

Sergeant Jimmy's Hunch

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Charles Dorian

JIMMY Linedare was told to go to Blanche Riviere and recruit the rebels.

"That town's impossible," he objected. "But I'll take a whack at it just the same. I know I can't do it alone but I've a hunch I'll get help when I need it—it's never failed me yet."

"That's why I'm sending you, Jimmy," said his Captain. "Everybody knows you're the best riverman in this part of the country. It's not so long since you broke the jam at Grande Fourchette with the help of a trivial little earthquake. They know it at Blanche Riviere, too, and they're that darned superstitious they'll begin to see things the minute you arrive."

"Oh, I guess I've got a few hunches all right," chirped Jimmy, pleased enough to be sent where two other recruiting sergeants had failed.

"How did they begin?" asked the Captain. "I don't think I've ever heard of the original one."

"Oh, that," smiled Jimmy, fidgeting. He wanted to get on with the business in hand, not to be explaining the favors of over peculiar providence. "It was a wild bull chasing me across a forty-acre field in a thunderstorm and when he was about to launch his spring offensive he was struck by lightning."

Blanche Riviere had stood back with complacent pride in its anti bellum policy while the war went on month by month and the richest of Canadian manhood sprang to the colors with patriotic zeal. It probably was unique in not having sent a single man to serve his country.

It was not their war, they maintained, so why should they fight? They would not be drawn into the maelstrom that was bearing to destruction the male support of the nation. Theirs was the modest belief that the day was coming when the men of Blanche Riviere would be the only fit men in Canada left to reorganize the depleted ranks for defence—of they knew not what.

These men numbered about two hundred, able-armed and fleet of foot. They dwelt in the woods during winter and followed the river in spring, that is, all except those in business in the little village itself.

It was the late springtime when the white-breasted moose birds winged their flight to colder climates and the robin and the wren took possession of the green boughs.

The drive was over and these men loitered around, creating amusement not always harmless, making at times a troublesome event of the village constable's duty.

Wickers, the constable, was glad to see Jimmy. He shared his office in the corner of the jail with him and promised to "join up" as soon as Jimmy gave the word.

Jimmy handled his task with such diplomatic skill that not a few declared for him.

"He doesn't say a word about signin' ye on," declared Jackson, the village tailor. "Just tells about the job they're up against in France and how they're drivin' the Germans out inch by inch and how the fellows in the West are standin' by ready to go help when called. Makes a fellow kind o' wish he was over there helpin' some, too."

The insidious seed was falling on fallow ground to the amazement of the rabid Stay-Outers. Street orators sprang up to denounce this newcomer as a serpent in the grass. Would his mushy talk turn them who had declared to keep out of it? Could they not see that his words were as poison? This straight-legged youngster must be sent about his business as the others had been. A meeting would be held on Wednesday evening to count noses for the cause. The details of that meeting need not be divulged. It showed that probably seventy-five per cent only were staunch to the old resolution. A clash of factions was imminent to see just how many Jimmyites there were who could still be saved.

Jimmy spoke to Jackson quietly and cautioned him to keep his followers from open rioting.

"See them one by one and tell them to keep out of street fights. I don't care if I have to go away from here without a

single recruit. I don't want them unless they think it's right to come. And when they're ready to come I'll be ready to sign them up."

"What's this dope in the paper about you not losing anything you set out to do? We all heard about that jam bustin' when you was alone on the logs with a cant hook when all of a sudden the whole pile collapsed and the earth shook so that men on the banks of the river fell over. Seems as if it's a habit of yours gettin' the elements to work for you in a pinch."

"It's all true, Jackson," said Jimmy, solemnly. "I came here to recruit the whole town of Blanche Riviere. I'm not telling everybody that. I'm telling you because I know you're with me and know why I'm doing it. I don't know how it's going to turn out but I've got a hunch that the Stay-Outers will join up when the time comes. You fellows keep quiet. Don't call any public meetings. You tell Bill and ask him to tell Sam, and so on, to keep by themselves. Tell them when they want company badly to go with a Stay-Outer and talk nice to him. The question will come up sure enough and if you speak canny you'll get the other fellow thinking right. I don't say there won't be a fight. If there is we'll trim them—but let them start it."

"We'll try it, anyway, Jimmy," promised Jackson.

Blanche Riviere nestled in a valley

wanted to go at once. Every time Jimmy went back there were more to hear his story of a heartless enemy and the need of men to beat him down. One day he said to them:

"If you will come to Blanche Riviere tomorrow very early in the morning I will have a uniform for each of you and some excitement besides."

The uniforms had arrived that day, three hundred of them. They came in response to a letter Jimmy had sent his Captain. The Captain had written a week before in this strain:

"I'm glad to see you are sticking to Blanche Riviere. There is no hurry about results but I'd be blamed glad to get a word from you."

Jimmy replied: "I'm still on the job and have every eligible man measured for a uniform. He doesn't know it, however, thanks to Jackson, my trusty lieutenant. (Big talk for a Sergeant, eh? But, then, I've a Captain's job.) Some may refuse to don the uniform but I've a hunch you won't get many back."

Events moved fast the day the Indians went to Blanche Riviere at five in the morning. The little jail was a hive. One cell of three was set apart for the medical officer while Constable Wickers administered the oath, and Jackson helped Jimmy make soldiers of all who passed the doctor. Jimmy explained to them that all they had to do was to walk erect and keep step and salute him. When they went to the Central recruiting station they would be taught all the rest.

The Stay-Outers had been holding

indicating a blackeyed, sleek individual, "you go light him up. Six men go wid you. Be ready. Everybody else, you know what to do. Go quiet. Get the constable first—he's got a gun. Then the Jimmy fella. Better Joe Chevrux and Bill Belanger come wid me for the cute work at de jail. The rest o' you ketch the Jimmyites as they come out from dinner and get 'em to de dock. Watch out for de Indians."

Jimmy was careful to warn the Indians that no roughneck work was to be done.

"They're same as you and me; they're coming along with us but they may put up a strong front before they see we're all of a family going to fight an enemy that butchers papooses and steals women. Just stick around with our friends and when the others show fight take away their clubs and bring them to Wickers. Seven men will stay with me at the office to stop any trouble there."

He went over these instructions slowly and painstakingly so that all would understand perfectly. He had not heard of the plot to capture the Jimmyites that very day and so left himself open to surprise. He and Wickers arrived at the jail early after dinner to see Lalonde sitting on the step, apparently alone.

The jail had a ten foot wall around it running thirty feet on each side. While Lalonde sat on the steps his aides were only fifteen feet away, just around the corner.

Wickers warned Jimmy to watch out for treachery when he caught glimpse of Lalonde, and feeling for his weapon he indicated that he was taking no chances.

Lalonde grinned as they neared him and said he guessed he'd better sign up since it was the custom. Wickers kept an eye on him while he unlocked the jail door. But he was not prepared for the agility of that cat. Lalonde dropped on all fours and got a clinch on Wickers' legs before he could step aside. His balance gone he stumbled against Jimmy and both fell. Two quick jumps brought the others from the fence, and seven Indians raced down the street to the rescue. Lalonde wrenched the gun hand of Wickers so that it was powerless. Jimmy was seized by the others and in a jiffy he and Wickers were locked up in their own jail. A horde of Stay-Outers swarmed from nowhere and after a brisk encounter swept the Indians, along with Jackson and two others who had come to Jimmy's aid, off toward the dock, scuffling, limping and howling like dogs in a net.

The whole village was on the qui vive. The women were about equally divided in their sympathies, while the storekeepers wished only for peace and fat prosperity. The news spread rapidly that Jimmy and Wickers were locked up and the village was in the hands of rioters. Women and girls frowned at the fate of Jimmy, who was a nice, upstanding, bright and cheerful fellow. It almost made them wish their men were more like him. Those who were keen for freedom from military enslavement half regretted that they were out of sympathy with the rest of the country. They knew in their law-abiding hearts that trouble would come of this outburst against authority, that it could be only a temporary gain and then jail for the offenders.

Wickers' wrist was badly sprained and Jimmy bound it up for him. Then they talked of escape. The windows were securely barred and the door had no visible hinge that could be taken off. Presently more Indians began to arrive excitedly with tales of bludgeoning and capture and begged leave to use knife or gun.

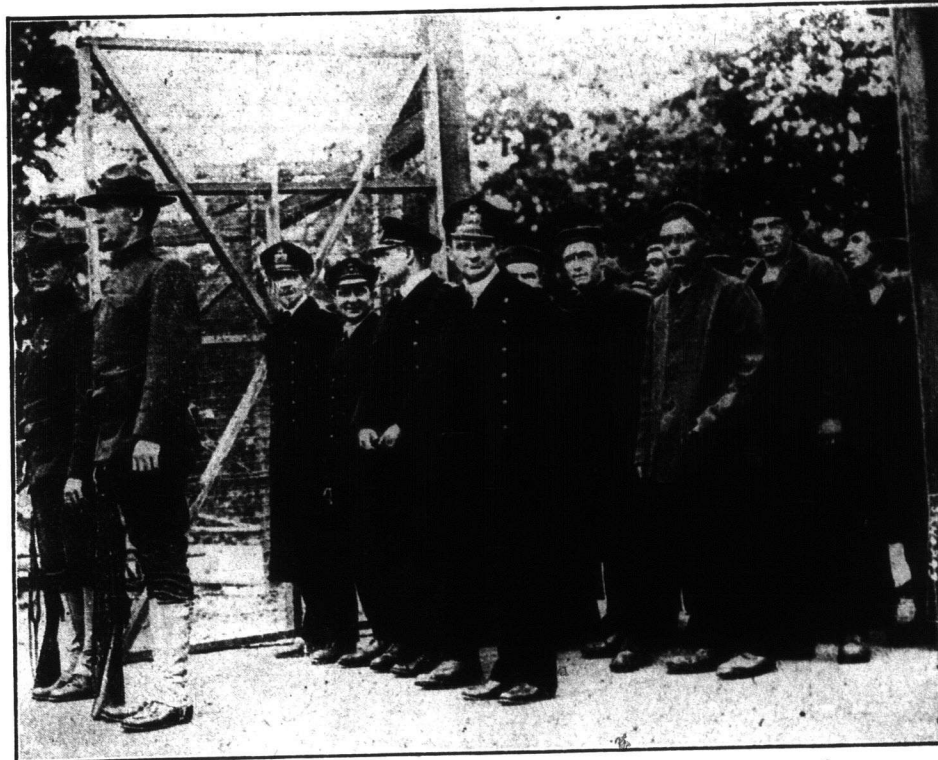
"No, none of that kind of fighting," warned Jimmy through the bars. "Just go get a good heavy crowbar and pry off two or three of these bars till we get out."

The strangest sound that had ever fallen on the hearing of Blanche Riviere now held the whole populace enthralled. It was martial music. They could not see by what produced but it existed and was coming nearer. Eyes strained in the direction of the road leading to the village from the west and skirted off toward the station.

Jimmy grinned at Wickers. "What is it?" asked the latter.

"My hunch," said Jimmy. "Where the devil it comes from, I don't know, but that's a silver band of not less than thirty pieces, and listen! By all that's holy, there's a regiment of infantry behind it."

Stalwart men they were who marched



The captured officers and crew of the German submarine U-58 are shown here just inside the first barbed wire gate at Fort McPherson, where they will be held in the war prison camp. They were made captives when the Jackies rescued them from the sea after the destroyer Fanning sank the submarine. The officers in the group guarded by Marines are Capt. Gusatav Auberger, Lieut. Otto von Ritgen, Lieut. Frederick Muller and Warrant Officer Henry Ropke.

about a mile from the Transcontinental railroad as the crow flies. The river ran crookedly through it so that the main street crossed two bridges. Hills bristling with giant Canadian pine guarded the village on two sides; the river fed and bled it. A trunk road ran diagonally from the railroad station to the village, paralleling the track for half a mile. Supplies arrived by boat from the depot as the shortest route.

Indian Reserves are often obstacles to town builders. One of them lay between Blanche Riviere and the railroad. A siding ran down to the water's edge from the main line and there logs were loaded for shipment by rail. One day, perhaps, the Reserve will be opened for exploitation and a mill erected there. Just now Blanche Riviere suffers from the isolation that favors the first citizens of the land.

Jimmy spent a portion of his time daily on the Reserve. There he spoke to the idle youths and fired them with the story of a great fight. He watched with keen satisfaction the kindling flame in their amber eyes; he envied their stalwart poise. Here were soldiers of the finest. He hoped he had Indian blood in him because he thought the true Canadian had the native bravery of the Indian, who in his most barbaric state was never the soulless savage the modern Prussian is.

The Indians responded nimbly. They

numerous street corner meetings and publicly declared that at the first sign of actual recruiting Jimmy would go. In secret the men were coached in the measures to be taken. They were to fashion handy clubs on the pattern of a policeman's baton. And when the word was given by their leader, Xavier Lalonde, they were to band together and seize the secessionists and bear them off up the river to a deserted camp where guard would be kept over them until they came to their senses and renounced all traffic with the would-be soldiery.

Jimmy had his twenty-seven Indians in uniform before the Stay-Outers were fully awake. The Jimmyites were out in force, too, but no attempt was made to enlist them. This had the Stay-Outers guessing.

After a heavy dinner of soup, pork and beans and raisin pie, Xavier Lalonde declared his intention of taking the bull by the horns.

"Now, it's dis way, boys," he harangued his crowd. "The lumber company, she's behind us. Men's goin' to be hard to get and wages good if we stick. Compraw? All we got to do is take the tug, 'Sonsie' and Iack him up to de biggest scow on de rivaire, and load our baggage." here he grinned and the crowd applauded. "Load our baggage on de scow and hike for dem place by de bush. Now, Pete Forget."