mood to respond to humor,

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though there was a well-defined vein of humor in him. Beaumont was not satisfied with him—that was what Yard saw. He had fallen short of the demands of the situation. Apparently he did not yet measure up to the full stature of a man, or he would have produced full accomplishment; so there must be something of the bum left about him. He would have to keep a watchful eye for it to detect and uproot it.

“The situation is developing just as I figured,” said Big John. “The market for sulphate-pulp has passed the hundred-dollar mark. I see it clambering to a hundred and twenty-five. See what that means? It means that every ton of sulphate we can produce over and above the amount we’re contracted to deliver will give us a profit of thirty or forty dollars a ton. If we can just crowd the mill to give an extra four or five tons a day—and that’s all within the possibilities—we can gather genuine velvet to the tune of forty or fifty thousand in the next twelve months. And I want all I can get. I’m risking considerable in this new game; and if I risk I’m entitled to the profits. It’s fair.”

“It is fair. You’re annexing a new industry to the flag. You deserve your reward.”

“Everything’s contributing. Imports of rags have fallen to nothing. More paper is being used

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every year—and to-day, because of the rag shortage, manufacturers of book papers are turning to sulphite-pulp. Not sulphate. Bear in mind that difference when you think about it. Sulphate is our game—chemical pulp—Swedish pulp. Sulphite—spelled with an ‘i,’ is acid pulp, and another matter—but it helps. No Kraft without us, and the country’s educated to Kraft wrapping-papers. Everything contributes. Of course the pickings are big to-day. But they won’t always be. If we make a go of this, other fellows will come in. There’ll be mills and mills. The supply will crawl up near the demand and prices will go down. That’s why I’m entitled to my rake-off. I’m showing the way. As soon as the others begin to tail in, war profits will go. Then the consumer will profit. Your publisher will buy his paper cheaper; country newspapers won’t have to go out of business because paper costs more than their gross receipts; manufacturers who ship in corrugated or fiber containers won’t be giving up most of their possible profit. . . . And we’ll be safe against another happening like this forever. So far as papers of all sorts are concerned, we won’t care a hang when another European war breaks out. See?”

“Yes,” said Yard. “We’re doing our bit to make solid the future prosperity of our country.”

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“And you, Yard, are at The Source—just as you said. It’s all up to the woods end.”

“It’s big, isn’t it? Think,” said Yard, his face the face of an enthusiast, “of an America that is self-sufficient; that need not ask a thing of the world. It would be a Golden Age for us.”

“More likely it would bring the world about our ears with large, unpleasant cannon and such trifles. No. You’re going too far. If it were possible—which it isn’t—I should dread the day when America had nothing to ask of the rest of the world. We’d be like a general store, stocked with everything the owner needed for life. He’d be satisfied. He would neither buy nor sell, but would settle back and eat himself up. Trade and commerce mustn’t be forgotten, son. If we’re to exist, to become mightier than we are, we must give and take. But”—he smiled quizzically—“we must see to it we get a little the best of the deal.”

Van changed the subject abruptly. “Do you know the postmaster?” he asked.

Beaumont looked at him sharply. “Yes,” he said, but added nothing to the monosyllable. Something in his voice restrained Yard from continuing the topic.

“You asked about the Power Company,” said Big John, tentatively.

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“Yes. Of course you knew they were bucking us before I dreamed it.”

“I had an inkling—an inkling. Have they shown their hand?”

“Not to any effect yet. Their time hasn’t come.”

“When do you figure it will come?” Big John was interested now. Here was a man who looked to to-day, but looked twice to to-morrow. Such men were to be tied to.

“In the spring. When it’s time to drive down the pulp wood we’ve accumulated during the winter.”

“Don’t expect to be bothered before then?”

“I expect something—every day.”

“But haven’t bumped against it yet?”

“Nothing worth mentioning.”

“What about the trouble at Camp Four?”

Of that Yard had not spoken. It had been a mere incident to him; one that, ending well, was therefore of slight importance. He shrugged his shoulders, and Beaumont wondered for an instant if it were a pose; decided it was not. Here was a young man so intent, so concentrated, that the world’s opinion of himself did not matter.

“Yard,” he said, “I don’t think I’m paying you enough money.”

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“Eh?” Yard’s mind had been on something else. “Oh, that’s all right, I guess,” he said, indifferently.

Beaumont mentally patted himself on the back. Here was that rare animal, the man who worked for an end and forgot all about what the work brought to himself. So Big John said no more about wages. He would see to that when the time came.

“Mr. Beaumont,” said Yard, suddenly, “do you ever see anything in me that—reminds you of—of the man who came into the woods?”

“You mean is there any bum left in you?”

“Yes.”

“About as much,” said Beaumont, “as there is cream in the average brick.”

Yard drew a long breath and looked out of the window. Big John did not know what his companion was thinking then; might, perhaps, have been surprised or disappointed if he knew. Van was not thinking of work, nor of sulphate. He was thinking of a girl with searching blue eyes, and wondering if those eyes saw more than Beaumont’s; if anything of the bum was still apparent to Svea Nord.

“What do you need most right now?” Big John asked.

“Snow,” said Van, succinctly,

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"I'll pray for it," said Beaumont, "but that's the best I can do. How about men?"

"Keep 'em coming."

"Want anything else?"

"No."

He arose and went out of the office. On his way to the hotel he saw approaching him Holmquist and a tall, spare gentleman of marked appearance. He was a man one would turn to study, for not alone was he what is sometimes described as an aristocrat, but ability—sheer ability—seemed to radiate from him. Yard saw Holmquist look at him and then say something quickly to his companion, whose face did not alter, nor did his eyes turn to Yard, though it was apparent Yard had been mentioned.

As they came face to face Holmquist and his companion stopped.

"Mr. Yard," said the dapper little man, "I would like to present you to Mr. Ekstrom, president of the Eastern States Power Company."

Van bowed courteously, but did not offer his hand. Ekstrom's hand had not moved toward him, either.

"I have heard much of Mr. Yard," he said, speaking precisely, in a cultivated voice, his words betraying by an indefinable something in the inflection that English was not the language

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he was born to speak. "May I add that what I have heard is wholly admirable?"

Van bowed slightly.

"You are not, I judge, a man to—mince words with. I believe that is the idiom," said Ekstrom. "You are an employee of Mr. Beaumont's, and know how the Power Company views this new venture of his. I do not attempt to conceal from you that we do not hope for its success."

Yard waited silently.

"You," said Ekstrom, "are a man who can contribute much to its success. Therefore it seems expedient, if we can arrange it, to deprive Beaumont of your services. Frankly, we would rather have you with us than against us."

Van saw no occasion to reply.

"This," said Ekstrom, "is not to be an attempt to bribe you. It is an honest effort to secure for my company a valuable man. Irrespective of the present situation, I should be glad to acquire you. Surely there is nothing unfair in that. . . . As to the sulphate industry, let me state my position there. It is not a matter of dollars and cents with me. I am a Swede. I am at this moment a citizen of that country, and owe it my allegiance. It is not a rich country, nor can it endure to have its wealth or its wealth-producing machinery impaired. Should the sulphate industry succeed

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here it will be so impaired, and therefore, as a citizen who has the welfare of his country at heart, I am doing, and shall continue to do, what I can in its interest. I think that explains clearly my position."

"Yes," said Yard.

"Then," said Ekstrom, "is there any reasonable inducement I can offer you to bring you into my employ?"

"None," said Yard.

"For a man of your capacity and ambition there is ample room with us."

"Undoubtedly," said Yard.

"Your decision is final?"

"Yes."

"Have you considered what the enmity of the Power Company might mean to you—personally?"

"No, and I shall not. That, I take it," said Yard, reverting, as he did in moments of stress, to the diction inherited from the Yards of Boston, "is in the nature of a threat, is it not?"

"This is industrial warfare. We cannot consider individuals."

"May I ask if you are threatening—violence?"

"Our wish is either to have you with us—or to—let us say, nullify—you."

"I don't know," said Van, softly, almost as

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though speaking to himself. "I'm not wholly sure of myself yet—not perfectly acquainted with myself, but my judgment is that you will find me somewhat difficult to—nullify."

"Every man," said Ekstrom, "has his point of vulnerability. You oblige us to exert ourselves to discover yours."

"Mr. Ekstrom," said Yard, "I do not know whether you have expressed yourself honestly or if you are inspired in this matter by patriotism. You have been frank with me, and I shall try to be equally so with you. I think, sir, that you have tried to seduce me with sophistry." Suddenly he set his eyes upon Ekstrom's. The Bostonese diction dropped from him; he became Van Yard, woodsman, in an instant. "You have made a threat. I'll give you a chance to make good—but tell the man or men you send on the errand to come ready for trouble. You seem to want fight. Well, you'll get fight. . . . Patriotism—*hell!* This country gave you wealth. It gives you a home. You will live and die here. If you owe anything to any country you owe it to America. You're a damned ingrate, sir, and should be led to our border and kicked over it. . . . Good morning." Yard pushed by them and strode on his way.

Holmquist was blazing with wrath; not so

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Ekstrom. He smiled and looked after Van with something of admiration in his eyes.

“There goes a good man,” he said. “I’ve got to have him, and I’ll get him of his own free will—or by some other means. *I—want—that—man.*”

Yard rode back to the woods in the cab of the engine that pulled a string of empty trucks to be loaded with hardwood logs in the morning. About a mile from headquarters the railroad branched, the line to the left passing headquarters and continuing upward beyond the dam, the other to the East Branch camps. Van leaped to the ground to walk the remaining mile to Nord’s.

He had traversed half the distance when he saw ahead of him, stopped by the roadside, a ramshackle buckboard, hitched to a horse so thin and threadbare that it narrowly escaped continuing to be a horse altogether. On the seat was huddled a small, female figure which, on nearer approach, Yard discovered to be sobbing with a skill which only many repetitions could have brought about. It was clear that there must have been many occasions to sob, and consequently that the way of the sobber had led in the valleys and swamps of unhappiness, rather than along the hilltops of delight.

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Yard stopped and explored the back of his collar with a dubious finger. Women in tears did not come within his experience; but he had once been reared as a gentleman, and gentlemen do not pass women in trouble without at least an inquiry. Yard essayed a question.

“Er—can I be of any—assistance?” he asked.

A face, tear-streaked, was slowly presented to view. It was a young face, a girl’s face. Had it been laughing it would have owned a sort of fresh prettiness. Yard judged her to be a couple of years short of twenty.

“Has—anything happened?” he asked, presently.

“I—I—l-lost it,” she said, mingling words with sniffles.

“What did you lose?”

“Dad’s fern money. He—he sent me to town with a l-load of ferns—and I—got paid for ’em—and l-lost it.”

“Um—and dad’s likely to—be unpleasant about it?”

“He’ll perty nigh—kill me,” she said, rising to a height of sobbing not before touched.

“Of course,” said Van, helplessly, “girls who are sent on errands should—er—refrain from more than a reasonable amount of carelessness. A reasonable amount. Just how much that is I

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am unable to say, but in the case of a girl of your age I should judge it would be—considerable. Your father, I gather, won't look to that fact."

"You're makin' fun of me," she said, dolefully.

"Really I'm not—at all. Would it be impertinent to ask how much you—misaid?"

"Thirteen dollars," she said.

"Unlucky number—very. It should have warned you. You should have been especially—discreet in the handling of it; and you seem to have been exactly the contrary."

"Are—are you a pefessor or somethin'," she asked, her sobs held in check by dawning interest.

"Why, no—not exactly. Thirteen dollars, you say. Now your father wouldn't recognize a—substitution, would he? That is to say, he wouldn't know it if you—gave him a thirteen dollars that wasn't the precise thirteen dollars he was—expecting, would he?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said.

"You have—a little advantage of me. Women have very rarely sobbed like that in my presence. It is disconcerting. Really, I think you should stop it. . . . Here"—he felt in his pocket—"here's thirteen dollars. If you can pass them off on your father as—the genuine thirteen dollars, probably

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he won't—come so near to killing you as you anticipate.”

“Oh, *mister!*” she said. “Honest?”

“Honest—*Injun,*” he responded, soberly.

She reached, almost snatched for, the money, and counted it eagerly; then, too relieved for thanks, she spanked the regrettable horse with the lines and went away from that place. Yard was relieved.

He looked about and saw walking toward him, not thirty feet distant, Svea Nord. Her face was expressionless, but there was a subtle something, a hint of suppressed curiosity, perhaps, in her eyes that made Yard sure she had witnessed at least the latter part of the episode and was not altogether satisfied with it. As a matter of fact, Yard was not perfectly satisfied. He was sure he had not risen to the event as he should have done.

Instantly, also, the matter presented itself to him as it might to an unprejudiced beholder—or perhaps to one with a possible prejudice. Young men did not as a common practice hand small rolls of bills to young women at roadsides unless there were a motive of some sort. It was a situation in which the motive might very easily be interpreted in a manner he would have suffered much pain to prevent Svea Nord from interpreting it. It filled him with anxiety, and

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his anxiety made him awkward. Awkwardness in such a moment is strong to create misapprehensions.

“Good afternoon, Svea,” he said. “I—I had no idea of meeting you here.”

“Good afternoon, Mr. Yard,” she said, not coldly, but he felt that she had raised a barrier between herself and him—and she had called him Mr. Yard.

It was not a thing he could explain. At any rate, it seemed to him, it would be too like boasting of a charity. And he felt some delicacy in talking about a business which was purely the concern of the young woman with the sobs. Therefore he kept uncomfortably silent. He made the tactical error of ignoring the thing altogether, and of seeming to seek to divert Svea’s attention from it.

The remaining half-mile seemed extraordinarily long to him. He had difficulty in finding topics of conversation, for it was apparent that the personal note would not be welcomed. He was not happy. Yet when he glanced covertly at Svea he could see no reason for unhappiness. She did not seem displeased; her face was not troubled; she was calm as was her wont, and responded to his conversational advances readily. Yet something was lacking. Perhaps she was not suspicious;

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perhaps she had read nothing into the incident he would not have had her read. At any rate, it was too late to ask or to offer explanation. To do so now would be but to arouse suspicion. It would bear the appearance of a story that it had taken time to perfect. He was glad when the house was reached and she preceded him through the door and passed on to the rear of the house.

Nord heard his step and called: "Number Three just jumped the track this side of Camp Four. She rolled down the bank into the river, yankin' the whole string of trucks after her."

The announcement erased Svea from Yard's mind instantly. It was a call to action. It was, perhaps, a telling point scored by the enemy, for at one blow it abated twenty-five per cent. of the rolling-stock which was essential to getting logs to the mill.

He had told Beaumont the enemy would not strike until spring. This—for he was positive in laying the wreck to no accident—proved him an unreliable prophet.

"Come on," he said, and started headlong for the scene of trouble.

CHAPTER XI

THE wreck of Number Three was the first warning of an epidemic of mishaps to the railroad. Trucks, loaded too high, spilled their logs in awkward places. Reaches broke unaccountably; loose rails became so common that engineers had almost to walk the tracks ahead of their engines. The big steam-loader fell ill. Fire broke out in the machine shop. All these things added to the fact that one engine out of four was totally suppressed for weeks to come cut unpleasantly into the supply of logs that went to the mills. More than one half-day was lost for lack of fuel.

And then, for the first time, friction began to manifest itself between Nord, Yard's nominal boss, and Yard. Yard was patient, for he laid misunderstandings to the fact that Nord was worried and hustled by the situation and so made irritable and at times unreasonable. Orders given by Yard were countermanded by Nord. Nord issued instructions which went directly contrary

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to plans Yard had formulated. At first Yard was silent; then he was forced to expostulation.

“Mr. Nord,” he said one evening, when he found that orders given by him to the East Branch camps to send down that day nothing but hardwood logs had been reversed, and that nothing but spruce had traveled to the mill, “you and I seem to be working at cross purposes. Somehow we’re not pulling together as we used to.”

Nord turned on him sharply. “I’m boss in these woods,” he said, “and it’s time you was finding it out. It isn’t a question of us working together; it’s a question of you working for me.”

“But it’s bad for discipline to have you go over my head and reverse my instructions.”

“No worse than for you to ram ahead the way you’ve been doing. The men don’t know who’s boss—and I’m showing ’em.”

“I’ll be glad to consult with you and issue orders in your name,” said Yard, placatingly.

“You’ll do as you’re told,” said Nord, and, turning on his heel, walked away.

Here was a hard situation for the young man. He knew Nord was disrupting his plans; it was apparent that Nord, offended to pig-headedness, was asserting authority at the cost of efficiency in the woods. Van refused to lay the condition to

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anything but offended vanity, but he—Yard—felt himself responsible to Beaumont for the output. Responsible, he felt, not to Beaumont alone, but to sulphate-pulp, to the new industry in process of birth.

Two options were presented: to do the best he could in the circumstances, and to seek, by ready compliance with Nord's whims, to bring about the establishment of the old relations; or drastically to seize the authority which was his by virtue of Big John Beaumont's letter, and remove his titular superior.

Here Svea Nord entered into the problem, complicating it. What would she think? What would be her attitude toward the man who discredited her father? Van's respect for her intelligence and fairness was boundless. It was possible he could explain to her the necessity for his act—but it was questionable. It was possible she might question the motive for the removal and lay it not to expediency, but to Yard's personal ambition, to his willingness to rise by treading down another ruthlessly.

True and trustworthy—that was what her man must be. She might—probably would, regard his action as treachery to his superior; and treachery could arouse in her nothing less than disgust.

The crisis was one not readily to be met by a

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young man whose love for a girl was as deep, as compelling, as grateful as was Yard's for Svea.

He decided, and he hoped his decision rested, not on fear of consequences to himself, but upon good judgment, to take no steps save friendly ones; to exert himself to the utmost to regain Nord's friendship. And there he let the matter rest.

For weeks Yard had been filling Camps Seven and Eight with picked men; to those camps he had been giving more of his time than to all the rest—and they were showing results. Gradually the men at that far end of the line came to be called by the rest Yard's roughnecks—and roughnecks they were. Fighters, drinkers, workers, every one of them! Hard customers to handle, dangerous men to oppose; but Yard worked on them in his way, and they responded.

Your roughneck, your born fighter, is capable of depths of loyalty. He likes to fight, but better than anything else he likes to fight for a friend—and Yard became their friend. More than that, he was admired by them, for he never avoided an argument; never showed uncertainty or nervousness—and he had thrashed Langlois, reputed to be the worst man in the mountains. He had managed to put their relations with him on a personal basis, and had you asked who they

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worked for they would have told you it was Van Yard, not the Green Mountain Pulp Company. They were Van's men, collected and worked upon by him for a purpose—to take care of an emergency which he saw arising in the future.

Yard's roughnecks! Already stories of those camps began to trickle down the mountain roads and spread through the southern counties. If it had been announced that Yard and his roughnecks were coming to town the villagers would have closed their stores, barricaded their houses, and petitioned the Governor to call out the militia.

For weeks Yard saw these collections of men were twanging on Nord's nerves. The woods boss referred to them angrily; pointed to actions of theirs which, indeed, were not gentle. More than once he threatened to break up the camps and scatter the men throughout the woods. Van was determined to hold his roughnecks together, not because they were his, but because he looked upon them as his strong army of defense. It was those disreputable citizens, he believed, who would one day stand between sulphate-pulp and failure.

Yard stopped seldom at woods headquarters during these wearing days, and saw little of Svea. That she was not unaware of her father's attitude

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toward him he felt certain. Her eyes were too clear, her intelligence too quick not to have carried her to the truth. But sometimes business compelled him there.

On one of these days, made as rare as he could make them, Svea sat on the porch as he dismounted from his hand-car. She greeted him impersonally, not with frank friendship as had been her habit before that inconsiderable incident in the road which had transferred thirteen dollars from Yard's pocket to the sobbing girl's. This was not the smallest of Van's troubles.

"Mr. Yard," said Svea, "a girl has been asking for you several times this week. She was here again to-day. The matter seemed to be very urgent."

"A girl?" exclaimed Yard, astonished. "What girl?"

"Her name, I believe, is Ruth Piggins."

Van frowned. The name meant nothing to him.

"She's a fern-picker," said Svea, her tone becoming not merely impersonal, but cold. "I'm sure you know her."

Fern-picker! Yard had not thought of the sobbing girl until now. Of course it was she. Who else could it be? He felt himself flushing, felt he looked and acted like a man detected in

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something discreditable; and the knowledge of this made him act the more so.

“What—what did she want?” he asked.

“You,” she said, pointedly, and went abruptly into the house.

Presently Yard followed, going directly to the little room used as an office. He had been there but a moment when the telephone sounded.

“Woods headquarters,” said Yard into the transmitter.

“Is Mr. Yard there?”

“Yard speaking.”

“This is Holmquist,” said the voice. “Can you see me in town to-night?”

“I can,” said Yard, “but I won’t.”

“Mr. Yard,” said Holmquist, “something has happened that makes it necessary for me to talk to you. Not in the interests of the Power Company, but of yourself—and other people. If you refuse to see me you’ll regret it as long as you live.”

“Let it come over the telephone.”

“This is something no telephone was built to carry. I’m acting for myself in this thing. I’ve *got* to see you.”

“Nothing doing.”

“Yard—”

“I tell you, Holmquist, I have nothing to talk to you about.”

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"I have something to talk to *you* about. I'm running risks; but I'd run any risk to have five minutes with you. I'll give you a hint. Suppose Ekstrom had decided to get rid of me."

Yard thought quickly. There might be something useful to be learned. Holmquist might be telling the truth. At least no harm could come from seeing the man.

"Very well, Holmquist," he said. "I'll see you at the hotel at six."

He hung up the receiver and turned. Svea was standing in the door waiting.

"Father wants to see you. He's down in the barn," she said.

"Thank you," he said, and went out. She remained standing a moment, her eyes on the telephone. Her hand traveled slowly up to her lips and pressed them hard against her teeth; she shut her eyes and breathed once, deeply, as though making a mighty effort for self-control. Then she swung about and went rapidly upstairs to her room, where she shut herself in, where she stood before the window with hands clenched and eyes wide and staring, looking out upon the mountain, but seeing it not at all because of a curtain of moisture that blinded her eyes.

"Yard," said Nord, as soon as the young man came in hearing, "I've made up my mind. To-

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morrow I bust up those two gangs of roughnecks. I'll scatter 'em so they won't be able to send letters to each other with a dollar's worth of stamps."

"I've selected those men, and put them there because I believe they can be of most use where they are. I hope you will reconsider, Mr. Nord."

"You heard what I said. That goes."

Yard looked at the man's face and knew it mirrored a stubborn determination, one not to be changed by argument or pleading. Now, indeed, he had come to a stage in the journey where he must choose one fork of the road or the other; where he must displace Nord, or pass over his duty—which was plain before his eyes.

Yet he hesitated, and, hesitating, yielded to the voice of procrastination. He would put off the decision. Hours remained. He would not have to act until morning. So, with this partial surrender accusing him from the moment of its birth, he swung on his heel and strode away toward the railroad.

Life was becoming too complicated for Yard. His experiences had not been complex hitherto; rather the contrary. Now he swam amid cross-currents and undertows which sucked and drew him this way and that, desire, love, straining to tear him from duty, from that which had become

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his religion. At that moment the lot of a bum in the gutter seemed not unenviable.

He cranked the hand-car and mounted to his seat. It sputtered down the grade toward town, bearing a young man who wished with all the strength of his heart that he had never seen the forests that clothed those stately mountains. For the first time their lofty reaches failed to exhilarate and inspire him. Rather they seemed to frown down upon him accusingly.

At six o'clock he entered the hotel. Holmquist sat in the little office, but at Yard's approach he arose and hurried through an adjoining door, motioning furtively for Yard to follow.

They went up the stairs to a bedroom, when Holmquist cautiously closed the door and drew Yard away from it to a position near the window. He seemed apprehensive of eavesdroppers.

"Yard," said Holmquist, manifesting some uneasiness, "this meeting is under a flag of truce."

"Yes."

"You agree to that."

"I sha'n't manhandle you, whatever you have to say."

"Very well, then. I have reasons for doing what I'm about to do. They're good reasons. I wouldn't turn against a concern like the Power Company—and run the risks of what might

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happen to me—unless my reasons were mighty good.”

“I suppose not—knowing you slightly.”

“Maybe you’ve noticed,” said Holmquist, “that we got next to things pretty quickly. As soon as you planned a thing we knew about it, eh? Notice that?”

“Yes. But not lately.” Yard smiled wryly.

“No. You kept your plans to yourself. But haven’t you noticed something else since that time? Haven’t your plans been upset and your orders countermanded? How about that?”

“You have correct information.”

“That’s why I’m here—or what I’m here for—to tell you who’s our friend.”

Yard leaned forward, his eyes not leaving Holmquist’s face. “You’ll tell me that?” he said.

“Exactly.”

“Then,” said Yard, “you’re a little more contemptible than I placed you. . . . You’re a crook, Holmquist, but even a crook must have some sort of moral standards.”

Holmquist shrugged his shoulders. “I have my reasons. Here, look at this.”

He held, just out of Yard’s reach, a check—a canceled check—drawn by Ekstrom as president of the Eastern States Power Company to Nord. The sum it bore written on its face was five

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hundred dollars. Holmquist turned it over. It carried Nord's indorsement.

"That's the gentleman," Holmquist said, crisply.

Yard felt numb. He wanted, suddenly, to sit down. His brain refused to work.

"I don't believe it," he said.

"I'll prove it. To-morrow Nord has promised to break up your roughnecks."

Yard remained silent, staring, staring at the outrageous roses woven in the carpet.

"That proves it, I guess," said Holmquist.

"Yes," said Yard, dully. "Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Then," said Yard, uttering the first word calmly, but advancing before he spoke the second, "—then go away from here—*quick*—before I pull you apart."

Holmquist did not remain to plan a dignified exit, but obeyed to the letter.

True and trustworthy! True and trustworthy! It was only those words that beat inward on Van Twiller Yard's consciousness. How would this thing affect *her* to whom truth and trustworthiness were as the breath of life to her soul? How would *she* bear the shock of knowing that the very blood in her veins was derived from a man who was a traitor; who sold his truth and trustworthiness for a matter of five hundred dollars? She

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was strong. Yard had gloried in her calm strength. She had sustained him, but who would sustain her now?

Yard could see her wither under that knowledge, unable to raise her eyes to face the world. Truth and trustworthiness! Two words to be bandied about by rhetoricians! Yet to those who wore engraved on their souls, not the words, but the *things*—the things they stood for—how lofty! Very beacon-lights placed on high mountain-tops, guiding to wonderful harbors! Svea Nord had placed *her* beacon-lights upon the highest mountain-top of all. Because she stood upon the topmost height the Valley of Degradation seemed deeper to her than to those who could not climb to stand by her side.

Her father—of her blood—was guilty of the sin for which she could see no atonement; and the duty of bringing him to justice and of blighting her with his turpitude was placed in the hands of the man who would have descended into hell to keep her light burning unobscured.

“I can’t do it!” he cried aloud. “I *can’t!*”

The gutter reached up unclean hands to claim again a soul that had well-nigh been its own.

CHAPTER XII

IT was Holmquist's business to read character, and he was apt at his calling. Ekstrom had seen his Man Friday's judgments proven correct so many times that he began to believe the fellow had some uncanny sense which gave him his power to appraise men and to foresee how they would react to certain emergencies. It is true that Holmquist dealt for the most part with characters of no considerable complexity, with men who did not require to be dug into far below their surfaces—but his successes had been impressive.

Therefore, when Holmquist laid before his employer a plan to eliminate Van Twiller Yard from their problem Ekstrom was inclined to listen and to act.

"Mr. Ekstrom," said Holmquist, "I think I have a scheme that will get rid of Yard. I've been sizing him up."

"Yes?"

"He's the sentimental type—the sort who likes

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heroics. I'd bet he'd sacrifice himself in an outburst of noble sentimentalism for somebody else—especially for a woman.”

“He looks pretty hard-headed to me,” said Ekstrom.

Holmquist shrugged his shoulders. “He’s a fighter, all right, and a bad actor. But I’ve grabbed his weak point. If he was in a fight that meant a hurt to a woman—especially a woman he was in love with—he’d quit.”

“Yes?”

“He’s in love with Svea Nord.”

“Yes?”

“Suppose I go to him under the pretense that you and I have fallen out, and tell him we’ve bought up Svea Nord’s father. What will he do then, eh? Easy as A B C. It ’ll be up to him either to go to Beaumont with the story—or disappear. He’ll disappear.”

“I’m not so sure,” said Ekstrom.

“I know. I’ve studied him.”

“But we need Nord pretty badly the way things are working out.”

“We don’t stand to lose anything. We’ll keep Nord and we’ll get rid of Yard. How many times have you seen me go wrong when I size up a man?”

“But this Yard seems to me to be a little more

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of a man than you've met before. Several sizes larger."

"It's his weak point."

Ekstrom considered. "Very well," he said, presently. "The game is worth the candle."

It seemed that Holmquist had made a true appraisal. Van Twiller Yard had quit. At the junction, just below woods headquarters, he ran his hand-car on a siding and started to walk back toward town. He was deserting the woods, deserting sulphate-pulp, deserting everything and everybody in the new life that had opened for him—excepting Svea Nord. He was giving it up for her; going back to the thing he had escaped from—from which there would never again be escape.

He did not walk erectly with the carriage that his resurrection had brought with it. His shoulders lopped; he shuffled. The man on that rutted mountain road was not Van Twiller Yard, actual boss of the woods, but Van Yard, bum. He had let go deliberately with both hands and was falling, he cared not where. He was dropping his soul back into the cesspool from which a miracle had dragged it—and he was conscious of it. He did not glory in it. There was no exultation in sacrifice made.

True and trustworthy! He was not being that,

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but he was saving Svea Nord from the knowledge that her father was despicable. His mind did not register the truth that in the life of every woman there is a man whose shame will crush her more surely than her father's shame. Perhaps this was because he knew he had no place in Svea's heart.

He shuffled on.

As he rounded a curve in the road he saw glimmering down from the slope above a dim light. Suddenly loneliness obsessed him, a fear of being alone, an aching necessity for a human being to be near him. He thought he was merely afraid of the dark, and he was ashamed. But it was not that. It was no finite fear, but a clutching by his falling soul at another soul to cling to like the straw of a drowning man.

It was without objectively realizing he was at the post-office that Yard climbed the bank and opened the crazily hanging door. The little postmaster's head was just visible above the counter on which sat the oil-lamp that gave him light to read the Proceedings of Congress by. This was his sole literature, and nightly he gave himself to it, reading strictly every word with a view to keeping himself assured that the country was being well taken care of. He looked up as Yard entered.

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"Git outside," he snapped. "Quick. Manners teaches most folks to knock on doors, but some has to be told."

Yard turned to go. If he had done so, doubtless he would not have returned, for he would have lacked the courage. But the postmaster saw his face by the yellow light of his lamp, and to such keen old eyes as the postmaster's there was need of but scant scrutiny to read the story of torture it told.

"Hey!" he said, quickly, "it's you, eh? Hum! . . . What fetched you here this time of night? Somethin's upset you, and you come to the old man, eh? *Set down.*"

Yard obeyed, dully, silently, and let his eyes turn to the floor.

"What ails you, young feller? Out with it."

"I—couldn't do it," said Yard, as though reciting a phrase in a language he did not understand.

"How d' you know?" snapped the postmaster. "Bet you could. You hain't more 'n half tried."

"I don't want—to try," said Van. "I don't dare—to try. I might forget. I might do it. . . . And it would hurt *her.*"

"And so," said the postmaster, with quick comprehension, "you're goin' off. You're quittin' under fire. You're desertin' in the face of the enemy."

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Yard made no answer, but continued to gaze dully at the floor. The postmaster did not speak, either, for minutes, but shut his sharp little eyes in concentrated thought.

“You found out somethin’,” he said, presently, “and it’s knocked you galley west—somethin’ that’ll hurt *her*, and *her* is Svea Nord. Um! . . . Now I wonder did you find it out yourself, or did somebody tell you.” Suddenly he leaned over Yard and fairly bellowed, “*Say, who told you?*”

Perhaps it was inspiration; perhaps the shrewd old man had some rough working knowledge of psychology; at any rate he succeeded. The sudden vehement question compelled an answer that came without Yard’s volition.

“Holmquist,” he said.

“Huh!” snorted the postmaster, eying Yard alertly. “You set right there while I make a drawin’ of tea. You need somethin’ bracin’. You need to be let alone some for a while till you sort of git back onto your feet. . . . Huh! . . . You need some coddlin’—and then you need to be lit into like blazes. Lucky you come to me—darn lucky!”

The postmaster potted about, talking jerkily to himself, and in a few minutes thrust a cup of hot tea into Van’s hand.

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“Drink that,” he said, “and git ready to ketch hell.”

Yard gulped down the tea obediently.

“Great stimy-lint,” said the postmaster. “Beats rum all to nothin’. Don’t hit you no sudden wallop, but fetches you around gradual. Kind of rouse you up a mite?”

“Yes,” said Yard. “Thank you. I’ll go along now.”

“You’ll set right where you be. . . . Know where you’re headin’ to if you go now? Eh? Right back to the gutter, that’s where. You set till I git done with you. . . . Now then, you’re runnin’ away from your job, hain’t you?”

“I’m going away.”

“Why?”

Yard was rousing gradually, becoming more himself—or, better, more an enfeebled imitation of himself.

“There’s no use going into that, Postmaster,” he said. “I can’t stay.”

“Why?”

“I can’t tell you.”

“Then I’ll tell you, consarn you! It’s because you hain’t never been nothin’ but a bum dressed up to fool folks. This man Yard that the mountains is talkin’ about hain’t never been a-tall. Nothin’ but a bum foolin’ folks for a spell. You’re

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goin' 'cause you hain't no good. That's why you're goin'. You hain't got no bone runnin' up and down your back. . . . And for the exact, precise, i-dentical reason that's takin' you away, why, I kin tell you that, too. Holmquist he got hold of you and told you somethin'. Somethin' you're afraid Svea Nord 'll find out. Somethin' you ought to tell, or do somethin' about. They couldn't bribe you and they couldn't scare you." The postmaster failed to realize he was being inconsistent now. "So they set out to git you another way. How about sulphate-pulp now? How about buildin' a new industry? How about you bein' a patriot and fightin' for your country? Huh! You hain't got insides enough to be a sutler's clerk. If Langlois was to see you now he'd lick you with one hand tied behind him. He'd know you been a bluff all along."

This forced a protest from Yard, and the postmaster's eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

"I wasn't bluffing," said Yard. "It was real—all real—but it's gone."

"Sure. . . . Jest because a slinkin' little dude told you somethin' that might hurt a girl's feelin's. And right off you forgit you're a man; you forgit you're fightin' for sulphate-pulp; you forgit what you owe your country—and you sneak off. Perty slinkum *she'd* think you was."

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“Better me than—” Yard checked himself.

“Better you than”—the postmaster pounced on the hint with a mental agility worthy of one in a higher place—“better you than Nord, eh? That’s it. Huh! Should ‘a’ seen it right off. Holmquist’s got *some* brains—some, but not enough to run ag’in’ the trusted representative of the Gove’ment. Kinder suspected Nord some myself. The way things was runnin’ made it look like him. Workin’ for Big John and takin’ pay from them furriners, eh?”

“No—no! It wasn’t that.”

“Don’t lie to me, young feller. It was that. Wasn’t it? . . . *Wasn’t that it?*”

“No,” said Yard.

“No matter. I know it was. And Holmquist told you. What for, d’ you calc’late? What was he aimin’ at? He give away Nord for a purpose, didn’t he?”

Yard made no reply.

“Lemme see. If *I* was a slinkin’ little dude how’d I work it? Um! . . . How’d I figger you? . . . Huh! Easy. Holmquist he says to you he’s had trouble with Ekstrom, that’s it. And he wants to git even with Ekstrom, so he’s tellin’ you. . . . See why the Gove’ment trusts me, young feller? ‘Cause I got brains and know how to use ‘em. . . . And you b’lieved him? Shucks.”

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“You don’t mean”—Yard spoke unguardedly—“that it was *all* lies?”

The postmaster chuckled dryly. “Not all. Jest that part. They’ve bought Nord, and figgered they didn’t stand no chance to lose him, neither. It was to git rid of you. This here dude figgered you out to do what you’re a-doin’. Says he to himself, that Yard ’ll quit when he knows, on account of bein’ in love with Svea Nord. That’s how he figgered it. But he didn’t figger far enough or deep enough. He jest got into you a little ways and seen what was there, but, not bein’ a man himself, he wasn’t able to see down deep enough into a man—to see that when you got time to reason it out all his figgerin’ would go jest the opposite. . . . And another thing he didn’t see was that you’d reason it out that it would hurt *her* more to know two men was gone bad than jest one. Because it hain’t possible Svea Nord won’t find out about her pa. Is it? Think he can be a scamp and not have her git to know it?”

“She mustn’t,” said Yard.

“It was all planned jest to git rid of you—and you’re lettin’ ’em do it. . . . Say, how d’you s’pose Svea Nord would like it if she knew a man was bein’ false to a trust because he was in love with her? Sort of makes her a party to it, don’t

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it? Who gains by it? Why, *her!* Calc'late she'd thank you for smirchin' her?"

Yard got suddenly to his feet and paced up and down with clenched hands thrust into his pockets. The postmaster watched him for the most part in silence, but now and then loosing a sentence when he thought its barb would sink deepest.

"Maybe she's fond of you," he said, presently. "Kind of hurt her to see you slide back into the gutter then." After a few moments: "Big John's been your friend—and you ready to cheat him." Again: "New industry—sulphate-pulp—patriotism; that was jest hot air you talked, I calc'late." And, "If you go and sulphate-pulp is beat it would be *her* fault. Nice thing for her to think about."

"Her fault!" said Yard, angrily.

"Whose else? Hain't you doin' it for her? Reason and motive don't matter. New industry 'll be beat just as bad as if you sold out for money or as if she was one of them Cleopatras. Nobody's fault but hern."

"True and trustworthy," Yard muttered.

"True and trustworthy," said the postmaster, seizing the phrase. "That's her idee, hain't it? Is it bein' true and trustworthy to make her a party to these here treacherous doin's? Guess

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she'd never say true and trustworthy ag'in if she come to know it."

"Be still!" said Yard. "For God's sake be still!" He strode to the door and tore it open.

"Here!" shouted the postmaster, springing after him. "Where you goin'?"

"To think," said Van, so intensely that the old man drew back. "To walk and think."

"Not till you've promised—*promised*—to come back here, no matter what you decide," said the postmaster.

Van looked at him a moment, almost as if he did not see him at all. Then, "I promise," he said, and disappeared into the blackness of the out-of-doors.

He stumbled over rocks, plunged against invisible trees, fought his way upward away from the road. Action, struggle, contest, were necessary to him. Again he was Van Yard of the woods, fighting his fight like a man, not running from it like a bum. Upward and still upward he sprawled and clambered to the steep rocks at the mountain's summit, and in the darkness, by the sense that lay in hands and feet, he scaled these until he stood upon the topmost pinnacle alone with an infinitude of blackness above, below, on all sides. And there he stood rigid, in labor of spirit through the hours of the night—until the

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wonder of dawn, forerunner of the rising sun, showed dimly ridge upon ridge, range after range.

The breeze began to stir; the sun itself appeared and he saw the marvelous beauty of that land that was his country; he knew and felt the grandeur beyond conception of the soul of the Being who created it. He felt his own smallness, the littleness of his own fears and desires and loves, when balanced against this vastness. And yet it forced a realization that in this big scheme, this wonderful creation, he, minute, had been selected to take his part in the bringing about of higher aims and purposes. He, Van Twiller Yard, had been given his part to play. And he knew right from wrong, the better from the worse. . . .

He gazed long lest some day that picture escape from the gallery of his soul. Then he turned and descended the mountain to the post-office.

Within was the postmaster, waiting the night through without rest.

"Postmaster," said Yard, standing in the doorway, "I'm going to see it through."

"Sort of calc'lated you would," said the postmaster.

CHAPTER XIII

YARD reached woods headquarters just as Nord, finished with his breakfast, was starting for the barns.

“Where you been? I been lookin’ for you,” he said, in a surly voice.

Yard was glad he encountered antagonism. It made his task easier.

“And I’m looking for you,” he rejoined.

“Huh! . . . You slide out to Seven and Eight and bust up those gangs. Divide ’em among the other six camps, tradin’ ’em man for man. See to it personal—to-day. That’s *orders*.”

“My roughnecks stay where they are.” Nord took a forward belligerent step. “Don’t start anything here,” Yard said, warningly, “if you have any consideration for your daughter.”

“Get your turkey,” said Nord, furiously, “and beat it out of these woods.” This was the formula of dismissal.

“Nord,” said Van, “I was in town last night. I saw Holmquist. He claimed he’d had a row

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with Ekstrom—and he told me where you stand. He showed me a check drawn to your order by the Power Company.” He was speaking gravely, without rancor or excitement. “Some time ago Mr. Beaumont gave me this letter of authority. Read it.”

“What d’you mean?” roared Nord.

“I mean,” said Van, lowering his voice lest it carry to Svea in the house, “that you’ve sold out to Ekstrom. I mean that *I’m* boss here now. That letter makes me so.”

“You carried that damn lie to Beaumont?”

“No. Nobody knows it but myself. I’ve had the letter some time. I got it when it looked as if I might need it.”

“It ain’t so,” snarled Nord. “You jest cooked up that yarn to get my job. I’ve seen you aimin’ for it, and now, by Cripes! I’m goin’ to take it out of your hide.”

“If you’ve got a spark of sense or a grain of decency you’ll go easy. Do you want Svea to know what kind of man you are? Do you want it peddled all through the mountains that you’re a crook and a bribe-taker? If you do—come ahead. If not, keep quiet and I’ll see if there isn’t some way of fixing this to—to save Svea.”

“Save hell!” shouted Nord.

“Nord,” said Yard, with steel in his voice,

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“if you make a move I’ll forget you’re Svea’s father. I’ll forget you’re anything but a traitor to the man that’s hired you and been a friend to you. If you’re bent on making this mess as bad as you can I’ll help you by putting you in the hospital. *Stand still.*”

Svea had come out of the door and was standing on the porch.

“Good morning, Miss Nord!” said Yard, more as a warning to her father than as a greeting to her.

“Good morning,” she said, gravely.

Nord wheeled, pointed a finger that shook into Yard’s face. “See him!” he said, his voice choked with passion. “Know what he’s done—this friend of yours? Cooked up a lyin’ yarn about me and got me fired, that’s what. Took my job away from me and stole it himself. Him that’s set at our table. . . . Lied your dad’s character away from him. He’s been after my job from the start, and now he’s got it. . . . Perty kind of a sneak, hain’t he?”

Svea’s face was suddenly white, dead white with the pallor of shock. She closed her eyes an instant, and when she opened them Van saw how they overflowed with misery. He was conscious of a feeling of surprise. Could it be that she knew the truth? That her misery was caused by

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knowledge of her father's treachery? Or was *he* the cause? His heart bounded at the thought. Was it possible that her father's accusation of him had brought that look to her eyes? Did he mean that much to her?

"Is this true?" she said, her voice scarcely audible.

"It is not true that I have tried to steal your father's job," he said. "But matters have compelled me to exercise an authority I have held for some time. I have had, temporarily, to take charge. Your father is not discharged, but for a while it is necessary for me to have sole authority in these woods. It will mean no change to you. Your father's salary will continue and you will stay in this house. . . . I hope very soon I will be able to allow him to take his old place."

"Did you tell Mr. Beaumont something about my father?"

"No."

"Has my father done any wrong?"

Van looked straight into her eyes when he replied, nor was there hesitation in his answer. "No," he said.

"But Mr. Beaumont has given you his place?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it is necessary."

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“Who told him it was necessary?”

“I did.”

“Oh!” she said, as one exclaims who has received a physical hurt. Then: “How could you do it when we trusted you? You must—have done what father says. . . . Couldn’t you have waited? Couldn’t you have played fair? Promotion would have come. . . . I—it’s hard to believe. It is such a cowardly thing.”

He stood looking into her face mutely, his eyes beseeching her not to pass judgment on him.

“Maybe,” she said, dully, “you’re sorry now. It was just a—temptation, and you did it. Maybe that was it. You’ll go to Mr. Beaumont now, won’t you, and tell him you—lied? You’ll do that, won’t you?”

“I’m sorry, Miss Nord, but I can’t do that.”

She recognized the finality of his tone, and for a moment returned his gaze, almost curiously, as though she were looking upon something strange, unreal. “I—believed in you. . . . I thought you—true and trustworthy. . . . And you are beneath contempt.”

Suddenly her eyes overflowed; her voice was choked by a sob, and she turned blindly and ran into the house.

Presently Yard turned to Nord, who was staring

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at him uncomprehendingly. "Better me," he said, "than you."

"I don't get you," said Nord.

"Probably not," said Yard, and he turned on his heel and strode away.

Nord turned as if to follow him, but apparently came to another mind about it, for he paused a moment, looking after Yard with wrinkled brows. Then he wagged his head and went into the house.

Yard walked to the junction and took his motor-car up the East Branch. It was snowing, and he hoped the fall would be heavy, though the season was over-early for such a snow as would make lumbering operations what they should be. He noted, with some satisfaction, as he progressed, that here and there through the woods were to be seen little piles of pulp wood, a cord to the pile, ready to be dumped into the river when the time should come, and driven to the mills. It was a sign of progress, though none knew better than he how far the number of those woodpiles under-ran what was needful.

He ate supper at five, where Sim-sam was big with news for him.

"You know Langlois?" Sim-sam commenced.

"I've heard of him," Yard said, with perfect gravity.

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“Well, he’s gone to work for the Power Company. Up on the dam. Uh-huh! Boss of it. And what you think he done? Eh? Nothin’ much ’ceptin’ give that jumpin’ Frenchman Pete a job in the gate-house.”

“Jumping Frenchman?” asked Yard. “Who’s he?”

“Not who,” corrected Sim-sam, “—*what!* Don’t you know what a jumpin’ Frenchman is?”

“Never heard of one.”

“Lots of ’em in the woods. Got somethin’ wrong with ’em, somehow. . . . Say, wait a minute and I’ll show you.” He called the length of the cook-shanty, “Hey! Jean, come git acquainted with the big boss.”

A stocky Frenchman with lean, dark face, aquiline nose, black mustache and twinkling, beady, black eyes shuffled forward. Yard rose to shake hands with him, but as the man came within reaching distance of him Sim-sam suddenly seized his arm. “Hit him, Jean!” he shouted, vehemently.

“Hit him, Jean. . . . Hit him, Jean,” repeated the man, parrot-like, and struck Yard with all his might in the ribs. The room burst into a roar of laughter. It was a joke they could relish. Sim-sam had sprung a jumping Frenchman on the boss. Yard grinned back, though his ribs did not,

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permit him to get the full humor of it for some time to come.

“*That’s* a jumpin’ Frenchman,” grinned Simsam. “I’ve knowed dozens of ’em. They’re all like that. Yell at ’em sudden and they’ll do what you say, repeatin’ it right after you. . . . Recall we had one once in Maine. Frank was his name. Boss sent his son up to hunt—one of these here eddicated kids with cigareets. Us fellers didn’t cotton to him much on account of him bein’ sort of uppity, so we done what we could to make him enjoy himself. But ’twa’n’t no go. So one night when he was settin’ near Frank I grabs the Frenchman and yells in his ear, ‘Kiss him, Frank,’ and Frank he grabs onto the colleger and smacks him and smacks him till we had to pull him off. . . . Hain’t nothin’ livelier ’n a jumpin’ Frenchman in camp.”

“I should imagine not,” said Yard, rubbing his ribs. “So Langlois took one with him—to help pass away the time?”

“Shouldn’t be s’prised. You was goin’ to look the dam over some awhile back. Do it?”

“No.”

“Huh! . . . Calc’late you better let somebody else do it now. Langlois won’t tap no keg to welcome you.”

The snow was still falling thickly when Van

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started back to woods headquarters. To go there was a necessity, for there was his office. He promised himself he would move it as soon as practicable to one of the camps and so minimize the possibility of meeting Svea, for he did not care now to encounter her. He was reluctant to meet the look he knew would be in her eyes.

As he entered the house she appeared in the dining-room door. "Mr. Yard," she said, not looking at him at all, "that girl was here to see you again. She wouldn't come in, but I believe she's waiting for you somewhere outside."

"Thank you," said Yard.

He went outside again and presently saw the young fern-picker huddled in the lea of a shed.

"You wanted to see me?" he asked her.

"Yes, oh yes! I have come so many times, and you were never here. . . . There wasn't anybody else to go to, Mr. Yard. I dassent tell dad—and you were good to me that time, and you look like you'd always be good. You'll help me, Mr. Yard, won't you? You'll do somethin'?"

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"What's gone wrong?"

"I— He—he won't marry me," she sobbed. "He said he would, and he promised, and now he won't have nothin' to do with me. . . . He said

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I couldn't prove nothin'—and I dunno how I can. . . . And dad'll *kill* me."

They were standing in the open now before the house. Yard patted her shoulder. "Poor kid!" he said, gravely. "I—I'm not used to such matters. What ought I to do?"

"I don't know. That's why I come to you. Everybody says you can do *anythin'*. And I knew by your eyes that—that you'd do somethin' if I told you."

"Who's the man, little girl?"

"I dassent tell. He says he'll see me in jail if I tell. He threatened me somethin' awful."

"Hum! . . . Now look here, if I can do anything I can keep you out of jail, can't I?"

"Ye-es."

"Then tell me. I can't do much unless I know."

She still hesitated, but his hand on her shoulder reassured her. "It was Mr. Holmquist," she said.

Yard swore softly. "All right, little girl," he said, gently. "I'll see what can be done. Sometimes you can't do much with that sort of skunk, but I'll see you through, anyhow. Maybe—maybe you'll have to go away after a little—so your dad won't—find out. When you think it's time you come to me—and I'll find a place for you—and everything 'll be all right. Don't you worry now."

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She looked up at him trustfully, relief speaking eloquently from her features. "I knowed you was all right," she said—and suddenly the removal of the weight from her mind caused its reaction, and she burst into a frenzy of sobbing, burying her face against his coat and clinging to him like a frightened child with her arms about his neck. He did not repulse her, but passed his arm about her and told her to cry it out.

He looked over her tawdry hat, slantwise now on her head, toward the house. The door opened and Svea appeared, broom in hand. On the threshold she stopped as though she had encountered some impassable obstacle, her eyes on Yard and the girl. Yard felt a fierce impulse to hurl the girl from him, but he smothered it. By an effort he kept his features calm and returned Svea's look without flinching.

"There, there," he murmured to the girl, "it's all right now. I'll see to it. I've promised, you know."

Yard could see the expression on Svea's face change from one of bewilderment, of startled amazement, to one of bitter contempt. He knew that now there were no greater depths to which he could fall in her regard. Now, he realized, he had become so despicable that to her he could have no

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existence at all. Van Twiller Yard had ceased to be for Svea Nord.

“Are you cold?” he asked, kindly, of the girl. “Won’t you come in and get warm before you start home?”

“No,” she said, withdrawing from him. “I’ll go now—and, Mr. Yard, I hope you git somethin’ mighty good in this world. I wisht *I* could bring you somethin’ good.”

She bring him something good—the thought was ironical. Had she not that moment made his damnation in Svea’s eyes final, beyond possibility of forgiveness?

“Good-by,” he said, gently. “When you need me—come.”

CHAPTER XIV

SNOW fell all that day and through the night, and Yard was hopeful, but toward morning warmer air swept over the mountains, the snow turned to rain, which came down in torrents, making it a matter of inhumanity to ask gangs to go into the woods.

Yard, bitterly disappointed, stood outside Camp Four, unmindful of the rain that drove into his face and threatened to soak through his heavy mackinaw. Instead of the help he expected, the storm had turned upon him as though it were an agency of his enemies. He leaned his elbows on the railing of the bridge and stared down at the stream below.

He became conscious that a change had taken place: a boulder which had lain just above the bridge had disappeared. A glance up-stream showed him that other boulders had vanished and that the river itself was not the river he knew. It was broader, more urgently on its way. Instead of gurgling over the stones in its course,

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or of parting musically to ripple around them, it now bore down upon them with a smooth, vindictive rush and tore at them savagely. It had altered its voice. No longer was its note dainty, musical, soothing; it had become, was momentarily becoming so in greater degree, bellicose, challenging. It no longer sung a lullaby; it shouted a war-song.

“She’s rising,” Yard said to himself, curiously. He had never before seen a mountain stream in flood, and flood water was associated by him with the springtime and the departure of the snows. That was the time he waited and worked for, when the river should go lunging by with force and volume to bear whole forests downward with its rush. The spring and the drive were one to Yard.

Suddenly his sullen inaction became dynamic action. What was this but a false spring? Snows were going, swelling rill and stream and river. Flood water was come—for brief stay, but nevertheless present and useful. Yard’s scowl became a look of eager determination, and he rushed to the door of the bunk-house.

“All out! Teamsters out! All hands to dump pulp wood into the river! . . . Out!” He rushed to the telephone and called the other East Branch camps, giving orders to similar end. And then,

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bearing in mind the great end of all strategy—to get the most men there first—he called first the roundhouse, ordering out the trains with flat-cars, then Camps Seven and Eight, telling his roughnecks to be ready for the drive.

Hundreds of cords of pulp wood stood in little piles throughout the woods, near to or distant from the river. The task was to transport these to the river's bank, dump them in, and drive them to the mill-pond below—before the water subsided and left the four-foot bolts high and dry on shoal or shore until spring.

Yard had that quality of leadership which inspires the followers with the spirit of the leader. There was no grumbling; on the contrary, there was eagerness.

“Cassidy,” Yard 'phoned to the boss of Camp Three, “you're in charge of the river and the drive. Take what men you need and put them where they'll do most good.”

And Cassidy was rejoiced at the choice of him, even though it meant for him and his men arduous labor in the most unpleasant of circumstances; it meant that for the day, perhaps far into the night, they would stand in icy, rushing water to their waists, perhaps to their necks, in places where the bolts of pulp might swirl in with the pile on shore, or, finding lodgment against shoal or ledge,

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grow and increase until they formed a jam. It was Cassidy's job to see the drive kept ever on the move.

There was not a croaker to say to Yard, "She'll go down on yuh." Even the nondescripts, the bums, the farm-hands, caught for that time the fever of the lumberjack, and labored not for pay, but for achievement.

All that day they strove, drenched with falling rain, or, what was worse, with the icy water of the river. Nor did they stop for food. Steaming buckets of coffee, sandwiches, doughnuts were kept moving from cook-shanties to the men, who gulped down hastily what they could snatch while they labored.

Then toward evening the rain ceased. Two-thirds the cut and piled pulp wood was bobbing, plunging, racing down to the mills that stood so hungry for it. A third remained and darkness was upon them.

But no one suggested a stop.

"She'll be goin' down soon!" men shouted. "She's reached top mark. Rush 'em in. Got to git a move on."

So, well into the night they worked, with lanterns where lanterns were available; by the sense of touch and with the eyes of cats where none were to be had.

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At eleven o'clock Camp Three reported a clean-up. Camp Two was a quarter of an hour later. Four was next, then came One, at a half-hour after midnight. Dog-weary, drenched, the men piled into their bunks without removing clothes or shoes. It is a tradition of the camps that to take off wet clothes invites pneumonia—to sleep in them as they are insures immunity. It is a tradition with much evidence in support thereof. All were in their bunks and snoring—all but Cassidy and his men. Their toil was not over, nor would it be finished before dawn—and Yard was with them. Up and down the river's bank he strode; rushing now into the flood with pike-pole, ready as any of his men to meet the conditions of the night; hurrying again from one point of danger to another. Always intense, smileless, driving. He did not urge on his men to-night with words of cheer, with bonhommie, with jests, but with fierce, relentless urge of will. Men looked at him and wondered—wondered but were inspired to add a little more to their utmost.

“He hain't human,” one lumberjack shouted to another, after Yard's influence had been resting on them for half an hour.

“What's ailin' him? 'Tain't the drive; 'tain't drink. Gawd! I'd hate to cross him to-night.”

It was true. Where before Yard had seemed

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wholly human, exchanging jest for jest, winning with a smile of rare entreaty, to-night he seemed hard. He was smileless, stern, a man driven by will unmitigated by heart—yet he did not show himself heartless. Joyless would be the better word.

No, the lumberjack was right. It was not the drive nor drink that ailed him. The contempt he had seen in Svea Nord's eyes had dried up the springs of joyousness which had welled within him; the soul-searing events of the day just past had scarred him, scorched him, burned away the more youthful, hopeful part of him, and left bare the vista through which he looked into the years beyond. There had been a bright hope ever before his eyes—the hope of winning Svea Nord. When it departed it took with it the sweetness of him, the gaiety, the gladness. It left a man with but one end, with but one hope, one refuge—*work*.

Henceforth his life was single; his purpose one; the urge of his will and his soul and loyalty all for one mistress, one love—sulphate-pulp. . . .

When the drive was past Yard stumbled wearily into Camp Two.

“Big John—she's call for you,” said the cook.

Yard went to the telephone and presently Beaumont's voice came heartily over the wire to him.

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“Good boy!” said Big John, and hung up the receiver.

Yard thrilled at the words. It was good to work for a man who would sit up through the night to watch, and who thought it worth while to give a word of approbation with the coming of dawn. That word Van Twiller Yard sent broadcast through the woods when he awoke—to share it with the men who had helped him to earn it.

More than *one* thousand cords of pulp wood rested quietly in the pond that morning. The danger line had receded by so much. In a day and night the river had done for sulphate-pulp what man-invented contrivances could not have accomplished in weeks.

It was two weeks later, early in December, when Big John Beaumont summoned Van Twiller Yard to the office.

“Smoke,” he said, briefly, handing Yard a box of the rotund, black cigars much favored by him.

“I don’t know how I’ll bear up under it,” said Van. “I haven’t smoked a cigar in weeks.”

“Um! . . . Why?”

“Can’t afford it,” said Van.

“Want a raise?”

“No,” said Van. “Wait till the work’s done.”

“You ought to be able to afford a cigar or two on fifteen hundred a year—and found.”

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Van shook his head.

“You haven’t given me any explanation of the Nord affair,” said Big John, with the effect of suddenness.

“No. I understood I was responsible for the woods.”

“You are, but a man has some natural curiosity, young fellow.”

“I’m sorry—” Van said.

“You mean you won’t tell me about it?”

“I’d rather not.”

“Suppose I ask it—not as your friend but as the boss?”

“I should have to resign,” said Van.

“Um! . . . You ordered him off the pay-roll. But he keeps on living at headquarters. Um! . . . He doesn’t get out after another job. Nord’s not the man to lay around with no pay coming in.”

Van remained stubbornly silent.

“And you can’t afford cigars,” said Big John, regarding the young man with eyes that were quizzical, yet admiring, perhaps envious. “Youth and ideals are bully possessions, Yard. Even when they have a wad of nonsense mixed up in ’em. . . . And to love a girl—to be young and to love like an idiot again, Yard, I’d swap places with any cookee in the camps. Idiotically, I said.”

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He paused a moment. "So you're turning over your salary to Nord, eh?"

Yard flushed.

"You haven't told him he was off the pay-roll," Big John said, in a tone that left no reasonable man a chance to contradict. It was the tone born of knowing a fact.

"No. But that's a personal matter, Mr. Beaumont. My salary belongs to me."

"Um! . . . For a bit of a girl that nine-tenths of the population of the earth wouldn't look at twice—but who manages to delude you into the notion that she's the sum total of all marvels plus an extra wonder or two of her own. . . . And I suppose these things happen every day! Thirty years ago it might have happened to *me!* To every man—once. I knew a young woman myself, Van, and she got me about the way this Nord girl has you. Uh-huh! . . . It hasn't faded a bit, young man. When I think about her to-day she seems just as almighty wonderful as she did thirty years ago. . . . She died. . . . That's why—one reason, anyhow—that Nord goes back on the pay-roll. . . . You get your salary from the date of the ruction. Now don't make a holler. Let an old fellow that hasn't any life outside of hardwood logs and sulphate-pulp take his little fling. It's for *her.*"

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It was not a matter one could protest, put as Big John put it.

“And now to business,” said Beaumont. “I think Ekstrom is gnawing at my side of the cheese. If you’re to fight in the woods it’s a good idea for you to know how I’m fighting in the office—and I may want to call you in as a reserve.

“When I tackled this pulp idea I had to borrow mighty heavy. Got notes in two banks in Boston for two hundred thousand. Put it all in the new mill. Understanding was they were to be renewed every three months for not less than eighteen months. By that time I figured we’d be high and dry and safe, with money to jingle. . . . And it’s up to you to see we are. Think you can fetch it?”

“Yes,” said Yard, succinctly. He *would* fetch it. It was all he had to hope for or work for. Surely fate or luck or Providence wouldn’t knock that last support from under him!

“One of those banks is acting skittish. Two new directors, and one of ’em’s named Petersen. Swede. Doggone it! every time I see a Swede lately I dodge behind a tree. Now, then, if that bank should refuse to renew I’d have to find a hundred thousand—and there ain’t no sich animal, as the countryman said when he saw the camel.”

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“Surely some other bank would take the loan.”

“Now listen. We’re not playing a safe little game like a retail candy-store. We’re butting into an industry that has belonged to somebody else. We’re the entering wedge. If we had nobody to fight but the Power Company we’d be up against it hard, for they’re worth twenty-five millions—and can influence that much more. And fifty millions talk mighty loud in the banks of this fair land, you can bet. But we don’t know who else we’ve got against us—enough, all right. Suppose we add a dozen more millions for good measure. What chance do you think I’ve got of borrowing money if sixty or seventy millions say I sha’n’t have it?”

“But these banks are *American*. Can’t they see what you’re doing? That it is for the good of the country? Haven’t they any decency even if they haven’t patriotism?”

“Cash cut patriotism out of its dictionary. It hasn’t any flag. It’s not international. It’s without a nation. Like Captain Kidd or any of the pirates, it hunts the high seas of business and doesn’t ask questions about the nationality of the fellow who’s going to walk the plank. If a man will sell rotten meat to the Government to kill its soldiers in war-time—for money—won’t another man kill us by simply hanging onto his

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money—if there's something in it for him? You bet he will."

"They can't all be like that," Van said, doggedly.

"Money is impersonal. Big money is. . . . When millions are mixed up in the game, patriotism is just plain bunk."

Van shook his head as though refusing to admit the point, but went on to the next logical step.

"If this bank does turn you down—what?"

"Then I invade Boston—and you go along. I don't know what we'll do, but when we come away somebody 'll know he's had a visitor. . . . That's why I called you down. When you haven't anything else to do, think what you'd do in my place—and think mighty darn careful about what you'd say if you were called on to stand on your hind legs in front of a board of directors in a mahogany-paneled bank. Jaw is about the only thing that 'll save us, and when jaw fights money I'm laying my bet on the undefeated champion. . . . Now beat it, young fellow, I'm going to be some busy."

Van studied the matter as he rode toward headquarters, not yet, by reason of press of work, moved to Camp Four. As he studied, the matter presented itself clothed in greater difficulties. To fight money with money he could understand,

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and perhaps might have held his own, but there was no money with which to fight money. Indeed, here was not a fight against money, but against something infinitely more subtle, more intangible, more impossible to clutch, to grapple with. This thing was influence—the influence to be exerted by freebooting barons of finance. But one weapon could Van discern that would suffice against it—the influence of a prince, a king, an emperor of finance. He knew he might as well tell himself what he needed was a rainbow. It would be as easily obtainable.

But what a spectacle that would be, Yard thought: to stand by and witness the freebooting barons spreading stealthily their influence like some deadly, all-pervading gas! To know it was abroad, to feel it, to know the warning tingle of it in the nostrils, and then—then to pour upon it suddenly, unexpectedly, the more subtle, many more times powerful influence of some benign emperor of finance, some Rothschild, some Rockefeller, some Carnegie! It would be the whiffing away of a morning mist before the terrible might of a sudden hurricane. . . .

But there was no emperor. There was nobody but Big John and Van Twiller Yard, of whom Big John was but in the outer fringe of the financial order, and Yard was a serf.

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As he stepped upon the porch at headquarters the door opened for Svea Nord to come out. Unavoidably they met face to face. That Svea saw him at all was testified only by a sudden departure of color from her cheeks. Her eyes did not seem to see him as he stood aside for her to pass, and she went by him without haste, without visible embarrassment.

The thing was unbearable. To a man organized like Van Twiller Yard, sensitive, loving with the strength that was in him, it was not to be endured. Her name was wrung from him—a protest from the depths of his soul, his soul which knew itself misjudged.

“*Svea!*” he said in a voice not pleasant to hear.

She paused on the step, turned her head a trifle so that she could regard him, and then, her eyes schooled to coolness, looking into his eyes, glittering with mental agony, she said in a dead, calm voice:

“Please do not speak to me again unless it is very necessary.” . . . She paused a moment; her body seemed to quiver, to waver. Her calm forsook her. “Oh,” she cried, the anguish of her voice answering the anguish of his own, “how could you? How could you? . . . How could you?”

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She stumbled blindly down the steps and fled, but as she ran from him he could hear the dry sobs that racked her, those great, painful sobs which lacked the tears to ameliorate their pain.

CHAPTER XV

SNOW had come now, to stay until spring. Not only had it come, but it was still arriving, and was to continue to arrive until the elders of the natives began scratching their heads and delving into their memories for another winter to be compared with it.

“Hain’t been nothin’ like it for thirty year,” was the rendered verdict.

By the middle of January there was a depth of seven feet in the woods. As Sim-sam said, “A feller’s got to dig a celler ’fore he kin cut down a tree,” which expressed the situation clearly. Spruce was too valuable to stump above the snow line; and hardwood, though customarily stumped higher than spruce, owing to imperfections liable to the bole in the region just above the roots, was certainly not to be cut seven feet above ground. So the snow-shovel was as much in use as saw or ax.

This made for delay, but the presence of the snow, enabling the construction of smooth, level roads over which to snake the logs to the skidways,

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more than made up for it. Then, too, with the setting in of winter lumberjacks cast their eyes toward the woods, and men were more easy to be had. So the lumbering operations themselves began to take on a semblance of efficiency and to show adequate results for toil expended.

But the narrow-gauge had its work cut out for it. To buck a snowfall of a couple of feet once in a while is an easy matter; but to keep clear twenty or thirty miles of track when it snows every day is quite another thing. Before long the trains ran through miniature cañons, smooth, white, painful to the eye when the sun shone. On either side of the track the big snow-plows had hurled and packed the snow into solid, perpendicular walls hard as ice, and twelve, even fifteen feet high. When other snows came it was more than could be reasonably asked of a snow-plow to toss it over these miniature cliffs.

Yard rode frequently on the snow-plow, and there were days when its progress was to be measured in yards rather than in miles. The snow-plow, a big, red-painted affair of heavy planking, was equipped inside with a sheet-iron stove to keep the necessary attendants warm. Indeed, there was a sufficient little room there, lighted by four windows, where one might be comfortable indeed.

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After the last heavy fall Yard had accompanied the plow. All three engines had been coupled behind it—with less urging it would not march. The mode of operating was simple. The engines would proceed as they could through level places until a huge drift loomed ahead. Then they would back off a quarter of a mile, and with engineers and firemen giving to each locomotive all they could give it, they would seem to crouch like football-players lunging at the opposing line, and charge. Sometimes such a charge would carry them through the drift; sometimes the snow-plow would be driven out of sight in the dune of white—for a gain of twenty feet.

When the narrow places were reached—the gaps—it often became a matter of shoveling, for not even three sturdy locomotives could drive such a plow through half a mile of snow blown in by the winds to depths of fifteen, twenty feet, or even more.

Day and night they labored to keep the ways clear for trains of hardwood—it was mostly hardwood that went down during the winter—to rattle and rumble and grumble to the mills. But Yard kept them going. They *had* to be kept going. He grew leaner; his eyes looked out at the world from shadowy hollows, and there was a steely glitter in them. Men watched him at his

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daily business and shook their heads. They saw a man driven remorselessly by his will, driving others remorselessly. His cheek-bones came out into prominence over thinned cheeks. Somehow his appearance was not that of a laborer, of one pitting the strength of his will and his body against opposed nature, but of an ascetic, of one whose soul was fired by a zeal that fed upon the fuel of the body. By word and act he preached his dogma—and his dogma was sulphate-pulp.

His men worked for him, admired him—but feared him. In the days before that dawn upon the mountain-top when he had looked on the world and found it wonderful, when he had perceived his own infinitesimality and the futility of his problems and griefs as weighed against the greater ends of the universe, there had been a warmth, a whimsicality, about him, that had drawn the affections of men to him. Now he was apart. He was a man driven. The joke, the laugh, the happy retort, were not for him. . . . Men could marvel, could, perhaps, feel the stir of sympathy, but could not love. . . . Save Simsam alone, who, knowing nothing of the matter, guessed at the presence of some black blight, and manifested with pitiful eagerness such tenderness as he was capable of—and it was in no mean measure.

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After that last big snowfall Yard sat in the snow-plow, alone at the far end of the little space, elbows on knees, somber eyes peering out upon the snow. They had fought well that day. From the junction up the East Branch to the trestle across Bib Buck Brook they had charged and slashed, and now the trestle lay before them.

At that point the brook flowed parallel with the railroad for a quarter of a mile, then suddenly cut across the right of way and scudded for the river. At the right of the trestle, ten feet from the tracks, the mountain rose precipitately, barely, with great outcroppings of granite. The brook passed under the track a dozen feet below, and it was thick with boulders.

A great drift, starting at the mountain wall, filled the course of the brook and mounted ten feet above the trestle, barring the way.

“Better take that easy, hadn’t we, Mr. Yard?” asked one of the men. “Might get dumped off that trestle there where the drift peters out, and them rocks don’t look good to me.” For rocks, swept bare by the wind, were threateningly visible there.

Yard glanced down, apparently without interest, and said, sharply: “Back off and let her have it.”

Accordingly it was done. The plow, with the

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force of three locomotives behind it, rushed the drift, sank its nose in the sullenly yielding snow—then halted with sudden shock and impact. Sounds of splintering and rending from beneath! Men flung headlong to the floor! Stove toppling from its legs! The snow-plow rose a little at the front, and, still driven by the locomotives behind, veered as though to avoid some impassable obstacle, and toppled and crashed headlong over the edge of the trestle to the rocks below.

As the plow wavered on the edge Yard sprang to action—instinctive action. With one swing of a chair he abolished the window, sash and glass. Almost as the completion of the same movement he dived head foremost through the opening and fell upon the trestle, clutching the farther rail.

Instantly he was on his feet, bruised, bleeding from a gash on his forehead, but feeling no pain. Only the snow-plow had gone over. The engines, momentum lost by the shock, had happily been brought to a stop. Yard leaped down to the plow, now lying on its side, its fighting ram splintered and crumpled by the obstacle it had met on the trestle. Smoke poured from it, and from the three men within there came out a confused shouting, mingled with cries of pain.

In an instant the crews of the engines were at hand to help. The men were gotten out, one

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with leg dangling, useless, broken between knee and hip. Next, the fire, kindled by the overturned stove, was smothered in snow. Not till then did Yard clamber to the trestle to discover the cause of the wreck.

It was a boulder, placed neatly between the rails. It could not have rolled down the mountain to rest there. In no manner could it have reached that spot except by the ingenuity of man. It had been placed there under shelter of the blinding snow, to perform a task, and it had well and truly served. . . .

After being quiescent for some time in the woods the enemy had struck again, and the great success of their blow lay not so much in the derailment or demolition of a snow-plow as in the effect of the thing on the minds of men. What man can charge headlong into a drift when lurking in his mind is the possibility, probability, of a boulder waiting there?

One engine took the injured man to town and brought back men to help replace the plow on the tracks. With the help of the locomotives this was accomplished after nightfall, and the crippled plow dragged back to the roundhouse for necessary repairs. The work was continued with a smaller, less capable contrivance.

“We can’t have that thing happen again,”

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Yard said, somberly, to Billings, as he sat with the walking boss that night. "The train crews will forget this one time in a week or two, but if it happens again—"

"Langlois is working for the Power Company," said Billings, thoughtfully. "I wondered why they hired him."

"Yes," said Yard, "I've thought of that. He'd be the very drug to fill this prescription. . . . It wouldn't be such a job for a woodsman to cut across from the dam to the East Branch and come down the track. I'd like to know where Langlois was last night."

"Do any of our boys know any of the men at the dam?"

"Sim-sam might tell us that," said Yard, and, going to the door, he called the old chopper loudly.

Sim-sam appeared in the door of the bunk-house and hurried across.

"Know any of the men on the dam, Sim-sam?"

"Jest that jumpin' Frenchman, Pete."

"Anything you could call him on the telephone about without getting him suspicious?"

"He owes me five bucks," grinned Sim-sam. "'Tain't likely he'd be so suspicious as he would be sore if I was to call up and ask when he was comin' through with it."

"Good enough. Do that—and then see if you

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can find out if Langlois was on his job there last night.”

Sim-sam managed by patience to get into connection with the dam and asked for Pete.

“Hello, Pete!” he said. “This here’s Sim. . . . Say, about that five bucks now—” His voice stopped and apparently he was listening to protestations of some sort which came to him over the line.

“You’re always busted,” he retorted. “What d’you do with your dough, eh? Well, call you ag’in next pay-day—whenever that is. . . . Say, what kind of a boss you got, anyhow, that won’t call his men to the ’phone in the evenin’? I called you up last night and Langlois tells me to go to the devil—he didn’t have no time to go wallerin’ around after jumpin’ Frenchmen.”

A pause, then:

“ ’Twas, too, Langlois. Guess I know his voice.”

The indistinct murmur of the distant voice told the listeners that Pete was talking.

“Did, eh? Left there at six o’clock and didn’t git back till ’most mornin’, eh? What was he doin’—chasin’ a squirrel around in the woods?”

Another brief pause.

“Asked him where he’d been, eh? And he nigh knocked your head off. Ought to know better,

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Pete, than to go buttin' in on Langlois's a-moors. G'by, Pete. See you next pay-day."

"Langlois was the boy," said Yard, with decision.

"Slim evidence to hang on," said Billings.

"Plenty for me," Yard said, and his lips compressed. "I'll call on Langlois to-morrow—and I'll bet there'll be no more boulders on our tracks."

"Go easy, Yard. He's a bad actor—and he's afraid of you. That makes him more dangerous. Always look out for a bad man that's afraid of you. He sort of feels like it's his duty to do something to prove to himself that he isn't afraid."

"I'll chance it," said Yard, and went off to bed in the room the Billingses kept ready for him.

"Not much to be got out of him lately, is there, Sim-sam?" said Billings.

Sim-sam's eyes had followed his friend yearningly. "Poor young feller!" he said, lugubriously. "Somethin's bitin' him mighty hard."

But next day Yard did not put the fear of God into Langlois, as he had intended, for Beaumont summoned him to the office.

"Put on your respectable clothes, if you have any," he said.

"I haven't," said Van, and went as he was.

"We start for Boston this afternoon. Those

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notes fall due in three days, and I want to get there in time to have a few hours to scout around if they won't renew."

Boston was reached in the early hours of the evening. Van had not wanted to go there, had a subconscious dread of his home and birthplace, though he had not admitted it to himself. There was the possibility of encountering old friends, acquaintances; there were the associations of the later days with their sordid reminders. As to the first, he need not have felt alarm, for what friend would recognize one of the Yards in a red-and-black checked Mackinaw, woolen woodsman's trousers, gray stocking reaching to the knee, and rubber shoepacks? The disguise of his body was perfect. It did not need the finishing touch which experience, labor, sun, wind, and storm had placed upon his face. Van Twiller Yard was submerged forever—replaced by Van Yard, woodsman.

The strangest thing to consider is that Van Yard was unconscious of the unsuitability of his garments. Big John perceived this, but did not mention it. One thought, after they had arrived, filled the young man's brain—sulphate-pulp. It was threatened, seriously threatened, and other matters were dwarfed to negligibility. He was curiously intent, preoccupied. After one or two

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futile attempts at conversation Big John left him to his own communings.

Next morning Beaumont and Yard were at the bank soon after the opening of its bronze doors, and gained speedy interview with its president, Mr. Waite.

“Waite,” said Beaumont, coming at once to the point, “are you going to renew my notes?”

“Why—” Waite hesitated briefly. “We have been talking over your affairs, Beaumont. Rumors have come down to us.”

“What rumors?”

“Well, frankly, that you had bitten off more than you can chew.”

“Huh! . . . With a contract for my output that shows more than three hundred per cent. profit I guess I’ll be able to masticate, all right. Want to see it?”

“We know about that, of course. But our information is that you can’t make good on it—can’t deliver.”

“That’s it, eh? Afraid of our output. Well, right now we’re manufacturing close to capacity—pretty good for a new mill. We’ve got pulp wood, peeled and in a heap, that ’ll carry us through nearly till spring. Where’d you get this information?”

“The sources are, of course, confidential. You

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say you have pulp wood enough to last till spring. But what of the rest of the year? Something's wrong out in the woods, isn't it? Our information is pretty definite that the woods end of your organization is falling down."

"How about it, Yard?" said Big John.

"It is *not*," said Yard, intensely.

"You speak with authority," said Mr. Waite.

"I'm in charge of the woods."

"Rather a prejudiced witness, aren't you?" said Mr. Waite, surveying Yard's costume covertly.

"Prejudiced only in one way, Mr. Waite, and that's in favor of a square deal. . . . This is no time for diplomacy, Mr. Beaumont. This bank has made up its mind what it's going to do, and no amount of arguing by us will change it. . . . Mr. Waite, your bank has its orders to shut down on us. I don't know that I blame you especially. You're a hired man. I don't blame you any more than I do any other man who was born without enough spine to last him through. You are well acquainted with the situation. You know we can succeed. You know we can give America a new and profitable industry—sulphate-pulp." He pronounced the name almost reverently. "And you know who's bucking us."

"Sir?" said Mr. Waite, rising.

"Sit down, please. . . . This thing means more

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to us than dollars and cents. We're doing something for our country. Giving it something! Adding to it something as valuable as new territory. . . . You're an American. All you have, your position, your money, comes from America. You owe it allegiance—and you're a traitor to it as definitely as Benedict Arnold was. If we were at war with Sweden, probably you wouldn't sell one of our fortifications to them. That would be too obvious. . . . But here is a situation where America is at financial war with Sweden, and you not only desert, you aid the enemy with all your power. You and your board of directors are as dangerous to America as any association of the hyphenates Mr. Roosevelt talks about—because you're more powerful, because you can carry out your purpose with a specious pretense of business necessity. . . . We withdraw our request for a renewal, and we're going out of here to look for a bank run by an American with a spine. There must be one. If there isn't—if they're all like you, then we'll go smash—and small matter it will be. . . . If that proves to be true, then it is time the people of this land get down the guns that are rusting over their mantels and march. For the people are American. Don't forget that. . . . And the day will come when they'll see what you fellows are up to and demand a reckon-

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ing. Money has grown reckless. It has the notion it is inviolate, that, like the king, it can do no wrong. But it's blind, Mr. Waite. Because it is powerful it can see no other power. But there is a force, and that force is in the people—the common men, laborers, clerks, farmers—which cannot be resisted. It never has been resisted. A few more years of this sort of thing and you financial men will bring it down on you.”

Van paused, and Beaumont looked at him anxiously, for the young man had spoken feverishly, with eyes that glittered; and gestured with hands that quivered, so tense were his nerves.

“Come, Mr. Beaumont,” Yard said, presently. “I had to get that off my mind.”

“Huh! . . . Like to have done it myself, but you did it better, I expect. Takes the fire and enthusiasm of youth for a job like that. . . . Good morning, Mr. Waite.”

So they passed out of that bank and into another, and yet another and yet another. It was evident they were known men, that their request for money had been refused before it was put. But they did not give up until banking-hours were over. From no bank they visited did they have the faintest glow of encouragement.

“We're done for,” said Big John, wearily, as they turned toward their hotel.

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“We’re not.” Yard seized his arm with nervous clutch. “This was skirmishing. Now we’ve got to fight.”

“How?”

“We’ll take the sleeper to New York to-night.”

“Son, you’re all fussed up over this. What can we do in New York?”

“Get big millions to block little millions. Fifty millions are against us. We’ll go to New York to get half a billion with us.”

“Say, young fellow, you come along to bed. This stuff has got you a bit off your balance. You come along now.”

“I’m not crazy, Mr. Beaumont. I’ve been thinking this thing over all the days since you spoke about it first. I’ve picked the most probable man, and to-morrow we’ll make him give us an interview. He’s as big as they make him. With the weight of his influence behind us we’ll never have another worry like this.”

“Who’s the man?”

“Angus Mackenzie,” said Yard.

Beaumont stopped stock-still. “Mackenzie!” he said. “By jingo! boy, you’re either crazy as a loon or a genius! . . . But we’ll try it. On patriotic grounds, eh? We’ll give Mackenzie a whirl. He’s the only bet we’ve got left.”

CHAPTER XVI

YARD'S intense, burning, fanatical enthusiasm carried Big John Beaumont to New York, but as he lay wakeful in his berth his hope chilled and he realized the futility, the absurdity of their errand. They were journeying to ask financial backing of one of the three great money monarchs of the United States, uncertain even of obtaining an interview. They were without introductions, had nothing to help them but their necessity.

"We're making fools of ourselves," he said to Van, in the morning. "Mackenzie's footman or butler or whatever it is will never let us see the inside of the door."

"We'll see Mackenzie," said Yard, with lips compressed, "if I have to use scaling-ladders."

"Come on back home, boy, and take our medicine—or, better, if you think there's a chance, let's try a couple of New York banks."

"Mr. Beaumont"—Yard spoke as men speak who have made an unalterable resolution—"you can do as you please, but I'm going to Mackenzie's

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house this morning, and I'm going to stay at his door till I see him or the police drag me away."

Beaumont began to wish he had left Yard at home. He had come to try to borrow money, not to be keeper to a lunatic.

"Don't you see the brass of it, Yard?" he asked. "I haven't the nerve to tackle it—it's too darned cheeky."

"Cheeky! . . . What do I care? What does it matter what Mackenzie or anybody else thinks of you and me? We're working for sulphate-pulp. . . . For sulphate-pulp!" he repeated, tensely, his hands closing into clenched fists.

"All right," said Big John, with resignation—and some admiration. "If you stay, I'll draw cards, too. . . . Let's get breakfast. We can't tackle him before nine o'clock."

They breakfasted without appetite, prowled about the hotel for an hour, and took a taxicab to Mackenzie's Fifth Avenue palace. Van advanced on the door as he would have advanced on a spruce-tree he was about to fell. Before him were double gates of upright iron bars with iron bands weaving in and out in artistic manner. These folded in front of huge bronze doors, one of which opened presently in response to Van's ring—opened grudgingly—and a portion of the body of a man in livery was visible.

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“We want to see Mr. Mackenzie,” Van said. “We have no cards. Will you say Mr. Beaumont and Mr. Yard, of Vermont, who *must* see Mr. Mackenzie?”

The man stared at them, closed the door, leaving them standing on the broad step facing the iron grilling. He was absent some time. Then a smaller door at the right, at right angles to the bronze doors, opened and the footman motioned them to enter.

“Mr. Mackenzie’s secretary will see you,” he said, and led the way down a narrow passageway which Beaumont felt must be mined to guard against sudden attack, and was undoubtedly under the muzzle of one machine-gun at least. Up a narrow flight of stairs the footman preceded them and into a bare, square room—an austere, inauspicious room.

“Be seated,” said the footman, and withdrew to the opposite side, closing after him the door. Yard and Beaumont heard the snap of a spring-lock.

“Sort of cautious, ain’t he?” said Beaumont. “We’re locked in. If they forget us, or don’t like our looks, we may be left here to starve.”

It was a long twenty minutes before Mr. Mackenzie’s secretary, a smooth-voiced, handsome, lady-like individual, appeared, rear-guarded by the footman.

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“You wished to see Mr. Mackenzie? Will you state your business to me?” He stared openly at Van. Doubtless he had never before seen a man in woodsman’s attire.

“It is necessary for us to see Mr. Mackenzie in person,” said Van, and both the secretary and Beaumont recognized the voice of a man who was accustomed to footmen and private secretaries, nor was to be awed by them. “We are not asking donations for any charity. Mr. Beaumont is a manufacturer of lumber and pulp in Vermont. I am his woods foreman. We came to Mr. Mackenzie because I read the address he delivered at the laying of the corner-stone of the electric-light plant he presented to the village of Patten. That address read as if it were sincere. If it was sincere Mr. Mackenzie will grant us a brief interview—for we come not so much as private individuals as to lay before him a condition which will work a considerable harm to this country. . . . We are not cranks. We believe Mr. Mackenzie, standing for what he does, will want to know what we have to tell him.”

“Are you known to Mr. Mackenzie, or have you introductions?”

“No. Our only introduction is that we are citizens of the United States, and are in its service as surely as if we were soldiers in uniforms.”

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“I am afraid,” said the secretary, “that Mr. Mackenzie will not see you. However, I will tell him what you say. Pardon me.” Shortly he returned. “Will you step into the library?” he said. “Mr. Mackenzie will see you presently. It is very unusual.”

They proceeded to the library, a great room with walls hidden by bookcases to a height of six feet. Above these a border of framed documents extended entirely around the room. These were honorary degrees conferred by universities; engrossed, addressed, the freedom of cities. It was an impressive room, but a comfortable, even a home-like room—one designed for use, and evidently much used.

“Be seated,” said the secretary, motioning to a huge tapestry lounge. He disappeared.

Yard waited eagerly; Beaumont with half-concealed trepidation. He felt he was being made a fool of, was apprehensive of what Van might say or do.

In a few minutes there appeared through the archway which they faced a little man, far in years, with whitest of hair, mustache, and beard. His face was broad, homely—benign. It was shrewd, capable of inspiring confidence. Blue eyes undimmed by age twinkled under heavy brows. He walked with short, jerky steps, very erect—

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a sort of strut. The face of Mr. Mackenzie was well known to Yard and Beaumont through presentments in the daily press. They arose.

“Gentlemen?” said Mr. Mackenzie.

“This is Mr. Beaumont of the Green Mountain Pulp Company,” said Yard. “I am Van Twiller Yard, his woods boss. . . . He did not want to come to see you, because he felt it was a wild-goose chase and an unwarranted intrusion. But I insisted—because I believe in you.”

Mr. Mackenzie’s eyes twinkled and wrinkles formed in intricate network around them. “I have employees who boss me around, too, Mr. Beaumont. They are good to have—good to have.” His speech did not conceal that his birthplace was Scotland. The great financier motioned them to be seated. “I was readin’ Bobbie Burns but now,” he said. “I was on the line, ‘Then gently scan your brother man,’ when my secretary described you, more especially this young man. Obeyin’ Bobbie’s injunction, I let you in to scan you. . . . ’Tis a mornin’ of leisure with me. What is it you’re wantin’?”

“I want to talk about sulphate-pulp,” said Yard.

“Sulphate-pulp, eh? I know the stuff. I will no buy any nor sell any nor deal with it at all, if that’s your errand.”

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“Mr. Mackenzie, I have read many of your addresses and interviews. I know what the papers say about you—and they say you are a man who loves his country.”

“Aye,” said the old man.

“Let me tell you why we are here—from the beginning; what we are trying to do, and why we think it is your affair.”

Mackenzie bobbed his head, leaned back, and closed his eyes.

Then Yard, his lean, tanned face glowing with enthusiasm, his voice timbered as the voice of one who carries a gospel, told Angus Mackenzie about sulphate-pulp. As he told it there was no business story, though he did not know it, but the story of a man—himself—converted to a new religion. He told about himself—a bum from Boston, and Mackenzie opened his eyes and peered twinklingly at him. He told the story in full, and made good hearing of it.

“It isn’t for the Green Mountain Pulp Company or Mr. Beaumont or myself that I’ve come to you, Mr. Mackenzie. It’s for America. We are the entering wedge of a new industry. If we succeed, others will follow. Wherever the spruce-tree grows, sulphate-mills will spring up. Millions of capital will be invested, thousands of men and women be supported by the industry—and by

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so much our country will be nearer to commercial independence. We are trying to annex a new and rich State to our territories—look at it like that. We are fighting a foreign war. It is foreign capital and influence that have arrayed American capital and influence against us. If you were a younger man, Mr. Mackenzie, and America were invaded, you would shoulder a gun. You would fight.”

“Aye, lad,” said Mr. Mackenzie, sitting upright now, “but I’m a Scotchman. I might give my life for my country, but my money—aye—there’s a far different matter.”

“It isn’t your money we want, but yourself and your influence at our back. We have fifty millions against us, smothering us.”

“ ’Tis a keen conception,” said Mr. Mackenzie. “If the influence of fifty is against ye, then get for yourself the influence of five hundred. Eh? Boy, you’ve a grand nerve.”

“Mr. Mackenzie, judging our affairs simply by business standards, those banks had no right to refuse our renewal. We are sound. We have the timber, the contract for our output, the mills to manufacture it. Nothing is against us but the influence of the Swedish manufacturers. Nothing. They don’t want to see us annex this industry. Those Boston bankers hadn’t a backbone among

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them. It's a sweet condition when an American banker can be intimidated by a crowd of Swedes."

"Aye. Referrin' to such men, I quoted a verse from Bobbie Burns in a certain address." He closed his eyes and tilted back his head in an effort to recall it to mind.

"While sordid sons of Mammon's line
Are dark as night,
Tho' here they scrape an squeeze an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul
May in some future carcass howl
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

"Bobbie could hit 'em off, man. They're a worthless, huddlin', quakin' lot. . . . Young man, if you own Bobbie Burns and Shakespeare you need no other books to make you an educated man."

"Mr. Mackenzie," said the secretary, who had come into the room, "you forget the Bible."

The old man turned on him testily. "I'm no talkin' for publication the now," he said, sharply. "I'm meanin' what I say. . . . Go you and telephone for a report on this Green Mountain Pulp Company." He turned to Yard. "I'm no doubtin' your word, young man. I'm gettin' evidence in support." Presently he said: "I

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knew you'd be wantin' money. Everybody comes to me wantin' money."

"We don't want money. All we ask is for you to use your influence."

"Influence that is no backed by the color of real money is worth a pig's squeal," said Mr. Mackenzie, succinctly. Then he quite shied away from the subject of sulphate-pulp to talk about himself, an individual in whom he seemed to hold a great, but naïve and in no manner offensive, interest.

"You think you're havin' hard times—aye. My mother took in washin's, lad—and there were seven of us. Well I remember my first raise. I was workin' for ten shillings a week and got raised to two dollars. Fair burstin' with it, I ran all the way home and threw it into my mother's lap—and she (a wonderful managin' woman she was!) burst into tears at the joy of it. . . . That's the kind of folks I come from, young man, and I'm a proud man of it. . . . Aye, meetin' with kings and emperors as I have almost daily, I look with pride on my beginnings."

He closed his eyes again and sat for moments as though in a doze. Neither Yard nor Beaumont ventured to disturb him.

"It's that kind of beginnings that makes America," he said, presently. "I'm no for the aristocracy. . . . I recall walkin' one day with the

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Emperor of Germany. He said to me, 'Mr. Mackenzie, I hear you do no like kings,' and I answered him, 'No, sir, I do not. . . .'"

Then, after a time: "I can no think of other things for this war. . . . It's terrible. I can no sleep for thinkin' of the sufferin' to the women and bairns. . . . Pray God such never comes to America."

Once more his thoughts veered. "Folks come beggin' me for money. I am no for pauperizin' Americans, and I give as I judge right for America. You no see me givin' statues for parks, nor paintin's. . . . I'm a' for the practical thing. 'Tis a fancy with me. I have much money, and I feel the duty to use it for America—to make her better and bigger, and to make her people more comfortable and contented. . . . So I give 'em waterworks systems for their little towns that no can afford sic things, and electric-light plants. That's aye the way to help. Give to 'em the useful things. No fritter your money away lightly, for 'tis hard to come by."

Again: "Yon noisy man at Oyster Bay calls us malefactors of great wealth—and well he may in cases. I am no malefactor consciously. I would no harm my country if it cost me my last penny. . . . But there's them that would—somelike you've been speakin' about, lad, with your young

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vehemence. 'Tis good to be young and vehement—but again, 'tis good to be old with the knowledge and experience lugged in by the years. . . . Aye. That's whaur you're lackin', lad, or you would no have dared to come to me with such an errand. . . .”

Yard's heart sank.

“But you can learn from the experience of others, from the words of others. I learn much myself from the perusal of sic men as Bobbie Burns. . . . From time to time I ha' made leetle speeches and addresses wi' no leetle wisdom in them. I ha' them all printed in pamphlets. . . . Come, I will give some of them to you for your evenin' readin'.”

He led the way into a smaller adjoining room about the walls of which were large pigeon-holes stacked with pamphlets. From one to the other of these Mackenzie strutted, drawing out here and there a pamphlet and opening it proudly.

“'Twas in this address I quoted from Burns a few lines that stand in my mind as high as anything he wrote. Listen well:

“Oh Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!

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And oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, how'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

“Is that no splendidly simple? 'Tis what I wish for America.”

The secretary entered and handed a paper to Mr. Mackenzie, who scrutinized it carefully.

“Yours seems a promisin' concern, Mr. Beaumont,” he said. “The report speaks well of it—and you. . . . It says nothing of this young man, but”—his eyes twinkled merrily—“he seems well able to speak for himself. . . . John Beaumont, I ha' no acquaintance wi' you, but you have comported yourself this day like a wise man. You ha' kept silent and let this young man speak. Had you come by yourself it would not ha' availed, for you ha' no the enthusiasm and zeal of youth. You can no see visions like he can—like I saw them when I was a lad. . . . The boy believes what he says. He is no workin' for the siller, but for the cause—and, lad, 'tis a good cause. . . . I will even go to the extent of helpin' you moderately. But I'm a business man, you must no lose sight of that fact. What security do you offer?”

“I'll pledge my stock in the Green Mountain

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Pulp Company. It's worth to-day three times the whole debt—and will be worth a dozen times."

"Have you it by you, man?"

Beaumont drew a leather document-case from his pocket and produced the certificates.

"Do you make proper indorsements—and we'll see. We'll see what's to be done. It's for the country, man—and a leetle bit for the boy with his burnin' eyes."

Big John, near to suffocation by his astonishment, complied.

"Now we'll have in blank notes. Two of them, please," he said to the secretary; and when they were brought he directed Beaumont to make out each for a hundred thousand dollars, payable to Angus Mackenzie.

"You'll be needin' to take up that other paper," he said. "I will now set my name on the back of these. Then your young man here will take them to those i-dentical banks in the city of Boston and see if they daur refuse them. Aye. And he can take also this word to them fro' Angus Mackenzie. Say to them that I ha' a contempt for the bread-and-butter banker. Say to them that a penny earned by helpin' to build up this land is worth a million got by underminin' it. And add, by way of a warnin', that Angus Mackenzie is keepin' his eye on this transaction and to

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beware of skulduggery. . . . Are you content, young man?"

Yard, ready with words when words were needful, was barren now. Silently he held out his hand, and the little multimillionaire clasped it firmly.

"If the time ever comes, lad, when you ha' no employment, come to Angus Mackenzie. I would have sic as you about me. Now be about your needful business. . . . I am glad to ha' met your like."

When they stood again on the sidewalk Big John reached down and pinched himself. "Did you dream it too?" he asked, his voice a bit unsteady with the relief, the astonishment of it.

But apparently the financial miracle had not impressed Yard, or was already forgotten. "Now," he said, "I can go ahead in the woods. Your end is safe. . . . It's up to me."

"Say, Yard, look here. Aren't you surprised?"

"No," said Van. "I thought I could make him see it."

Beaumont was about to utter some exclamation when Mackenzie's words returned to him. "You have comported yourself this day like a wise man. You ha' kept silent and let this young man speak." Now he kept silent again, reflecting that Van Twiller Yard could not realize what a miracle

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he had brought about, nor would he be able to realize it until many years had passed over his head.

Because Van was young he had done a thing no older man would have thought of, no experienced man would have dared. He had accomplished a unique *coup*—one never to be repeated; and he had succeeded wholly because of the youth and the faith and the enthusiasm that was in him.

CHAPTER XVII

THE next morning found them in Boston again. Beaumont was able to derive amusement from the nonplussed banking officials when he presented paper indorsed by Angus Mackenzie. Yard was not. Sulphate-pulp had submerged—it is to be hoped temporarily—his sense of humor. He was business, pure business, and he took pains to deliver in exact words Mackenzie's warning.

There was no declining of this paper after its authenticity had been certified over the long-distance telephone. There was noticeable in the bankers' manner a respect, a somewhat apprehensive respect.

Fifty millions had met five hundred millions—with the result of the meeting not left in doubt.

That evening Yard was again in his little office at woods headquarters, getting into his hands the threads of the past days' logging operations—reading reports, studying scale-sheets, finding that the railroad had been kept clear for logs to move to the mill.

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His door stood slightly ajar. Across the hall was the door of the Nords' living-room, and presently he was disturbingly conscious of Svea Nord's presence. He heard her voice and a man's voice. He tried to concentrate on his work, but Svea Nord intervened. Where his thoughts should have been intent on figures of log measure and cords of pulp wood, they insistently occupied themselves with a blue-eyed, dependable girl—a girl whom he worshiped, but who despised him as unworthy even of contempt.

True and trustworthy! He repeated those words and searched his soul to find if he were worthy of them. Striving to be honest with himself, he weighed actions, motives, accomplishments. He had not been untrue to a trust; as he had seen the right he had acted, and no man can be unconscious of rectitude which has cost him what Van Twiller's rectitude had cost. He assayed his metals in the fires of suffering, and, in justice to himself, could not find the dross that Svea Nord perceived. . . . He had been true and trustworthy. It was because of his truth—of his trustworthiness to his love—that his love despised him. The thought was not without bitterness.

The only warmth he found to comfort him was in the thought that his suffering had stayed her suffering. . . . He had saved her from the sight

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of her father's degradation. Quixotic? Perhaps. Not gifted with understanding of a woman's soul? True. He fancied he had been kind to her, not knowing that a woman's grief upon discovering the unworthiness of a man whom she has set upon the throne of her heart is more bitter than to know that a mere parent—forced upon her by nature—is not a man to be admired.

Svea had demanded that her chosen man be true and trustworthy. Van Yard had been true and trustworthy—and it had cost him his hope of winning her.

Without intending to listen, without realizing that he did listen, his ears strained eagerly for the sound of Svea's voice. Not to overhear what she said! Only to be made more miserable and at the same time glad by it. The man's voice was more distinct; apparently he sat nearer the door, had crossed the room—and Yard recognized it. It was the voice of Holmquist.

There came a brief silence, and then Holmquist spoke, his voice taking on a new tone.

"Svea, we've known each other a long time now."

"Yes," she said.

"Nobody could know you, Svea, as well as you have let me know you—and not come to think of you as I do. . . . You're nor surprised, are you?"

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Perhaps I have not been as attentive to you as I should have been, but business matters have kept me away—and success in business was necessary before I could say to you what I want to say. . . . I think I have succeeded. I believe that by spring things will be in my hands as I want them. I'll be so necessary to Mr. Ekstrom that—" He paused briefly, then went on in another tone, one showing less self-satisfaction. "I kept waiting for some sign that you might think of me as I think of you, but you're always so calm and self-contained a fellow can't tell what you're thinking about. . . . And now I can't wait any longer. . . . Svea, you're wonderful . . . wonderful! . . . I love you. . . . Can you—will you—"

Van did not hear the rest. He was on his feet, teeth clenched, eyes burning, rage rising in his throat to choke him. Holmquist was daring to speak of love to Svea Nord—Holmquist, who had tempted and tricked her father; Holmquist, who had not in his veins one drop of true or trustworthy blood. . . . Yard saw the weakly pretty, tearful, woeful face of the little fern-picker. . . . Now the man who had degraded her was offering his love to Svea. Once more Yard saw Holmquist on that morning when the young woods boss had charged him with his act

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and made known its consequences; saw again Holmquist's shrug and sneer; heard again his cold-blooded words: "It's her word against mine. I never spoke to the girl. Let her get out of her own mess the best way she can."

So lofty was the place upon which Yard had set Svea that a less matter than this would have seemed impious to him, intolerable. He became as a heathen priest enraged at some invasion of his temple's holy of holies. Snatching open his door, he plunged across the narrow hall and into the little parlor. He did not see Svea; his sole thought was to remove from her presence, from foul contact with her, this man.

Holmquist turned, startled by the sound of Van's entry. At sight of Van he gave back, cowered, cringed—not a pleasant sight to see. Yard reached out an arm, made powerful by labor, clutched Holmquist's collar, and jerked the little, dapper man to him. Turning, he propelled him through the door, down the hall, to the outer door, and vehemently hurled him through the air into a waiting drift.

An instant he stood there, panting; then he returned to the parlor and faced Svea.

She was standing, white as death, startled, but not frightened. "Are you insane?" she said, her voice tremulous.

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“No I’m not insane,” he replied, hoarsely. “But I couldn’t—*stand* it to hear that man make love to you. . . . It’s not jealousy.”

She had tried to speak, but the rush of his words silenced her.

“I did not intend to listen—didn’t know I was listening, . . . and then I heard. . . .”

She tried to pass him and leave the room, but he backed before the door.

“No, you sha’n’t go. You’ve got to listen. . . . I’ve stood about all I can stand without going to pieces. Maybe there was a better way than throwing him out, but I couldn’t see it and don’t see it. It *had* to be stopped. . . . You’ve got to listen, now. . . . I know what you think of me and why you think it—and that can’t be helped. But you sha’n’t think worse than you do. . . . If I hadn’t loved you—if I had been only a friend—I’d have seen red when that man said ‘love’ to you. He has no right to say ‘love’ to any good woman—to touch a decent woman with the tip of his finger. . . . True and trustworthy—that’s what you said a man must be. And Holmquist—his business is to drag men down from truth and trustworthiness. He’s a fixer—a briber.”

Her lips curled.

“I know what you think of me,” he said, tensely, “and whether I deserve it. . . . That

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isn't the question. I know what I think of you—and that *is* the question. To me you stand for everything that's good and sweet and clean in life. . . ." His voice softened. "You're the kind of woman a son might worship—the way not many mothers are worshiped."

He did not realize he was paying her the noblest compliment to be conceived, but she realized it and wondered how such a thought could come from the heart of such a man.

"I know that man. I know no decent man would admit him to his home—knowing him as I do. The word 'love' on his lips was an insult to you that you can't understand—and I heard it and threw him out. . . . He'll never repeat it—I'll see to that, whether you want me to or not." He paused, chest heaving with the stress of his excitement.

"If I need protecting my father can see to it," she said, biting. "However much I needed a protector, I would hardly choose a man like you. . . . You forget that I saw you with that girl in your arms. . . ."

"In my life I had never spoken to that girl but once before."

"Don't lie, Mr. Yard. That scene spoke for itself."

"I sha'n't defend myself, Svea. . . . It would

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be useless. Even if I cleared myself of that one thing, you would still believe I had tricked your father out of his job. . . . Your heart is so true, Svea, that you cannot see that where there is the appearance of evil there may be no evil at all. . . .”

He was calmer now; had summoned up a sort of grave dignity. Svea could not help reflecting that a man with such an exterior—with such rash, hot-burning flashes of good in him, even of chivalry—could not be all bad. But he *was* bad. She had seen. The evidence was not to be disputed.

“If you know anything that makes Mr. Holmquist unfit to be my guest,” she said, “it would be more manly to tell it to my father than to hint at it to me.”

“Your father—” He stopped. He had been on the point of saying, “Your father knows better than I,” but that would be dangerous, explosive—might, if she followed the hint, overturn her world.

Holmquist burst suddenly in the room, snow-covered from his plunge into the drift, his face insane with the rage of humiliation. In his hand he clutched a revolver. Svea saw him first, for Van’s back was to the door, and her eyes widened with horror.

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“Mr. Yard!” she cried. “Behind you! . . . Behind you!”

Yard turned to face Holmquist, half a dozen feet away. Slowly the man raised the revolver, his teeth glittering white between lips drawn back in a snarl.

“Damn you! . . . ” he squeaked, rat-like, “damn you!”

Yard bent forward a trifle from the waist, and stood motionless, his eyes upon Holmquist’s eyes, every atom of his will bearing upon Holmquist’s will. To move, to spring upon the man, would bring a shot. That, if it meant only death, would not have been terrible, but it meant a tragedy in Svea’s presence—scandal, whispering, malicious tongues wagging busily.

The revolver pointed at Van’s face; Holmquist was nerving himself to press the trigger.

“*Put down that gun,*” said Van, without raising his voice, but backing every word with the driving force of the will of a man fighting for his life.

“*Put down that gun,*” he repeated, his eyes never wavering from Holmquist’s eyes.

Holmquist was trying to shoot, trying to force his brain to flash the command to his crooked finger, but Van’s eyes held him. Sweat appeared on his forehead; he shivered; his cheeks went gray. It seemed to him that something relentless,

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ruthless, terrifying, clutched the motive forces of his brain and held them inert. His will was struggling against Van's—struggling to pull that trigger—found itself bound, manacled, powerless.

Svea watched him with parted lips; saw the agony of the struggle; saw one man's will cracking another's as one would crack a brittle stick over his knee—and the sight was unbearable. She covered her eyes.

“*Put down that gun,*” said Van the third time. The gun wavered in Holmquist's quivering hand, was slowly deflected as though by some crushing force that bent down the man's arm in spite of his utmost resistance.

“*Drop it!*” said Van, and the revolver fell to the floor—and not the revolver alone.

Holmquist slumped to his knees, his lips working, his body shuddering. “Don't! . . .” he cried. “Don't! . . .”

Yard picked up the gun and turned to Svea. “You see,” he said, tensely, the strain of conflict not yet faded from his voice. “He isn't a man—just a thing. . . . He had a gun—and he couldn't shoot. . . .”

“Yes,” she said, awed by what she had seen, “I saw.”

“You believe me now?”

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"I believe you," she said, as though repeating a formula.

He turned to Holmquist. "Get up," he said. "Put on your coat and hat and go. Don't tell this—but there's no fear of that. . . . And if you ever dare to speak a word of"—he hesitated over the word—"of love to Svea Nord again I will come to find you. Remember that."

The temptation had been strong in him to take the man by the throat, to make him confess to Svea his relations with the fern-picker, but he did not. Svea had undergone stress enough; it was not to be further increased.

Holmquist stumbled out of the room, out of the house, and as he went sounds issued from his throat, unpleasant to hear, bearing some distant resemblance to human sobs. The man had lost control of himself. His broken will dangled as though it had been a broken arm.

"Svea," said Yard, his voice pleading as his words dared not. "I'm sorry—but it's better to have it end this way than to have had him finish—what he was saying to you."

She looked at him, her blue eyes purple now with the emotion she suppressed. Her heart was swelling within her; she thought it would burst. . . . For she knew she loved this man. There was a power about him that compelled her love,

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a gentleness that drew her heart. In spite of what he was, in spite of his treachery, in spite of the fern-picker, she loved him. How could she who was a man—such a man as Yard had shown himself to be—be contemptible? But he was. . . . She had seen. She *knew*.

Though her love killed her, she would never confess it to him. He was unworthy of it. He was not true and trustworthy. . . . She bit her lip, clenched her hands, shut her eyes.

“Go away,” she cried, pitifully. “Go away. . . . Go away. . . .”

Yard turned slowly, his eyes craving forgiveness, caressing, pouring out his love upon her, and withdrew from the room.

She stood a moment looking after him—stretched out her arms after him as though to draw him back to her. Then she tottered, dropped to her knees, and threw herself prone upon the floor, covering her face with trembling hands, and there she lay and sobbed—sobbed quietly, terribly. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH ground frozen hard so that horses did not sink to their bellies in the swamps, with snow packed and frozen into smooth logging-roads, operations in the woods made real progress. Driven by Van Yard with his grim, tireless determination, they surpassed Big John Beaumont's expectations, and the reports coming down to him made his eyes glow with satisfaction. His judgment was vindicated. He had picked a man.

Healthy rivalry sprang up between the camps individually, and between the two groups of camps, and nightly the men lounged about the big stove in the bunk-house and listened eagerly to telephoned reports of the day's cut from other camps. Seven and Eight took the lead and kept it. Yard's roughnecks were lumbermen. Besides that, they realized they were a picked crew, the boss's own men, and they worked for him and for glory as they would not have worked for money.

Logs accumulated on skidways, piles of pulp wood multiplied throughout the woods. Yard was able to promise that the winter's cut would

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answer every demand of the mill—and more; would answer if it could be got to the mill. The spring alone could answer that. It was a business the river only could attend to, and if the river did its duty, were permitted to do its duty, performance of Big John's contract with the Corrugated Company would be assured. More than that, sulphate-pulp would be established. The new industry would be annexed to the United States, never to be wrested from her.

The winter was eventful; no winter in the logging-camps can pass without event. But there was no further attempt by the Power Company to obstruct the work. Perhaps this was because of a visit Yard paid to Langlois at the dam on the day after his return from Boston, and a call made upon Ekstrom in his office. Perhaps it was because Ekstrom was confident of the success of the measures he planned for the spring. At any rate, the work went forward with only such obstacles to surmount as were imposed by nature or were incidental to the operations.

Yard's visit to Langlois was illuminating, brought out with bold strokes the new phase of the character of the man who had been Van Twiller Yard, bum. It showed him without humor, grim, intense, centered wholly upon one idea, if not gloomy, at least somber. What lightness had

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been in him was abolished—Svea Nord had done that. His fanaticism, asceticism, had grown upon him, and he traveled as if driven by sharpest goad toward the goal of accomplishment that was forever upheld before his eyes. His was a single-track mind raised to the *n*th power.

Yard slept, the night of his return, in Camp Four. In the morning he found Sim-sam waiting for him.

“Goin’ to the dam to-day, boy?”

“Yes.”

“ ’Tain’t safe. ’Tain’t necessary.”

“Don’t argue, Sim-sam,” Yard said, not un-
gently.

“Lemme go along, then.”

Yard shook his head and set off for the junction where he would catch the up-bound train for Camp Eight and the dam. Sim-sam waited for him to disappear down the track, then set out to follow.

Yard rode to his destination in the cab of the engine; Sim-sam on the rearmost truck—un-observed. When Yard walked down the precipitous slope to the base of the dam, where were located the quarters for the employees, and the gate-house, Sim-sam followed cautiously.

Yard met Langlois on the path. Both men stopped.

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“Langlois,” said Yard, “the other day you put a boulder on our railroad. It derailed the snow-plow and broke a man’s leg. I’m not here to talk long to you. . . . If that thing happens again, if there is any interference with our railroad or with our camps which endangers the life or limb of one of my men, I’ll bring my boys down from Seven and Eight and we’ll get you—and I’ll give you to them to do what they want to with. You know what that would be. . . . That’s all.”

He turned his back on Langlois and strode away. Sim-sam expected the ex-camp boss to spring on Yard’s back, but he did not move—merely scowled and shifted from one foot to the other. The desire was there, but the nerve was lacking. Even with back turned Yard was the stronger man.

The call upon Ekstrom was in similar key. It did not frighten the president of the Power Company, but left him with a greater desire than ever to possess this young man.

Later in the week Sim-sam surprised Yard by telling him he had to go out of the woods for a few weeks—and the old chopper, lugging his paper suit-case and his much-thumbed magazines, disappeared.

The only other incident having an extra-routine bearing upon Van Twiller Yard was the

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sending away of the little fern-picker to the city, for sending had become advisable. This did not pass unobserved, and tongues wagged. Rumor busied herself with the fact and spread it in such places as would work the most harm—as is rumor's custom. Svea Nord came to know it, and there was but one construction she could place upon it. . . .

Yard had long since moved his office to Camp Four. For months he did not encounter Svea, nor see her save at a distance as he passed the house that had been woods headquarters. But that did not mean forgetfulness. Svea was always with him, lurking in a recess of his mind and ready to obtrude on his reflections. He did not welcome thoughts of her.

And then spring approached; the sun rose higher overhead; there were sporadic thaws warning of the breaking up of winter and of freshets to come. It was time.

Through those winter months the mills had not been idle; their output satisfied even Big John, but output meant consumption of pulp wood, and the supply was running low. Before many days fresh cords of it must come down from the woods, or operations must pause to wait for them, and with profits upon the daily production passing what many able men would consider ample

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yearly salaries, to pause even for a day was not to be considered with equanimity.

So big John and Yard prayed for the melting of the snows and the coming of spring rains.

In the woods Yard made everything ready for the drive. Piles of pulp wood lined the river, ready to be thrown in; accumulations of spruce in logs were being gnawed to four-foot lengths by cross-cut and gasolene-driven circular saws. The woods had done their part, were ready. Now the river must do its task—and speedily—or all this labor had been expended in vain.

“She’s coming,” said the men, with eagerness in their voices, and listened each morning, as they got out of their bunks, for the sound of rain on the roof; for the rush and roar of the rising river, the booming, cracking, crashing of ice wrenched from its bed by swelling flood water.

But it did not come. March passed and still the river was closed; still depths of snow filled the woods. If there were a thaw one day, the next day and for days to follow there would be weather that froze the crust thick, or there would be belated snowfalls making necessary the use of snow-plow and road-roller.

Every day saw the pile of peeled pulp wood across from the mill dwindling and dwindling. Not weeks now, but days could it supply the

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hungry mill. . . . The break-up must come; must come speedily.

Then, on the 2d of April, Yard awoke to hear the wind sweeping gusts of rain upon the roof, a very deluge of rain. He leaped from bed and dressed, though there was nothing he could do; but he craved action. He could no more have slept or lain in his bed until dawn than he could have if its sheets had been made of the fabric of the shirt donned by Faithful John in the fairy-tale.

Nor was he content with standing by the window to look out at the blackness of the night. He thrust on his Mackinaw and rushed out of doors and down to the river. The waters were rising. Already little streams of water poured down mountain gullies upon the ice which groaned and heaved, booming and cracking as it burst under the strain. The freshet had come!

Back and forth from the house to the river he tramped a score of times. Long before dawn the flat space about Camp Four was a sea of slush, knee-deep. The air was warm, soggy. It was the great spring thaw, unmistakable, coming not a day too soon.

Yard planted a wand by the river's edge and measured the rise of the water. Inch by inch it surged upward. The ice began to travel down-

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ward, slowly at first, then swishing by, churned and tossed by the sullen, irresistible current.

That it might jam below he knew, had foreseen. Piling on bend or shallow, it might rear itself into a dam ten, twenty feet high, disputing the passage of the pulp wood. But Yard was ready for that, ready with the antidote—little yellowish cylinders, innocent enough to the eye, but holding ready in their bodies a frightful energy capable of rending boulders, of obliterating mountains. Dynamite was their name, and more than one ton of them was stored in the East Branch camps, ready to be called to duty.

The river rose and still rose, a foot, two feet, three feet before morning. Yard did not wait for dawn, but routed out his men in the darkness and set them to work.

“The freshet, men!” he shouted into the bunk-house. “Out! . . . The river’s up!”

Other camps were not behind him. Men working madly were heaving bolts of pulp wood into the stream; horses struggled through the blinding rain, slipping, stumbling in the treacherous slush with sled-loads from the woods. Then, with daylight, came the message from Camp One:

“She’s jamming in the Horseshoe . . . fifteen feet, and pilin’ fast.”

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“Clear it!” shouted Yard into the telephone, “and keep it clear.”

Again from Camp Three: “She’s pilin’ in the Notch,” with the same frenzied order from Yard.

In half an hour, from the direction of Camp Three sounded a muffled *boom!* Dynamite was laboring for them. Other explosions, fainter, more distant, told of similar upheavals at Camp One.

“More men! We can’t keep her clear,” came the cry from Camp One, but it was needless. Already trains were bearing from Five, Six, Seven, Eight, every man that could be spared, bringing among them Yard’s roughnecks, each to give such account of himself as to be rated thereafter as the worth of two men!

Five hundred men were working to feed pulp wood into the torrent, tearing at the piles as though they were living enemies. It was no silent scene. Teamsters’ voices, fluent in profanity, urged their teams; men shouted, bawled; the river roared back at them a multitude of sounds. . . . And Van! From one camp to another he rushed, driving, setting an example of killing labor, and where he appeared men redoubled their efforts for him to see. He was a man whose approbation all men coveted, whose displeasure all men feared.

Those who recalled his face, his efforts, on that

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morning—and none forgot who saw him—told the tale that he was no mere human man, but the personification, the embodiment of a spirit, grim, tireless, relentless. . . .

And then, with the work but commenced, the rise of the river halted. It lapped for no higher spot on its banks, tore with surging wave at no farther foothold. . . . Then, in the sight of all beholders, a thing against nature happened. . . . Despite the torrents of rain that fell, despite the innumerable gully-washing streams that poured to inflate the flood, the river dropped!

Six inches it subsided, the fact proven by the wands planted along the shore to measure its progress, and it continued to subside. The velocity of the current diminished, and before noon there was left a mere trickle, a mockery to those wearied men.

Susbsiding, the river left its ice in ridges, jams, gorges. Upon the banks, buried in the ice, thrown helter-skelter against the jams, was every stick of pulp wood the five hundred men had slaved to put into the water. . . . The freshet had been shriveled at its source; choked, smothered.

“What is it?” men asked one another. “What’s the matter with the damn river?”

The answer was not long to seek.

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"They've closed the gates at the dam! . . . The dam's shut!"

"They're stealin' our water! They're gummin' the drive!"

It was true. The day of the Power Company had arrived. Those floods which nature intended should flow down that river to greater rivers, and even to the sea, had been shut off, imprisoned in the great reservoir behind the rampart of that great dam which towered a hundred feet of cribbing and earthwork above the valley.

Simply by the turn of an electric switch, the starting of a gasolene-motor, the gates barring the tunnel through which the water might escape with awful, seething, spouting violence beneath the dam, had been closed and made fast. . . . The drive was at an end. The thousands of cords of pulp wood, essential to the lusty birth of sulphate-pulp, lay motionless in the river's bed or remained in their piles in the woods. On that day sulphate-pulp lay dying of thirst, for want of water. And water enough and to spare was wantonly withheld by an enemy!

"The dam's shut," Yard telephoned to Big John Beaumont, and his voice was savage.

"Come down," said Big John, "we'll see what's to be done."

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“Legally?” Yard asked, and Big John heard without rancor the sneer borne by the word.

“Legally first,” he said, and Yard banged the receiver in place with a rage he did not try to control.

Big John discussed the situation with Yard, neither man in a humor to resort to half-measures; but Beaumont insisted that relief be sought by legal means before others were sought.

“I’m ready for trouble if they force trouble on me,” he said, “but I’ve tried to be a decent citizen all my life and I want to stick to it if I can. If the laws will help me out—I’ll give ’em a chance. If it happens that Ekstrom has a private court or so—why, you can go ahead and I’ll back you to the limit.”

“We can’t spare the time,” Yard objected, stubbornly.

“Look here, you’re in this game not for me or for money, but for sulphate-pulp. You’ve spouted patriotism all over the State. Now, when it’s our turn to be law-abiding—which is about as good a brand of patriotism as they make—you kick over the traces and want to start a private war.”

“It is war,” said Yard.

“You don’t see fairly to-day. . . . But that argument’s a dead bird. We try for an injunction.

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The papers are drawn. . . . Now about what's to be done meantime. We've got hardwood here to run us three days. You've got to keep that coming or we run out of fuel and the pulp-mill shuts down. We've enough pulp wood for a week, and that's got to be kept coming as you can get it to us. I'd suggest using the East Branch to haul pulp wood and the other branch for hardwood."

"That's what we'd have to do. Most of the hardwood that's get-atable is along the pond by Seven and Eight. I'll haul from there."

"Good enough. . . . Now sign these affidavits and I'll get busy with the courts. We ought to get action to-morrow. I'll keep you posted."

Yard took the train directly to Camp Eight, and what he saw along the way was disquieting. First, as he crossed the trestle over the spillway from the big pond—the safety-valve of the dam—he noticed that the height of the gates there had been raised an ample six feet by the addition of flash-boards. This would permit the rising of the water in the huge reservoir to a height never before reached, never necessary. He saw, too, how rapidly the water was rising.

With no escape, the flood waters from the East Branch itself, from innumerable brooks, from

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torrents formed by melting snows, were pouring into the pond, raising it hour by hour, rising toward former high-water mark and threatening the tracks. Before he reached Camp Eight there were points where the track itself was submerged under six to eight inches of water—and with those newly added flash-boards a further rise of ten feet might be looked for.

That night he sent down a train of eight trucks high-piled with beech, birch, maple. It was the last train-load to leave Camp Eight or Camp Seven for days.

When this train was loaded and gone Van set the crew to launching the gasolene-craft which had been stored since fall—the thirty-footer which Beaumont had sent up on his request. The high water had been foreseen—and to foresee with Van Twiller Yard was to make adequate preparation. Boom-logs were ready upon the shore, their ends fastened with chain. Pike-poles had been provided; everything was in readiness for the emergency which Van had feared.

With the railroad useless it was impossible to move logs by land; he would move them by water, raft them to a point where the railroad emerged to security above high water, and there load them for transport to the mill. It would be the task of the launch to tow the rafts of timber.

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Now hardwood is not pleasant to raft. Its buoyancy is not great; it becomes easily waterlogged and sinks, and losses from such attempted operations are high, sometimes reaching twenty per cent. But Van's rafts would not be the huge affairs of the Great Lakes, of the Pacific coast. They would be smaller, and each log of them would be dogged to its neighbor so that none might escape.

It was slower, more toilsome, meant the handling twice of every log: first to roll it into the water, then, what was much more difficult, to haul it out again and place it aboard the trucks; but it had to be done.

Before noon next day the first raft was on its way to the bay, four miles below, which Yard had selected as his new landing. It was a small raft, might have been laughable to a Western lumberman, but it taxed the strength of the launch—and it was enough if it could be repeated daily.

It was a minor engagement in the war, not of decisive character, but strategically important. It stood an unqualified victory for Yard, and his heart, that had known little pleasure these many months, warmed to it. He was winning. If Beaumont would let him have his way he felt a swelling consciousness that he could see the end

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of the war—and that the issue would be a fortunate one.

And then, taking away what small pleasure the day had earned, came a telegram from the city relayed by telephone—the little fern-picker was dead.

CHAPTER XIX

BETWEEN midnight and morning of the day which brought Yard to Camp Eight, large sleighs, denuded of bells to make their passing silent, and crowded with men, slid swiftly over the road to the dam; there were fifty of them, of the breed known as professional strike-breakers, and Holmquist was conducting them to their destination. They constituted a garrison whose duty it was to prevent a raid on the gate-house and the freeing of the water.

“Lay low,” Holmquist ordered them. “Keep out of sight. If those roughnecks try anything we’ll give them a little party. You see to it, Langlois.”

Langlois nodded in surly acquiescence.

“And, Langlois,” said Holmquist in a whisper, “you won’t have to depend on these fellows alone. There’s a little express shipment coming to you—and you can put it where it ’ll do the most good. If you happened to plant it under this man Yard I’ll bet I could keep back my tears.”

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"I got a thing or two ag'in' that bird myself," Langlois said. "If there's a mix, and he's in it anywheres, he's goin' to git his. And nobody 'll stand around sayin' how natural he looks, either, after he gits it."

"Don't hold back on my account. . . . I'm going to get a couple of winks of sleep. Be careful to keep these men out of sight till they're needed. Nobody suspects they're here."

But Holmquist was not in possession of all the facts as to this. Some one did know of the importation of professional fighters, and that some one was an old lumberjack with two paper suitcases, much given to "lit'ry pursoots." Sim-sam knew it, and telephoned his knowledge to Big John Beaumont, who let it go no further, for he feared the news of it would be a challenge to Van's roughnecks, not to be overlooked by them. He did not want to precipitate bloody war.

In the morning Holmquist drove from the dam, choosing a fork of the road which led past woods headquarters, and there he stopped, well knowing that Van Twiller Yard was elsewhere, much occupied. His errand was not with Svea, but with her father. As a matter of fact, he greatly hoped Svea would not become aware of his presence.

He stopped his horse behind the barn and went

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in to wait for Nord. It was early in the morning and Nord was certain soon to come out to care for the stock. It was a quarter of an hour before he appeared.

“Good morning, Nord,” said Holmquist.

Nord scowled at him. “What you want here?”

“I want to talk to you, and I guess, the way things are, you’ll listen like a lamb. I want something of you. It isn’t for the Power Company, but for me—and I hope you’ll be accommodating. Not so much on my account as yours.”

Nord glowered at him sullenly.

“I’ve been coming to your house for a long time, and you knew why, didn’t you? You knew I was coming for Svea?”

“Yes—I knew,” said Nord.

“And you didn’t object to me as a son-in-law, did you?”

“Not—then.”

“Do now, eh?” Holmquist laughed unpleasantly. “Well, it doesn’t make any difference whether you fancy me or not. I’m not courting you. . . . Svea seemed willing enough to have me come. Now she isn’t. She’s refused to see me. I’ve written to her and she doesn’t answer.”

“She got next to you, I calc’late. She’s got a way of seein’ into folks.”

“She saw Yard throw me out of the house—

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that's all. After that she turned against me hard. I'm not a big bruiser like Yard—and I didn't show up to much advantage, but that's nothing against me."

"Yard throwed you out—of my house?"

"Yes."

"Um!" grunted Nord. "Well, what you want me to do about it?"

Holmquist, though the thing had been planned out well in advance, found some difficulty in beginning. He had been sure of success before the time came to put the matter to the test, but now he experienced some doubt, hesitated, stammered.

"I've *got* to have her," he blurted out in a moment. "I never wanted anything like I want her . . . and everything was going right till Yard showed up in the woods. I've run against him every move I've made—everywhere. . . . I want Svea because"—he drew his breath through his teeth so that the sound of it was audible—"because I can't get along without her. But if I could I'd have her to keep her away from Yard."

"Away from Yard," repeated Nord, slowly, as if the words planted a new idea in his mind.

"You're her father," said Holmquist, "and you've got something to say about it—you've *got* to have something to say about it."

"I dunno—I dunno," said Nord. "Svea hain't

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much to be influenced in sich matters. And if she was I don't calc'late I'd be willin' to do it."

"Willing or not, you've *got* to. I don't care how you do it or what you say to her, but she's got to marry me. Get that into your head quick. . . . Yard sha'n't have her. You don't want him to have her, do you? Didn't he kick you out of your job? . . . And he's after her. If he wasn't, why did he let you stay here in this house? Why did he pay your salary out of his own pocket after he fired you?" Instantly Holmquist knew he had overstepped himself.

"What's that?" said Nord, taking a step forward.

"Out of his own pocket," said Holmquist, seeking to make the best of it. "Tried to *buy* her, that's what."

"The money I've been livin' on came from him? *He* went down in his pocket and paid me my wages right along! He did, eh?"

Holmquist breathed more easily. "Just that. . . . Now will you do what you can for me?"

"I don't calc'late to meddle into it."

"Listen here. Svea doesn't know why Yard fired you, does she? And you don't want her to know. There's others you don't want to know. . . . Well, the day she marries me I'll give you back that check we paid you—the one with your

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name on the back—and a couple of reports in your handwriting. . . . You can make her do it. There's something you can tell her; some way to make her. . . . There'll be a good job with the Power Company, too. I've done a good job for them this winter, and it's about finished. When it is I guess I can have about what I want—and I'll see you fixed for life. . . . In a week the Pulp Company will be as good as busted—and Yard's going to get his for good measure. . . . You wouldn't want Svea to know what you did, would you? She isn't the kind to overlook it."

"Not her," said Nord, grimly.

"Here it is, then: You do what I say and you get the reports and the check—and a job. If you don't do what I say—Svea gets them. But not till enough other people have seen them to make this country too unpleasant for you to live in. . . . And that goes."

Nord stood very still, his eyes half shut, not turned upon Holmquist. He was letting the little man's words sink in—thinking—thinking. It was the crisis of his life. Vaguely he realized that. His mind did not work rapidly, but groped its way. His standards had not been high of late years—but before that he had not been without his ideals. In his youth he, too, had had his beacon burning on a mountain-peak. But it had

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been dimmed, quenched. . . . He thought of many things as he stood; of the wife, dead these many years; of his daughter; of the man who wanted her for his wife—and of Van Twiller Yard. It was strange, perhaps, but in that moment he thought more of Yard than of the others.

In his rough way he sought to analyze Yard's conduct toward himself. . . . Holmquist moved uneasily.

“Well?” he said, harshly.

That word, its tone, brought decision to Nord. His mind leaped the remaining gap to decision. It was delivered without words. Suddenly he reached out and grasped Holmquist's shoulder in fingers that clamped down like a steel trap, wheeled the young man about, and shoved him toward the barn door. Nor did he stop with ejecting him, but propelled him, despite squirmings and strugglings, imprecations and threats, toward the house. Nord uttered no word till he had kicked open the door and stood inside, still holding Holmquist at arm's-length.

“Svea!” he shouted then. “Svea! come here!”

“What are you going to do?” Holmquist panted, stricken with panic, but Nord made no reply.

“Svea!” he called again, insistently.

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"Yes, father," she called from the head of the stairs, "I'm coming."

Half-way down the stairs she saw the man and stopped, her hand groping for the banister.

"Come on, daughter," said Nord. "Hain't nothin' to be afraid of."

She came down slowly and stopped again a few feet away from them.

"What is it?" she asked in a low voice, her eyes not moving from her father's face.

"A rat," said Nord. "I caught it in the barn. I fetched him in to show to you so you'd know what a rat looked like—and so you wouldn't never have any more trouble from this here one. . . . He wanted me to make you marry him."

Svea's eyes flashed from her father to Holmquist, and back again. She stood waiting for what was to come.

"Daughter, what I got to say don't come easy. I dunno where it's goin' to leave me when it's said. . . . But I thought it out and it's got to be said plain so as to leave nothin' for this rat to git a-holt of." He shook Holmquist slightly, his bearing that of a mastiff shaking a rabbit.

"When I git through you'll see I hain't much of a man to be callin' names at another man, but much as I'm ag'in' rats, 'tain't exactly fair to name this here for them. . . . He says to me that

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if I didn't make you marry him he'd tell you what he knows about me—that and consid'able more, he said. Some of it was about Mr. Yard."

At the tone of her father's voice as he spoke that name Svea raised her eyes quickly; there was something in it that paid a compliment to Yard; something in his way of speaking it that told Svea her father held the young man in high esteem.

"Nothing Mr. Holmquist could tell me would make any difference," she said.

"Not unless he had proofs—and he had 'em. . . . You're goin' to think hard of me, Svea. You and your ma before you was always strong on a man bein' honest and keepin' faith. Well, I hain't kept faith, and that was why Yard took my job away from me. You seen him do that, and you didn' understand it, so you thought he'd done me out of my place to git it for himself. . . . I knew it and I let you think it—because I couldn't bear to have you thinkin' your father wasn't a good man. . . ."

"Mr. Yard didn't—" She was unable to go on. Her father declared Yard guiltless of one of the counts against him, and his evidence was conclusive. Color crept up into her face; she did not feel a gladness so much as a premonition

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of gladness. It was warming, very sweet to her hungry heart.

“Yard acted like I wouldn’t have expected my best friend to act that day. . . . He knew I’d sold out to the Power Company for five hundred dollars and that I was a kind of a traitor to the company he was fightin’ so hard for—but, knowin’ that, he didn’t go to Big John with it—and he didn’t tell you of it. He could ’a’ told you, and you wouldn’t have been thinkin’ about him the way you have—and I guess it hurt him bad to see you feel that way. He saved my face—and he kept you from knowin’. . . . And then, when I was fired, Svea, he goes down into his pocket and pays my salary to me. It took every cent he got himself, for they paid us both alike. . . . I didn’t know that, then, or I wouldn’t ’a’ took it. It wasn’t so much to give me the money, I guess, as to keep you thinkin’ he’d done me a wrong and didn’t dare go to Big John with it and git me fired. . . . He did it for you!”

“For me! . . .” she whispered. “He never defended himself. He did all that? You’re not—not keeping anything back? It’s true?”

“As true as gospel,” said Nord, solemnly. He was thinking with a little twinge that her thought was all for Yard, for his sacrifice, and none for him, her father. “Now I’ve told you all of it,

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Svea. You know what I did, and nobody can gain anything by tellin' you again." He shook Holmquist once more. "Your teeth's pulled," he said, ominously.

"Poor dad!" said Svea. "You were afraid I—wouldn't stand by you? . . . Poor old dad."

"You—you hain't *despisin'* me?" he asked, his voice not steady as it had been.

"No. . . . No. . . . It was a terrible thing! . . . But to tell now was good and brave. I don't know why you did that other, dad, but it wasn't the real you. . . . This is the real you to-day—telling the truth, and ready to sacrifice my—love to tell it. . . . You told for Mr. Yard's sake, didn't you?" she asked, with a penetration that startled him.

"I calc'late that was what made me—even more 'n the thought of you marryin' this rat. . . . That would 'a' done it. I know I couldn't 'a' made you marry him, Svea, but if I could you don't think I'd be such a damn scalawag that I'd do it?"

"No, dad," she said, "but I'm glad the other was the bigger reason. . . . Oh, dad, I saw him when he came—just one of those hideous bums; and I watched him climbing out of it all. . . . It was wonderful. He grew so *big*, so *strong*. Everything he did was done as if he was a *man*! Then I

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thought he had done *this*, and it hurt. I had thought him true and trustworthy—and he was a sneak and mean and self-seeking. . . . It hurt, dad.”

“You was in love with him!” Nord said, dully.

“If I were,” she said, “he must be the first to hear it.” It was not a rebuke, but a statement of fact, of right. No living soul was entitled to hear those words from her lips before she uttered them to the man of her selection.

“That’s so,” said Nord, unprotesting.

“True and trustworthy, is he?” squawked Holmquist, rage conquering bodily fear. “How about that fern-picker he had to send away to the city? How about her? . . . And she’s dead. How about that? . . . Now tell him you love him—”

Nord’s hand tightened on his collar, shutting off speech.

“Please,” said Svea, faintly, her hand at her throat, her cheeks pale again at the recollection of that other infamy of Yard’s—one witnessed in a manifestation of itself by her own eyes and not to be disproven, “please take him away—take him away.”

For a second time Holmquist was propelled to the door and hurled outward. This time he did not return.

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“Poor baby!” said Nord, tenderly, taking her in his arms. She did not resist, but pressed closer to him, seeking a refuge. “Is it somethin’ else? Can’t you tell your old dad?”

“I—can’t,” she said, raising her head. . . . “And this is true. . . . I saw myself. It’s worse—worse. I— He’s a *murderer!*”

“Now . . . now. I don’t know what it is, daughter, but Yard never done it. . . . If it was mean, or underhand, he never done it.”

“I know. . . . I *saw.*” By an effort she recovered herself; stood again, calm outwardly, holding herself in check. “I—want to be alone, dad. But—you’ll want to know that—I love you just as I always did—more. What you did to-day—wiped out the other. . . . I—want to be—alone.”

She turned and ascended the stairs, clinging to the railing, as if her young strength were exhausted, needful of support. Nord looked after her with yearning futility. “If I could only do somethin’,” he muttered. “If only your ma was here!”

But there was no comfort for Svea. She went to her room and sat upon the edge of the bed, dry-eyed. There were no tears. And before her was a vision of the young fern-picker lying still in death.

“He killed her!” she whispered again and again. “He killed her!”

CHAPTER XX

AT noon Svea appeared down-stairs and quietly busied herself about her father's dinner, and from her outward appearance none could have told of soul-disturbance within. Dinner over and the dining-room "red" up, she went unobtrusively out of the house and, with feet protected by boots, dared the mud and slush of the road.

That was her way. Always she turned to the out-of-doors for sympathy, for comfort; the physical exertion of walking carried her away from herself, helped her to forget, to recover that serenity of spirit which was hers by right.

She had admitted to herself that she loved Van Twiller Yard. That admission had been forced from her long ago; but she drew no joy from it, nor from the realization that Yard loved her. Somehow that added bitterness to the situation. Yard loved her, yet he could turn his thoughts from her and his love to baseness. It seemed a greater sacrilege to her than the breaking of the

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marriage vow itself, for to woman the birth of love, its first tottering steps, its growth into the world of her heart, are more sacred, sweeter, tenderer, than the full fledging of love into marriage.

While Van Twiller Yard loved her and was wooing her love he had been able to meet the fern-picker, to take her in his arms, probably to whisper spurious love to her. Possibly he had uttered in insincerity to the girl some of the very words he had spoken to Svea as they welled in naked truth from his heart. It was infinitely sordid, unspeakable, despicable to her.

Her walks were no lady-like strolls in a well-kept park. She tramped as a man would tramp, regardless of distance, of obstacles, of weather. She went on, hardly aware of her surroundings or location, when a voice called to her from above.

“Howdy, Svea Nord! Passin’ without so much as a nod?”

She looked up, with some surprise, to find that she stood below the little post-office and that the postmaster was looking down at her pertly like some mischievous, antiquated fowl.

“Hello, Postmaster,” she replied, and stopped.

“Come up and visit. Hain’t seen you for a ’coon’s age. Got a pail of candy open.” The

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postmaster always enticed her with candy, as though she were a child. It was his attitude toward all women.

“I don’t feel like visiting to-day, Postmaster.”

“All the more reason for comin’. . . . *I* feel like visitin’. You come right up here or I’ll scramble down to fetch you.”

“I’ll come, then, for a few minutes, but you won’t find me good company.”

She scrambled up the muddy hill and presently was sitting inside the post-office, with the pail of candy shoved close to her elbow, where she could rob it at will. To please the old man she took a piece and nibbled it.

“Bad winter, wasn’t it?” he offered.

She nodded in agreement.

“Sort of calc’lated on hearin’ news about you ’fore this time,” he said. “Me ’n’ Uncle Sam’s been watchin’ careful to ketch sight of signs of it ’fore anybody else. Sharp eyes! That’s me. And Uncle Sam he knows it. That’s why he sets sich store by me. Postmasters without sharp eyes hain’t much account, say I.”

“Of course they’re not. But what news did you expect to hear about me?”

“They’s always a piece of news an old feller’s expectin’ to hear about girls your age. But I been expectin’ it of you more acute-like. Yes, I

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guess I kin say safely I perty near *knowed* I was goin' to hear it."

She shook her head, not comprehending. Other matters shadowed her mind; its sloth was due to abstraction. "I don't understand."

"Huh!" he snorted. "Don't understand! What's ailin' you to-day, anyhow? . . . I mean I was expectin' to hear you was goin' to desert your dad and foller after and cleave to some young man—and I got the young man all picked out."

"No," she said, dully, and he was aware of the reawakened pain that gnawed her heart.

"Now if I hain't stuck my foot into it! . . . Dum' me for an old fozzle! Somethin's been a-happenin', and I might 'a' knowed it. You jest tell it to your Uncle Samuel's trusted representative, and he'll git matters fixed up in a jiffy."

"This can't be fixed, Postmaster. There isn't a tinker in the world could put it together."

"I hain't no tinker. I guarantee results. . . . Had one of them lovers' quarrels?"

"No."

"Um! . . . 'Feared he hain't a-goin' to ask you?"

"No."

"Now, looky here! . . . I know that young man, and I picked him out for you even 'fore he picked you out for himself. I calc'late it was

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before he knowed *me* at all. But I'd got reports about him, and says I to myself, there's the feller for Svea Nord. And he is. And why in tunket he hain't got you I don't know."

"Don't tease me to-day, Postmaster. I can't bear it."

"I hain't teasin' you, dolly," so he called the young women of his acquaintance. "I'm a-statin' facts—and wonderin' how they come to git twisted. You know what man I'm talkin' about, don't you?"

"No," she said.

"There hain't but one's worth lickin' the mud offn your shoe—and I'll bet you know it. And he loves you, too. Dunno when I've seen a young man so bad took down with it. . . . I mean Van Yard."

"*Oh!*" said Svea. It was a cry of pain.

"Um! . . ." grunted the postmaster, eying her sharply. "Somethin' is happenin', eh? Somethin's rumped up the road of true love, eh? Well, if I hain't a road-smoother I dunno what I *be* good for. So you and Yard have fell out?"

"No."

"You hain't fell *in*, by the looks of things. Why hain't you engaged to marry that young man, like you ought to be?"

"He's a *murderer!* . . . as good as a murderer!"

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Her composure was breaking down under the torture of the old man's questions—as perhaps he knew it would.

“A *who?*” he shouted.

“She's dead,” said Svea.

“Oh, she is, hey? And who's *she?*”

“A—a little fern-picker that he—he had to send away out of the mountains—and—she's—*dead.*”

The old man was now really bewildered. “Only girl I know that's dead is the Piggins girl. Died down to the city. What girl you ravin' about?”

“It's— That's the one,” she said.

“But what in tunket's Yard got to do with her? Might as well call him a murderer because old woman Higby died up to Rutland two years ago.”

“It was his fault. . . . He—”

“He—*nothin'*. What idee you got in your head?”

“I know. . . . I saw. Once on the road I saw her taking money from him, and once I saw him take her in his arms—like—like—oh, like a—lover would.”

“Well, I'm *dummed!*” snorted the postmaster. “So that's the kind of tricks things play, eh? And so you jumped to the idee that he was the snake in the grass.”

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“He sent her away, didn’t he?”

“So I’ve hearn tell.”

She was silent.

“Think that’s proof, eh? Well, I’ll show you. Now listen and see what a dum’ fool even a nice girl can be when she’s a mind to. So far’s I know, Van Yard never seen that girl but three times. One time in the road, like you said. He met up with her when she was settin’ there cryin’ because she’d lost some money got from sellin’ ferns, and was afraid ol’ man Piggins would maul her. Yard he digs down into his pocket and gives her what she lost. Darn crim’nal thing, wasn’t it? That’s time number one.”

She had raised her eyes to his and was gazing at him tensely, eagerly, with new-dawned hope.

“Next time was when she seen what a mess she’d got herself into, and, havin’ nobody else to turn to, she come to him. Nobody else ever took the trouble to give her a decent word, I calc’late. So she come to him, hopin’ for help—and she got it. And she was in his arms like any sick kitten would be if he seen he could comfort it. . . . Even a dum’ fool like the Piggins girl seen Yard was a man to trust.” He went on without pause: “And the last time he seen her was when he was sendin’ her away—payin’ for it out of his own pocket—and payin’ for it out of his heart, I guess,

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the way things had turned out. . . . And that's all. Except that the feller that *was* the murderer wasn't named Yard at all. He was another breed of cattle altogether, and mostly, when folks wasn't callin' him somethin' uncomplimentary, they described him as Mr. Holmquist. . . ."

Svea stood over him suddenly, her hands, strong young hands, gripping his shoulders, and she shook him a little in her pitiful eagerness.

"Is that *true*? . . . Do you *know*?"

"I know," he said, solemnly.

"Oh!" she said, softly. . . . Oh!" Then she bent over and kissed the postmaster on his withered lips. "And I didn't ask him," she said. "I didn't give him a chance to explain. . . . I was of little faith."

"Calc'late he'll be willin' to overlook *that*," said the postmaster.

"I must ask him—to forgive me. . . . He'll never come back to me. I must go to him—and tell him." In her repentant eagerness, in the sudden wealth of happiness that had come to her, she was for starting at once, on foot, to search for him.

"Hold on!" said the postmaster, a grin like the sudden wrinkling of old paper crossing his face. "You'll have to save it up a spell. He hain't got no time to listen to anythin' now—not even to you.

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His hands is jammed full and runnin' over. You leave him be."

"What is it? What's happening?"

"That's men's business, to be left to men," he said. "And chiefly it hain't my affair to be peddlin' to anybody. . . . He's busy and you mustn't disturb him, that's all—and you listen to me."

"If it's best—for him," she said, "I'll wait. . . . And thank you, thank you, Postmaster. I think it isn't your Government that put you here—it was God."

"Might 'a' been, might 'a' been," said he, dryly. "God he picks out some doggone onexpected instruments to serve his ends."

"I'm going now," she said. "I want to walk—and think. It 'll be a different walk from the one that brought me here—and you did it. . . . I'll always remember that you did it."

They went outside. "It's a wonderful day," she said, breathlessly. "Aren't the hills beautiful?"

Personally the postmaster thought the hills looked a bit bedraggled and bare and dirty just then, but he offered no argument.

"Good-by," she said, offering her hand. "I'd like to—kiss you again."

"No complaints from me," he said, with marked enthusiasm.

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An interruption came from the road below in the shape of a raucous voice apostrophizing a horse.

“Hey, you! Step easy! Step easy! Look out for them ruts! Want to joggle me to Kingdom Come? Say! *Whoa!* . . . Cæsar’s ghost, that was a bad one! . . . What’s your hurry, anyhow? Slow up. Crawl. . . . I hain’t anxious to get no place *fast*, not with this load. . . . Watch out for that stone, consarn ye! Think you’re in a hoss-race? I’ll learn you, once I git you home. . . .”

Approaching at a snail’s pace, there came into view the vehicle, known by courtesy as the stage, which plied between the village and points back in the hills, hauling passengers and express. It came abreast the post-office and the postmaster called:

“Hey, Ulysses! What’s ailin’ you? Most gen’ally you hain’t in no sich hurry to go slow and cautious.”

“Most gen’ally,” retorted Ulysses, “I hain’t carryin’ in the back of this stage what I’m a-carry-in’ in it to-day.”

“Now what might that be, Ulysses? You’re jerkin’ on my curiosity.”

“Dunamite, b’jinks!” said Ulysses, with some pride, “and I’m haulin’ her to the dam. Nigh a ton of it, with wire and fixin’s to set it off. . . .”

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That there little dingus on the seat is a electric contraption for shootin' a spark along the wire—and when she shoots, somethin' moves away from where it was. . . . I'm goin' cautious, 'cause I aim to git where I'm goin' by land. When I take to sailin' through the air I want an airship. No sky-hootin' fer me without no parachute, b'jing!"

"For the dam, eh?" said the postmaster, suddenly thoughtful.

"Yes, and in a hurry, too. . . . That's why I'm makin' sich rapid progress." Ulysses permitted himself to grin. "Git there 'fore night, though. . . . G'dap, Oscar! g'dap! We got to be movin'. Can't set and gossip, owin' to our rate of speed. 'Afternoon, Postmaster."

"'Afternoon, Ulysses," said the postmaster. "If 'twan't you aboard that load I'd 'most hope you didn't git there."

"What is it, Postmaster?" asked Svea, seeing the anxiety on his face.

"Somethin' leetle girls mustn't ask questions about," he said. "Now you git along home, and be as happy as you can, and to-night you might work in a prayer that no harm comes to that young man of yourn—along of dynamite and wires and electric contraptions."

"When can I go to him?" she asked.

"To-morrow night, God willin'," he said, and

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there was a gravity in his voice that filled her with misgivings. Something threatened her man, and she could not warn him or be with him to face it.

“Isn’t there—anything I can do?” she asked.

“No,” he said, testily. “I’m calc’latin’ to look after this.”

CHAPTER XXI

BIG JOHN BEAUMONT and his lawyer went to the circuit judge in his chambers and made application for an *ex parte* temporary injunction restraining the Power Company from stopping the flow of water in the East Branch. The judge refused to grant the petition without hearing, but set a date for the hearing no later than that afternoon. This was better than Beaumont had hoped.

At the hearing counsel well earned their fees by practical oratory and citation of authorities. The judge's decision was that no temporary injunction might issue, because a temporary injunction, at this moment of flood water, was equivalent to a permanent injunction, wherefore he refused to act. There was color in what he said; it had the appearance of a decision made upon law and equity alone, but Big John knew it was not—knew it because of the easy, certain, unworried bearing of the Power Company's lawyer from the start. The man had *known* the injunction would not issue.

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There is but one way to *know* such a fact—namely, to have the information from the issuing authority. To deduce that the judge felt himself answerable to the Power Company rather than to the people for his acts was not difficult.

In this country we have come to suspect our lawyers and our judiciary. We talk of the venality of the courts, of the purchase and sale of so-called justice. We speak of it as an intolerable condition; but it is not an intolerable condition, for of such revolutions are the necessary, never-failing offspring. The supreme authority rests in the citizenry—in you and me and the man around the corner. In this body is ample power to reassume the authority they have delegated—and, in the phraseology of a certain game much favored of men in this country, to call for a new pack and a new deal. If our courts were generally venal; if there was even a strong leaven of venality, the new deck would be forthcoming rapidly. But the body of the people know the body of their courts are upright, doing their human best with human ability. Where there is one tainted judge there are a hundred upright judges—and the people, though much given to talk, know this to be true.

But when even a single privately owned jurist comes to view there is a shock of irrepressible

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disgust—almost of desperation. For, if our courts will not stand between us and injustice, nothing will except a musket to shoulder.

This was Big John's mental condition. He was being wronged, broken—and the courts were a party to it. He had been law-abiding, had insisted on lawful measures. His attitude changed. From the court-house he rushed to the office and telephoned Yard:

“The skunk refused the injunction,” he shouted into the transmitter. “We can't get a hearing before high-water is past. . . . It's a damned, infernal outrage. If we can't get water legally—we'll get it any way you can, and this is your authority to go to it. I'll back you till there's frost in Hades, and I'm coming to help.”

Yard replied to the last phrase first: “You stay right where you are. I'm running this end, and I can't be bothered looking after your safety. I'd have you on my mind. That's final.”

“I won't sit here twiddling my thumbs and send you boys to do my dirty work.”

“I may need you there—no telling what may happen. And this isn't dirty work—any more than shooting a man in the act of kidnapping your baby. . . . Somebody's got to be there to look after emergencies.”

“All right,” Big John grumbled. “You're boss.

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... I'll be waiting darned anxiously to hear how you come out."

"Just keep your eye on the river," Yard said. "There'll be water coming down it shortly."

"When are you going to start?"

"Now."

"Listen. With all that's happened to-day I almost spilled the beans. Langlois has fifty strike-breakers at the dam. They're ready for trouble."

"Why didn't I know before?" Yard said, sharply.

"Because I didn't want to start a rumpus till I had to."

"I could have kept my mouth shut," Van said. "You should have told me. It 'll mean delay."

"Good luck, boy. Watch out for yourself."

Yard hung up the receiver. The moment for action had arrived, the moment for which he had planned, and for which, subconsciously, he had hoped. He had been drinking his toast to "The Day."

First he called the boss at Camp Seven. "Rush fifty men," he said. "Have them come a-running."

From the crew of Camp Eight another fifty men were called to the service. This left enough to continue rafting logs down the pond so that

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hardwood would go uninterruptedly to the mill. For now fuel was as necessary as water.

In half an hour the Camp Seven contingent arrived. A hundred men crowded into the cook-shanty, and Van, standing on a bench, talked to them briefly.

“Not a yell from any of you,” he said. “If you like what I say keep quiet about it. I don’t want any demonstration to give warning that we’re up to something. If you don’t like what I say, and don’t cotton to the job, you’re at liberty to go back to your work. I don’t want a man who has any doubt about it.” He paused. “There’s going to be a fight.”

The men stirred, faces lighted; they drew closer about the speaker.

“The Power Company is trying to bust us. They’ve shut the dam and stolen our water. The drive has been stopped—and we’ve got to start it. That’s the job I’ve got for you. Langlois is on the dam with fifty hired scrappers. It’s up to us to clean them out and open the gates—and when we’ve opened them, to keep them open. It won’t be a picnic. Those men can fight because it’s their business. But they’ll be fighting as a business. You men can fight—and you’re two to one. That ’ll make up for their advantage of position and for any defenses they’ve got ready.

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And you'll be fighting for something better than pay."

"You bet," said a big Irishman, "we'll be fightin' for *you*."

"Not me," said Van. "For sulphate-pulp."

"T'ell wit' sulphate-pulp!" said the Irishman. "You're the lad for our money. Hain't he, byes? . . . If you say fight, we fight—and we'll show you some scrappin', b'lieve me. We'll show it to you, and not to sulphate-pulp or ham and eggs or any other darn thing. Git that."

"That's the boy, Pat. That's the idea," came voices from the mass of men.

Yard would not have been human had he not responded to the compliment. To know that he had won a place among these men was much. Less than a year ago he had come to the woods—despised by the least of them, and he had fought his way not only to leadership, but to possession of their blind loyalty. It warmed his heart to know that his roughnecks were proud to work for him, boasted of their boss.

"All right, boys," he said, "and thank you. I'd rather you'd be fighting for something besides just me, but I'm mighty proud to know you *will* fight for me. . . . You've all seen the layout of the dam?"

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Yes."

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“Remember, the whole object is to get the gate-house and keep it. There’s where the scrap ’ll be. . . . The first man into the gate-house gets fifty dollars. If he gets the gates open he gets a hundred. . . . We’ll tackle them from this side—the woods run up closer. Fifty men will go downstream and come up the river through the underbrush. Fifty more will go with me to this end of the dam, and wait. When the valley crowd come in sight and are ready, we’ll both go at them at once.”

“Gawd! Can’t we let out one yell?” begged the Irishman.

“Not a peep, Garrity. You’ll have chance enough to yell, but you’ll find those buckos aren’t to be frightened much by noise. . . . You’ll boss the fifty men that come up the valley, Garrity. See that they come quietly and keep out of sight. . . . I don’t believe there are guns over there. It doesn’t seem like this would be a very good State to start a mess of shooting in. It ’ll be fists and clubs. Take pick handles and cant-dog handles, or whatever suits your fancy—and use ’em.”

“Use ’em,” says he.” Garrity laughed. “One wallop to the man, byes, that’s all. No wastin’ of stren’t. Me lungs is fair bustin’ with the yell that’s pent up inside me.”

“Save it,” said Yard.

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“You’d best keep out of the scrimmage,” said Garrity. “The byes won’t want you gettin’ damaged.”

Yard laughed aloud. It was the first time those men had heard him laugh for many weeks, and it was good to their ears. “Garrity,” said he, “how’d you like it if I ordered you to stay in camp?”

“You might order it, boss, but you’d have the devil’s own time makin’ the order stick.”

“Same here,” Yard said, almost merrily; “and you boys keep your eyes on Garrity and me. . . . See who’s the best man of us this day.”

The men laughed. They were a breed who went merrily to battle. In that moment Yard loved them, every rough, tough, hard-drinking, hard-living soul of them—and they knew it.

“Come on, then,” he said. “Garrity, take the men from Seven. We’ll give you twenty minutes to get down-stream, then we’ll start.”

“Beat it, byes!” Garrity roared. “Seven it is. Will we show these dudes from Eight what a scrap is? Eh? To-night they’ll be tippin’ hats to Seven.”

The Camp Eight men waited impatiently. The twenty minutes seemed an intolerable drag of hours, and then they started out silently. For a time they kept to the roads till they neared the

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dam, then they took to the screen of the woods and went as stealthily as such men can go. It was not a silent march, but it was subdued.

Yard had little hope of a surprise. With the dam guarded by professionals, pickets would have been set, and the pickets would know how to do their duty. A quarter of a mile from the commencement of the dam he halted his army.

‘Careful, now. Spread out,’ he said. ‘Don’t show your head when we come to the open.’

The march was resumed, more silently now. Presently the trees began to thin and the cover to become less thick. However, witch-popple and coverts of young spruce, slashings and underbrush, were in plenty to the very lip of the dam, and among these the men squirmed forward.

At last they stood where they could look down upon the great obstruction—that pile of stones and earth that had cost the Power Company a matter of two millions of dollars to erect across the valley. Fifty feet wide it was at the top, two hundred at the bottom, and from the valley’s floor it reared upward a hundred feet—a man-made mountain.

Under the dam they could see the houses of those who served the dam, and close by the tunnel’s mouth Yard pointed to the gate-house.

“There she is,” he said.

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A few men could be seen moving about the houses. At either extremity of the dam a man was posted, walking back and forth with ceaseless vigilance.

“No surprise to-day,” said Van. “It ’ll be fight from the word go.”

“Hustle up and say it,” muttered an impatient warrior. “We’re fifty to fifty. No need waitin’ for that other bunch.”

“No need, maybe, but they’ve earned their share in this. We can’t cheat ’em out of it.”

“Somethin’ movin’ down the valley,” said a man at Yard’s elbow.

Yard looked. There was unmistakable movement, hidden, he hoped, from the eyes of the watchers. But fortune was not with him. Suddenly a guard threw up his arm and shouted, shouted and began to run down the precipice of the dam. Instantly men boiled out of the largest of the houses. One man separated himself from them, bearing something in his arms. Yard could not see what, but he did recognize the man as Langlois. And Langlois deposited his burden on the ground and stood motionless beside it.

There was no reason for delay. The element of surprise was abolished.

“Go!” Yard shouted, and his fifty leaped to their feet and charged furiously down the hill.

CHAPTER XXII

THE postmaster came stumbling, staggering up the road to woods headquarters, his old legs, his age-enfeebled body, using the last remnant of their strength to carry him to the door, and he fell against it panting and exhausted. He kicked it, pounded on it with his fists, would have shouted, but there was no breath for that. Then suddenly he sat down, collapsed.

Svea came to the door. "Postmaster!" she cried, bending over him. "What is it? . . . What's the matter?"

"Yard!" he panted. ". . . Telephone. Quick!"

"Yes—yes. What shall I tell him? What's the matter?" In her anxiety she shook the little old man. His heart was beating with thumps that bade fair to burst it; the gulping breaths he drew permitted scant speech.

"Dynamite!" he said. "He's goin'—to rush—the dam. . . . Maybe—he's gone. . . . He don't know. Fifty men there. Tell him. . . . Langlois—got dynamite planted. . . . We saw it—on the stage."

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She had rushed to the telephone, was turning the handle of the old-fashioned instrument frantically. Central responded.

“Camp Eight—give it to me quick!” said Svea.

Then she waited. There was no response. Again she turned the little crank.

“I’m ringin’ them,” said Central. “They hain’t answered.”

“Ring them hard—hard.”

Still there was no response.

“Can’t git anybody to answer,” said Central. “Guess they hain’t there.”

“Keep on trying,” pleaded Svea. “It’s a matter of life and death.”

But it availed nothing. Camp Eight would not answer. It was not because the camp was deserted. Big John had talked to Yard a few moments before, and now Yard was making his brief speech to the assembled roughnecks. The insistent ringing of the telephone passed unnoticed, disregarded. These men had something to do now besides answer telephone calls. . . .

Svea dropped the receiver and ran to the door.

“Father!” she called. “Father!”

Nord came to the barn door, and in answer to her frantic summons started to run to the house. She gave him no chance to ask questions.

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“Van Yard is going to rush the dam,” she said. “To open the gates. . . . They’ve got fifty men there—and he doesn’t know it—and there’s dynamite. It’s set . . . Langlois!”

“That Frenchman ’ll use it, too,” said Nord. “My Gawd! Svea, what ’ll we do?”

“I tried to telephone, but I can’t get them. Maybe they’ve started. . . . We’ve got to warn him.”

“I’ll hitch up and—”

“No time for that. . . . We’ll take the short cut over the hills. That way we’ll save half an hour.”

“I’ll go. . . . Gimme my Mackinaw.”

“I’m going, too. One of us might—have something happen. I’m going—I’ve *got* to go, dad. . . . I couldn’t stay here.”

He did not try to dissuade her. In a moment she was ready in boots and Mackinaw.

“Hustle,” quavered the postmaster. “Git a move on.”

They started, swinging away from the road and heading for the dam through the woods, taking the straight line. “Hurry! . . . Hurry!” urged Svea.

“Save your breath,” snapped Nord.

Up the hill they scrambled, stumbling over rocks, worming their way over entanglements of slashings where there was no stable footing, only

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dead branches that broke under their feet. Along the slope they went, drenched now, mud-covered. They splashed through brooks, heedless of depth. Silently they went, every energy bent to making haste.

Svea kept abreast of her father, and he was urging himself to the utmost. It was no child's play, this, but grueling, exhausting labor, not without its painful aspects. Svea's hands were bleeding; a welt showed across her face where a suddenly released branch had punished her.

It was not a matter of one mile or two, and on the heights there still remained snow to impede their way. They floundered through it, pushing on, on, urging themselves beyond their normal strength.

The strain told. Nord, not in the best condition from weeks of comparative idleness, was puffing and in distress—he began to lag.

“Hurry! . . . Hurry!” urged Svea, and he quickened his steps. She did not lag. Even though each step seemed to spend the last effort of her body, she forced herself on.

Now they crossed the height of land and saw below them the dam, still distant. They would emerge at the opposite end of the structure from the one Yard was to attack. The sight of it encouraged them, gave them new strength, and they plunged downward. . . .

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They were running now, for they saw they were not too late. Then, down the valley, Svea caught sight of moving men. It was the fifty from Camp Seven. The attack was approaching. On the dam she saw the guards posted—facing the other way, for only from that direction was attack to be feared. . . . Now she was on the dam itself. The problem was to cross. Would she be allowed to cross?

Then she saw the guard throw up his arm, heard him shout, saw men pour into the open, Langlois among them, bearing a box in his arms. He ran apart and set his box on the ground. . . . Svea recognized it. She had seen it the day before on the seat of the stage. It was the electrical contrivance for loosing the dynamite.

“Dad!” she cried. “Langlois!—the battery!—there!”

Suddenly Yard and his men broke cover and charged.

“Quick, dad, that battery,” Svea pleaded, and Nord started again to run. Svea followed, but now she could not equal her father’s pace.

She saw him plunge down the face of the dam, run toward the threatened danger; saw him pause an instant near a pile of wood, and then run on, an ax in his hand. Breathlessly, hand pressed to

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heart, she watched—watched, too, the approach of Yard and his men.

At every step they might stand above that explosive—any instant Langlois's waiting hand might throw the switch. . . . But she could not shut her eyes. . . . Her father was close now, unobserved. All eyes were directed to the charging men. Fifty feet, thirty, ten, Nord had to go. . . . He was there, leaped tigerishly on Langlois, struck him mightily so that he staggered, tripped, fell. Svea cried aloud in exultation.

In that instant she was proud of her father. For the wrong he had done he was making payment, handsome, manly payment. Her eyes glowed as she saw him stand over the battery, legs braced, ax swinging about his head. A circle of men formed about him—not approaching too near. . . . She saw him move the wires that led to the dynamite, with his foot—he was spreading them apart. Then he brought down his ax twice, once for each wire; swung it aloft again, and the sound faintly reached her ears as he demolished battery and switch with a blow. . . . That danger was gone now, and her father had accomplished the thing. Her father!

She sank to the ground, trembling, watching the advance of Yard's men, watching her father. Something flew through the air—a stone. Her

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father staggered, but remained menacingly erect. Another missile found its mark; then a billet of wood, hurled from behind, brought him to his knees. . . . Then he disappeared under a mass of men. . . .

Svea covered her face.

CHAPTER XXIII

AS Yard descended upon the gate-house with his men at his back he took stock of the defenses—the visible defenses. These were simple, consisting of half a dozen strands of barbed wire supported by stout posts, which circled the gate-house. This would prove an unpleasant obstacle, narrow enough in its diameters to permit adequate defense by fifty men.

He saw Nord, without recognizing him, run down the face of the dam. What he did, the action of that moment, was hidden from him by surrounding figures, but these hurried away, sent by some order, and entered the stockade. From what cataclysm he had been saved Yard did not know.

The fifty from Camp Seven burst into the open, and it became a headlong race for the honor of reaching first the barrier and striking the first blow. There was no time for generalship here, Van recognized with regret. No order of his would stay his men, for the lust of battle was

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upon them, the scent of combat sweet in their nostrils. With a joyous tumult of war-cries in more than one tongue, the roughnecks roared down upon the mercenary defenders and battle was joined.

Over the barbed wire club met club, fighting-man met fighting-man, and the advantage lay with the defenders, for their numbers were adequate to the space occupied—with a small reserve. Yard's men impeded one another, for none would hang back to give another a chance. They did themselves more damage than they did the defenders, who fought methodically, in a business-like manner, and well earned their pay.

That the attack was futile Yard recognized, but he could not call his men off—not yet. They were being punished, but were taking their punishment greedily, struggling, snatching one another back to get closer to that barrier of wire. . . .

From the dam above Svea Nord looked down on that swaying, shouting, seething ring—then to the inert body of her father lying at a distance, and wondered what manner of created thing man might be; how he could cast off in a moment the inherited traditions of centuries, the accumulated restraints of generations of ancestors, and become a heartless, pitiless fighting creature, bringing the aid of every nerve and sinew to the task of bat-

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tering, beating to the ground other creatures of like form and semblance. . . . Her anxious eye could single out Van Yard, fighting as the rest, and she could not, did not strive to repress the thrill of exultation she felt in the prowess of the man—*her* man.

Slowly, grudgingly, snarlingly, Yard's men were driven back from the fence—to the length of a pick handle. They were beaten, could not reach their prey, safe behind that seemingly frail intrenchment. They were not joyous now, but morose, savage—preying animals balked of their meat.

“If you've got enough of it for a minute,” Yard shouted, “draw off.”

But it was not to be done without another charge. Again they beat vainly against that inner circle of men and wire; again were forced to give up the effort.

“Not much!” shouted Yard, putting command into his voice. “Here! To me!”

This time they obeyed. Brute force was defeated; generalship might try its hand.

“We can't get 'em while that wire stands,” Yard said, as they gathered about him, some bleeding, all tattered, bruised, bearing marks of the *mêlée*. “Got your mouths full of it? Ready to take orders now?”

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“Let her rip,” said the leader of Camp Seven’s fifty.

“They can hold us as long as that wire’s there. A dozen of you scatter and find planks or timbers—a couple of six-inch tree trunks ’ll do if you can’t find anything else. . . . Get a move on.”

The men hurried off on their errand, with jeers and catcalls following them from the ranks of the victorious defenders.

“Garrity,” said Yard, “when we get the stuff you go with your gang to the opposite side. I’ll take ’em here. If they get plank we can use it to flatten the wire down, and the timbers for battering-rams. Line up a dozen men to a timber and go at them where the wire’s out of the way. Don’t bother to stop and fight—your fellows back of you will tend to that. Smash through to the gate-house—it’s the gate-house we want—and open the gates.”

“Good man!” said Garrity. “’Tis a love of an ijea. ’Twill wor-rk.”

Curiously, jeeringly, the defenders watched the dozen men return with half a dozen two-inch planks and a couple of six-by-six sticks of good length.

“Slam your planks down hard,” said Yard, “and stand on them. Hold them down. Don’t let those fellows throw them out. . . . Then

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the men with the timber rush it. Go to it now."

Yard waited for Garrity to get into position, shouted, "Now!" and went at the wire again. His men slammed down their planks, ripping the wire clear off the posts and beating it to the ground. Then, obeying orders, they planted their feet firmly on the planks, holding them against the efforts of the defenders to heave them up and cast them away.

"Give it to them now!" Yard shouted, grabbing a place at the front of the gang holding the timber. "*Run!*"

Ten feet of hardwood protruded in front of them, a compelling ram, and there was no jeering from the defenders when it bore down on them. Straight through the opening Yard charged, and into the midst of them. There was no withstanding the rush, and a way was opened for them, but instantly the ram was past the defenders closed in, fighting mightily.

Yard's one thought was to scramble through the scrimmage to the clear space inside the circle—toward the gate-house. Clubs rose and fell, men grunted and cursed. More than one man was down, in danger of being trampled on by friend or enemy. Yard fought single-mindedly to force his way through. He did not care if he in-

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flicted damage or not; to get through was his business, and with fist and pick handle he strove to accomplish it. It was hard fighting, a press, squeezing the men at the center of it breathless. It was all but impossible to move, to raise arm to kick with foot—as impossible for those who tried to hurl out the attack as for those who attacked.

It was breast to breast, a jostle, hot breath mingling with hot breath. Fair play, the rules even of rough-and-tumble, which knows few rules, were cast aside. Men gouged, lifted knees wickedly against opposing stomachs, lashed out with heavy boots at exposed shins.

Slowly, very slowly, Yard wriggled and buffeted forward, was conscious of an urge behind him, and knew that the full weight of his fifty was thrown into the breach in the wire. They were pressing him on.

At last he shot out of the seething mass, as a log will dart out of a breaking log jam—out on the side he had fought to reach. He stumbled, fell headlong, leaped to his feet, unnoticed for the moment, for all behind him were occupied, and hurled himself toward the gate-house. Across the ring he saw that the other attack had failed, was halted, the ram thrown to the ground.

The door of the gate-house was shut, locked,

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but his calked boot sent it from its hinges. Inside he saw the engine that operated the gates, saw switches, levers, but, now that he had arrived, he did not know which one to touch, which one would work his purpose.

There was a single guardian—Pete, the jumping Frenchman—and Van recalled his peculiarity.

“*Pete,*” he shouted, imperatively, “*open the gates!*”

“Pete, open the gates. . . . Pete, open the gates,” repeated the man, mechanically, and mechanically threw a lever.

In an instant Yard was upon him; one heartily delivered blow disposed of that man for the day, and Yard stood waiting, listening. There was a roar as of an explosion, a rumbling, a swishing—the babel of pent waters suddenly released. From above Svea Nord saw a mass of yellowish white foam thrust its nose from the mouth of the tunnel, filling the channel from bank to bank, thundering, roaring downward. The gates were open, the waters released. The thing Yard had come to do was accomplished. . . . She gloried in his achievement. . . .

Yard stood until he was certain, then with a huge wrench he attacked the mechanism, smashing switches, controls, disabling the engine. When he was through no injunction issued by any court

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could close that dam; defeat of his men could not close it; however victory turned in the battle that roared outside, the objective had been reached. The gates of the dam would not close again for many a day.

Relief is unnerving after long strain. Suddenly Van felt puny, tired, weak, and steadied himself against the wall. Sulphate-pulp was safe; that fight was over, and the drive would go on. Pulp wood would ride to the mills on the breast of that flood, bringing safety to the enterprise, certainty of success.

He had done it—*he!* Memory flashed backward. He saw himself in a bums' lodging-house among other bums! Saw himself in the day of his degradation! The man he saw he did not recognize, perceived no relation with him in thought, motive, soul. He, Van Twiller Yard, was not that man. He was a *man*. He recognized it, was entitled to recognize it, for it was his reward. . . .

Sulphate-pulp! . . . It would live; it was annexed to his country, and he had done his part in the campaign. A deep breath of gratification, of realization, filled his breast; he stood erect before God and man, knowing that his work had been well done.

Then he plunged out again to do his part in

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what remained to be done. What followed was brief, not easy of accomplishment, but certain. Gradually, gradually, fighting well for their wage, the hired toughs gave way, their numbers decreasing as man after man was put out of the scuffle—and then they broke, broke and ran, and, running, were snatched up by panic and carried as though on wings. . . . The matter was concluded.

Van wasted no words on it. "Good job, men!" he shouted. "Garrity with his fifty stay here. The rest of you back to the railroad. The train's waiting. The drive's on. There's a day's work ahead yet."

There was no reason now why the men should not shout, and they did shout, those who were able, those who were half able, and even the wrecked men on the ground tried to add their bit to the sound.

"They won't be after comin' back," said Garrity. "L'ave me twenty-five men for good measure and take the rest. You'll be needin' thim."

"Right," said Yard. "Get a move on."

As he moved away Garrity gazed after him with eyes that glowed out of a battered countenance. "Hain't he the boss, byes, eh? Hain't he the boss?" he said, exultantly.

Following his men, Yard moved toward the railroad; halted suddenly, for there was a woman

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bending over a man's motionless body. She raised her face. It was Svea.

"You—" he said.

"Dad's hurt. Not badly, I think, but he's unconscious." She spoke calmly, surely. She was her old dependable self.

"Garrity!" shouted Yard, "man hurt here. Have him carried in and see to him."

"Mr. Yard," said Svea, hesitating over his name. "I—I want to say something to you. I—"

"Sorry, Miss Nord," said Van. "I can't listen now. The drive's on. I've got to get there." He hurried on.

She followed him with her eyes, proudly. "Yes," she said, "you must get there. It's your place to-day. Some other day will do for what I've got to say. It will keep—for it is eternal. . . . It will keep."

CHAPTER XXIV

BIG JOHN could not stay in his office, but went out alone to the point where the East Branch flowed into the mill-pond, and there he paced up and down with the uneasy prowling of an animal of action compelled to quiescence. He was like a boy waiting for a promised gift, a foretold event. To stand still was impossible; to think coherently was not within his power. He fidgeted, whittled wands and placed them at the water's edge; he walked to the first bend and peered upstream.

An office-boy, aware of his location, came hurrying with the word that a gentleman had arrived off the train to see him.

“My compliments to the gentleman,” snapped Big John, “and tell him to go to the devil. I’m busy.”

Ice in plenty remained along the river. Extending out from the shores were shelves of spray-coated, frozen snow whose perpendicular edges rose six feet above the surface of the dwindled

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stream—a miniature gorge. The stream itself was not clear, and farther up-stream Beaumont knew there were jams and heaps of ice that could still account for themselves unpleasantly. But the warm sun, the spring rains, had honeycombed it. Ice was no longer the blocks of adamant manufactured by months of weather that did not consider itself really doing its duty unless it forced the mercury of the thermometers to at least twenty degrees below zero.

Big John sat down on a rotting log, and because he was not trying to think, to reflect, to draw his mind away from the river, it drew itself away. Van Twiller Yard was the subject of his reverie. As though he were sitting in a darkened house, pierced by a shaft of light—a living paintbrush which painted upon a motion-picture screen a quick succession of scenes of action—he watched Yard's genesis in that region, followed him through his brief career, considered and weighed his actions and motives, estimated the difficulties of past, of character, of new environment that the young man had been called upon to subdue—and reached a decision.

If Yard succeeded this day, Beaumont would be potent to give due reward—and the manner of it was now determined; if Yard failed, Beaumont would be impotent to reward, but he and

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Yard would start again at the beginning, and would fight up together to snatch jointly new and different rewards. Of one thing he was certain: from that day forth Big John Beaumont and Van Twiller Yard would be joint endeavorers in whatever might offer for their hands to do.

It was a sound that aroused him—a new voice from the river, a *crescendo* attained by its rippling. He leaped to his feet and hurried to the brink. The water was lapping his wand. Not covering its foot, but lapping at it. Was it rising? He thought so, was uncertain. Excitement, the excitement of a man holding a lottery ticket at the moment of the drawing, took possession of him.

“Come on!” he said. “Come on, you!” The element of the race-track entered into the thing now. “Come on, you river—our money’s on you! Stretch your legs! . . . Get a hump on you!”

Then, around the bend came a line of white, boiling, rolling, foaming. Big John watched it with hands clenched. It raced toward him, a wave two feet high—forerunner of the rush of waters to come.

A meaningless, exultant shout burst from Big John’s throat. “He’s done it! . . . Bully for you, boy! She’s coming. . . . He’s got the dam! . . . Oh, you Van Yard! Oh, you boy!”

Upon the crest of the oncoming wave was

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something dark, cylindrical, that rolled and tossed and bobbed about crazily. It was a bolt of pulp wood—the first bolt of the drive. Big John leaped out, ankle-deep in the icy water, to seize it, his purpose to hold it forever as a memento of that day and of what had gone before to make that day possible. But it danced merrily away to float in lazy security on the still breast of the big pond.

The water came up with a surge and a rush, rising, rising, pouring itself down its miniature gorge like some huge serpent, living, undulating, hastening to a destination.

Now it was dotted with bolts of pulp wood. They came in shoals. Big John had never seen a sight to which he so reacted in terms of beauty. The thing was beautiful to him, more beautiful than palm-shaded oases, than many-tinted sunsets, than the ocean at dawn of a summer's day. . . . He had not thought himself an emotional man.

All day he watched that stream of pulp wood leap from the tongue of the flood into the placid pond, to ride there in security. Hourly he estimated in cords the quantity that had arrived, and as his figures mounted, as hundreds of cords grew to thousands, he could scarcely contain himself.

He would have tried to reach Van Yard, to

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shout congratulations in his ear over the wire of the telephone, but he well knew where Yard would be, that Yard would welcome no interruption; so his thanks were pent up in him, suppressed, compressed until his powers of retention were taxed.

At seven o'clock he called Yard at Camp Four. No one responded but the cook.

"She's not here. Dose men she's all on dat drive, by gar!" said that functionary. "She's stick by heem till hell freeze, I t'ink. Me, I make coffee, coffee. *Oui*. He orders it. Barrels, maybe hogsheads of coffee I made dis day."

They were still at it, not pausing, not satisfied to have done three days' work in one, but must stretch it to four.

At nine o'clock Big John called again. "She's work wit' lantern now," said the cook. "I t'ink she's never stop, me."

It was half past ten when he succeeded in getting Yard on the wire, and Yard was weary.

"Boy—" said Big John, and stopped because adequate words wouldn't come. . . . "I— Oh, come down here where I can say it to you. I can't do it without seeing you. Come to-morrow morning."

"Can't do it. Got to finish the drive," said Yard.

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“Come when you can, then, but make it quick. . . . I’ll bust. I want to tell you how you stack up with Big John Beaumont. And I want to hear all about it. Think I haven’t any curiosity?”

“Day after to-morrow,” said Yard. “Good night.”

Next morning Svea Nord called Big John from woods headquarters. “When—when will Mr. Yard be through? When can I—see him?”

“To-morrow. He’ll be down to-morrow. . . . Something special?” he asked, quizzically.

“Something very, very special,” said Svea, and Beaumont recognized the happiness in her voice.

“To-morrow’s the day for settling things up with him,” he said, gaily. “I got a few things to say to him myself. . . . You’re invited, but you can’t have him till I’m through with him. Come to the office and I’ll give you a comfortable place to wait.”

“Thank you,” she said. “I’ll wait till—till you can give him to me.”

“For keeps?” Big John chuckled.

“For keeps,” she said, softly.

“Hurray!” Big John almost shouted. “I’m going to do something for him myself—but I’m afraid he won’t think much about it—when I turn him over to you. No gift of man can equal

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what you will give. . . . I know," he said, gravely. "But you can't have all of him. I want some."

"All," she responded. "Every bit. I won't give up a speck of him. . . . Good-by."

"Good-by, my dear," said Big John, feeling, somehow, as if a son had brought him a most winsome, desirable, lovable new daughter.

Presently a caller was announced, a man whose purpose and identity astonished Big John and whose business kept him much occupied throughout the day.

Late next morning Van Twiller Yard came diffidently into the office. His work was done for this emergency; success had been his. Sulphate-pulp was born, more than born, was taking sturdy steps in the world—and he, the certain, the dynamic, the driver of men, dreaded to face the thanks he knew would be offered. What awaited him more than thanks, he did *not* know. That in a room adjoining Beaumont's there had waited for him since early morning a young woman with blue eyes, strangely bright—bringing him the best of gifts—he did not dream.

Big John sprang up at his entrance, planted a heavy hand on each shoulder, and held him away so that he could look well upon him.

For a moment he did not speak. Words were no readier than they had been over the telephone.

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“How did you do it all, boy?” he said at last. “How did you do it all?”

Yard smiled diffidently. “Somebody had to do it—it had to be done. . . . Sulphate-pulp, you know.”

“You rained down from heaven,” said Big John. “The emergency demanded the man—and, by heck!—it got him! . . .” Then, whimsically: “But you didn’t look like manna when you landed, boy. . . . I can see you now. The worst bum of the lot—but with something in you no other bum ever had.”

“Not *in* me,” said Yard. “It wasn’t there when I came—but I came, without knowing I was doing it, to The Source of the thing you mean. . . . From the first I drank from The Source. It was the woods, the hills, the *real* things, the things that have a right to be, that gave me what I got out of it.”

“The Source,” said Big John; “that’s it, The Source. And I saw the miracle! But didn’t The Source have help—a little help—from *somebody*?”

Yard’s face clouded. “Great help,” he said. “Without her even The Source could not have done it.”

“Um!” grunted Big John. “Now, son, sit down and tell me about it—the row at the dam. I’ll bet it’s a bully yarn.”

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So Yard told him the thing succinctly, in a business-like manner, as one would recount a feat of salesmanship, a mere incident to the day's transactions; but Beaumont was able to visualize it all, to see it as it had happened, and to respond to it with the fighting spirit of him.

"Bully!" It was his favorite word. "Now for a little necessary business. Our board of directors met yesterday and inquired into your conduct of the woods. We did considerable business—considerable. . . . Here's a resolution we adopted: 'Resolved,'" he read from a paper on his desk, "'that, in consideration of the services of Van Twiller Yard, woods foreman of this company, and its present treasurer'"—Yard bent forward suddenly and stared—"a block of stock of the par value of one hundred thousand dollars be transferred to him on the books of this company, and the certificates handed him at the earliest opportunity, together with an expression of this company's thanks for his efficiency and ability when efficiency and ability were most needed by it.' They were darn unanimous about it, too," said Beaumont.

"I—treasurer—a hundred thousand," Yard said, nonplussed at last, blushing, stammering like a yokel.

"Treasurer—and general manager—that's to

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be the title. Me, I'm going to sit in a private office and loaf and smoke and watch the wheels go 'round. You're *it*."

"But a hundred thousand—"

"Suppose you dropped a bundle of bills—a million dollars—on the street, and somebody worked like the devil to get them back to you; wouldn't it be worth a ten-per-cent. commission? You're shoutin' loud it would. . . . Besides, a young fellow needs quite a pile to marry on, these days," Big John chuckled.

"I'm not—going to be married, Mr. Beaumont," said Yard, dully.

"Huh!" grunted Big John, but added nothing to it. "We've got to see a man for a few minutes, and then I want to show you your new office—it's right through that door."

He pressed a button and an office-boy responded.

"Ask Mr. Withey if he will step in now," he said.

Presently a man, past middle life, with smooth, intelligent, whimsical, shrewd face, appeared in the door. He was tall, though a little rounded at the shoulders, very neatly dressed in garments made by no tailor's apprentice. Yard looked at him, found something vaguely, elusively familiar about him, but could not give him a place in his memory.

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“Mr. Withey—Mr. Yard,” said Big John.

Withey’s eyes twinkled. “Calc’late,” he said, in a voice and diction manifestly not in keeping, not belonging to his exterior—“calc’late I’m dog-gone glad to see you again, son. Hain’t got any new magazines, have you? Eh? Need some powerful bad. Read up all I got. . . . Last one had a dum’ good yarn in it, too. I sat alongside the stove and read off that story from the pictures as easy as anythin’. Dunno what I’d do, son, if ’twa’n’t for them lit’ry pursoots.”

“*Sim-sam!*” exclaimed Yard, and their two hands gripped.

“Mean trick to play on you and Mr. Beaumont, wasn’t it? But I couldn’t very well tell you. Government had an eye on your business, you see. Since the war we’ve had a load of trouble with hyphenated gentlemen of different breeds and have got so we keep a pretty close eye on them. . . . Wouldn’t have got this thing, though, if the postmaster hadn’t spotted it and written letters about it. Shrewd old codger. So they sent me on the job.”

“You mean—”

“Work for Uncle Sam, yes. . . . And between the postmaster and me—and you—we’ve landed ’em. Got Holmquist now, and Langlois—on that little dynamite matter. Ekstrom is, or

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will be to-day, under indictment for conspiracy and other small matters. So you don't have to worry about that crowd any more."

"I feel," said Yard, slowly, "as if a good friend were dead."

"Not a bit. Just changed his skin. I hope you'll find Withey's as good a man as Sim-sam was."

"I'll miss him," said Yard.

"Now," intervened Beaumont, "Yard's got to be shown his office. There'll be lots of time for you men to talk after that. Right through this door, Yard."

Big John opened the door, shoved Yard through, and closed it again. Then he and Withey waited with such expressions as men wear when they've done something that pleases themselves very much.

Svea sat near the window. Yard was looking into her eyes before he realized she was there. He stopped abruptly. Svea arose and came toward him.

"Oh, Van," she said, softly, "Van!"

He stood uncertain, not moving, not speaking.

"I know," she said—"everything. . . . Why, oh, why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you defend yourself?"

Still he made no reply, only stood staring at

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her, not able to comprehend, not able to realize or to believe.

“Have I got to say it, Van? . . . It’s hard for a girl to say.” She came very close to him, her hands touching the lapels of his coat. “Don’t you want me? . . . Won’t you take me? . . . I don’t know what will become of me if—you send me away . . . because I love you, Van. I love you.” She hid her face against his coat.

It was not by words that Yard responded—but presently he found his voice, haltingly. “All the rest of it wouldn’t have mattered—without you,” he said.

“Poor boy!” She touched his cheek with light fingers. “I made you suffer—when I should have *known*. Instead of trusting you—I believed—what I believed. . . . True and trustworthy! It makes me want to cry . . . but there mustn’t be any tears to-day, dear.”

“Nor ever, for you.”

“You will never cause me one,” she said, simply.

Suddenly he picked her from her feet and held her up before his eyes; his face was alight; full realization had come; and her heart leaped with gladness to hear the care-free joyousness of his laugh—for he laughed. She knew it was his first attempt at laughter for months.

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“I must tell somebody,” his voice sang. “I want everybody to know. I can’t keep it. . . . Oh, Svea! . . . Svea! It’s true?”

She assured him efficiently of the truth of the marvel.

“Tell me again. Tell me over and over,” he demanded. . . . And then: “I can’t keep it. I’ll go to the window and shout it to anybody in sight. I’ve got to tell it.”

She struggled away from him, laughing, and opened the door. “Tell them,” she said, “but it won’t be fresh news, I’m afraid.”

Yard drew her into the other room, holding her close, as if in fear she might slip away from him, become immaterial, a wraith, if he loosed her. Big John and Withey stood grinning at him.

“Boss,” said Yard, “thanks for that hundred thousand. I’m going to need every cent of it.”

“Sort of figured you would,” chuckled Big John. . . . “Hain’t it a thing to see?” he demanded, turning to Withey.

“The finest sight in the world,” said Sim-sam—and Van Twiller Yard was in perfect agreement with that estimate.

THE END

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