

Halycon looked at him anxiously and the other man interpreted the look.

"No! friend," he said, "I'm not off my head, but that heat has burned into my brain all day and I feel it yet. It was just a while ago that I crawled in. It was torture but I couldn't die in that sun."

Halycon moved over to look at him more closely, but the prostrate man waved him back.

"Don't look!" he groaned. "I'm not nice to look at. I was once. At least she said so. I was white, Eastern, groomed and the rest! You know it all. But the rocks have disfigured what the sun, wind and rain had left."

Clive poured out a can of coffee and set it by him. He put the pot on again and lay down beside the fire.

The wounded companion raised his one uninjured arm with difficulty and took a sip of the hot liquid.

It seemed to clear his voice a little. "Women beat the dickens!" he said for the third time. "Did you ever find one that was everything in the whole world to you?"

"Once!" Halycon answered. "That's why I'm here."

"We're a pair! I am here because someone is dear to me. If I did not love her so well I would now be marrying her instead of roaming here."

"What?" Clive asked in wonderment.

"We were engaged for three years," the stranger explained. "I have found out that she does not care."

"Yet she would marry you?"

"Yes, but I love her too well. In the spring, when I saw how things were, I took my canoe and headed for this wilderness, leaving a letter which released her from the engagement. I have been here ever since."

"You are from where?"

"Ottawa. It is hard, stranger, to cherish a dream for three years and then have it slip from your heart."

Halycon's thoughts were far off. He was thinking of his own case. He had dreamed of a love for three months and the awakening was gall. For the moment he forgot his companion. He was back in dreamy, lake-starred, mountain-domed Banff once more. He could hear the hill-songs and the cataract-tunes which they both loved. He could picture the girl in all her loveliness as his soul remembered her. Then had come the night of bitter disenchantment!

A groan abruptly broke his dream. "Friend, give me more coffee!" The tone was weaker.

Halycon obeyed and the pain-shattered voice went on:

"Three years! That awful rapid!" The breathing thickened. The man's mind was really gone now. He raved irrationally.

"Awful sun!" he moaned. "Alice, are you there? Here's a friend who has been good to me. When did you get back from Banff?"

Halycon leaped up at the words and caught his breath.

"What?" he cried. "Say that again!"

"Alice, I couldn't marry you. Since you came back you don't care. That awful sun! Say, partner, how did you—miss—the eddy? I've been three years on the rapid. That coffee is good. Thank you, Alice. No, my brain burns. Where—is—the shade?"

The broken ravings of the man's delirium continued. Halycon moistened the baked lips. With the faltering words had come a great revelation and Clive felt a surge of shame at heart. He was the one who had wrecked this man's love-dream. He reproached himself but that could not change anything.

"Good-bye, Alice!" the voice whispered. "It's dark—and no sun! Partner, I say—it's over!"

The last word was but a gasp. A sickening convulsion ran through the frame. Halycon stood looking at the quiet form and the tears dripped down his tanned cheeks.

Then the thought of his obligation to the dead arose. He could not take the body with him, for though the hardest portages were over there were still long ones to make. If his path had been clear waterway it would have been different. Clive smoothed the limbs as naturally as possible, ready for burial, and with his camp-spade dug a narrow grave where the shingle lay piled in a nook of the rocks. He took what few papers and things were in the clothes and bound them carefully together to return to the dead man's friends when he should find them on communicating with Alice Blendon. Engraved upon the sheath of the hunting knife, Clive read the name Charles Hooper.

In a coffin of soft fir branches Halycon laid the body to rest, murmuring a prayer ere he covered it. There in the depths of the wild northland, Charles Hooper found his tomb, and if he could have spoken from the silence perhaps he would have approved. He was laid away in the heart of God's unsoiled country with the wind and wave to sing his requiem, with the moaning pines, whose voices of grief last longer than human sighs, to mourn beside his grave, with the virgin forest for a sacred abbey and with the tribute of great soul to great soul. What, in earthly passing, could be better?

At the camps on the Montreal, Clive told his story. The partner of Lewis confirmed his belief that the dead man was the lone prospector. He remembered now, when the name was mentioned, that the man had called himself Charles Hooper during his two days' stay in the Montreal camps before he pushed on to meet death in the wilderness.

But the partner of Lewis did not know it was the false Charles Hooper whom he had seen.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TEN days after Halycon left for the North the bubble, which was in substance CONSOLIDATED DIAMOND COBALT, burst. There was, however, no hue and cry throughout the country. Losers, ashamed of their imprudence, said not a word. In large cities men who had plunged heavily in the watered stock never admitted they had held a cent in the company's shares. It was through no investigation or suspicion of the public that the bubble burst. Public confidence is so serene, so sanguine and so sympathetic that instinctive cunning and innate wariness show forth only after it is too late. There was a man in Cobalt, though, who was watching the proceedings of the company, and it was through him that the swindle was exposed. Robert Ridgeley pricked the bubble of the gang which he had seen operate in mining camps other than Cobalt by airing the "salt" in a weekly letter to the journals. Coming from such a man as Ridgeley, there was no one but knew it was gospel truth, and when a judicial investigation into the affairs of the CONSOLIDATED began, no officer or director of the company was to be found. Theodore, Freeman, Giles and their tool, Jacob Graham, had secretly and hastily departed from Cobalt. Jasper and Jasper had been wise enough, moreover, to lay plans to make themselves safe should their scheme be exposed. They had acted but as ordinary solicitors to an apparently wealthy mining company which engaged their services. Further than that, they knew nothing. They were in no way responsible for the sound or unsound financial condition of the concern, their connection being a purely legal one. So Jasper and Jasper put themselves about not one whit to escape the law as the others had. For them it was unnecessary to do so.

In the large cities, where one knows so little of his neighbour's life, those who lost in the broken CONSOLIDATED could not be easily specified on account of their reticence, but in a small village place, where every inhabitant knows the goings and comings of everyone else, facts like these were open as the day. All persons in the Humber village and surrounding community knew that Henry Thurston was a ruined man and that the Thurston place was mortgaged to the last red cent within a week after the news of the bubble-bursting reached the village. Gossip ran rife and the few enemies of the Thurstons found a fine opportunity of making sarcastic comments and wise reflections. But neither the comments nor reflections altered the case. Henry Thurston was down! The foot of misfortune had trampled heavily. The CONSOLIDATED mined not in silver, calcite, galena, copper or sulphides, but in savings and bank accounts, and the money for allotments did not line their shafts with timber. Instead, it lined the pockets of the men behind the mine. Their bubble had been pricked at last, but not before the pockets were bulging.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE streaming afternoon sun of autumn, coming through the vines of the open bay-window, struck aslant Jean Thurston's hair and lighted it all to golden radiance where she stood.

"Mr. Jasper," she was saying, "this is the last time I shall answer that question, and my answer is a decisive 'No!' I forbade you to re-open the subject. It is most embarrassing for me, and, I should think, humiliating to you. I do not want to wound you, but it can never, never be."

Jasper's eyes gleamed maliciously and the blood rose to his face. Along with his many vices he possessed a stubborn pride, and it nettled him that this country girl disposed of his suit with such queenly indifference.

"That is your final decision?" he asked. "You cannot, of your free will, marry me?"

"My final decision!" she answered with emphasis.

"Then I must change that will," Jasper declared. "Since your will is not free I must force it."

Jean Thurston laughed contemptuously. "You talk like the proverbial villain in the play," she said. "I suppose you thought because we have lost nearly all we had that I would rush at the chance of marrying a rich lawyer. Thank you, no! I want neither you nor your money. There is somewhere on the round of this earth a brave, true heart worth all the thousands you can pile together."

"It is Glover. Curse him!" Jasper burst out unthinkingly.

"That will do, sir!" Jean said, going swiftly to the door.

Her hand was on the knob when Jasper cried: "Wait one moment! I have something I wish you to see. I beg pardon for my expression. I forgot myself."

"Be very, very brief," she said coldly. He drew from his pocket a folded paper.

"I ask you once more to marry me. If you refuse, you know the inevitable." He had opened the paper out and held it in his hands before her eyes. It was the mortgage on the Thurston place.

Jean shrank with a cry, but recovered herself imme-

(Continued on page 26.)



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