

a groan of utter misery buried his face in his two hands.

The phonograph whirled and stopped. A draught caused the lamps to flare and smoke and—

"Up with yer paws, yer louts!" came a harsh, nasal voice.

North awoke with an inarticulate shout and sprang toward the door, where two muffled figures were standing with levelled pistols. The loggers had jumped to their feet and a few were obeying the order. But the boss was not of this number. For all his big frame he had a brain and body trained for sudden action, and scarcely had the words left Bud's mouth before he was charging recklessly down the camp. Luckily for him the stranger was nearer the door, and as Lefty's finger contracted on the trigger he threw himself between them. At the report he pitched on his face, and McKnight, clearing his body without a pause, was upon the robbers before they could fire again. Lefty went down before the knotted fist as if he had been struck by a peavie, and though Bud made an effort to dodge, was caught by an arm and crumpled violently to the floor. A dozen rough hands made further resistance impossible.

Then the boss dropped beside the man who had interposed and gently raised his head. The bullet had bored through his left side, close to the heart, and it was plain the wound was a mortal one.

"I'm done for, Hugh," announced the tramp without emotion.

The boss started. "By jove, it's Angus North!" and he stared in amazement at the wreck of his one-time friend.

"Sure thing. Come back ter stay." "An' jest in the nick o' time, too. He'd have winged me, I guess, if yer hadn't got in the way."

The woodsman is not demonstrative, and the tone rather than the words evidenced the gratitude he felt for the act. North's weak features suddenly hardened.

"Don't fool yourself. It was for her sake I done it. I had meant them ter kill yer, but—but that pesky phonograph got me all balled up an' I butted in 'fore I knew what I was erbout. Give me a drink someone."

The cook ran for a mug of water, and McKnight held him higher as he drank.

"I had no idea yer held a grudge against me, Angus. I only did my duty

that night, and I've been tryin' ter do it ever since. Madge made me write to all the folks I knew in the States to try and find out where you were. She'll be mighty glad to hear you're back."

North's features relaxed as pleasure faded the pain from his eyes.

"Is that straight, Hugh?" he cried weakly.

"God's my witness. She was certain you'd return some day, when you'd got a grip on yourself, an' she's been waitin' an' lookin' for you ever since."

"An' she ain't your—your—"

"Shucks, no! She said she'd never talk to another 'til she'd seen if you still wanted her. She's believed in you all erlong."

"Thank God!" groaned the penitent wretch, sinking back with closed eyes.

After a moment he began to speak again.

"An' here I've been plannin' for five years to get even with yer, Hugh, thinkin' you had taken her from me. I reckon there is a God after all."

"You better keep quiet now, old man," said McKnight gently. "They've telephoned for the doctor. He'll patch you up as fit as ever."

"No, I'm done for. Do yer mind givin' me your hand? That feels good—just like old times, Hugh."

There was silence in the camp for a while. The loggers stood motionless, staring at the floor, and even the two criminals respected the solemnity of the occasion. Then North drew his friend nearer.

"You still love her, eh?"

"Don't ask me that."

Well, if anyone deserves her it's you. Tell her I said that, will you? An' I'm right glad I came back to clear things up."

"But it's you she wants. You've got ter live, old man."

"Thank God I'm dying, then. If I weren't I'd be too weak to resist, an' I'd make her life a hell. I've always took the low road an' would again if I got the chance, an' it's time I was out of the way. So-long, you fellers. Give Madge—"

The hand of Death was laid gently on his lips.

The boss remained on his knees, his lost comrade in his arms, while the tears slowly trickled down his rough, kindly face.

"Boys," he said huskily, "he's took the highest road there is, an' I guess it'll lead him straight to heaven."

* * *

THE GREED OF CONQUEST

(Continued from page 22).

of gold, a peerage—indeed, anything."

"I cannot remember," said Lowick in a dull, even voice, but he did not

"Is your mind a blank on the subject?"

"No, but there are many details that I cannot remember."

"They will come back to you if you work out fresh plans, if you put everything you remember down on paper. You must—"

The door opened, and Joan and her mother entered the room. Their faces were pale and tear-stained, but they both seemed radiantly happy. Only a very close observer would have noticed that there was a shadow of pain in the girl's eyes.

"Ralph says he has forgotten the secret," said Colonel Endermine, when the door was closed. "I tell him that he must remember—for your sake, Joan, and for the sake of England."

Joan shook her head sadly. "We won't talk of that just now, father dear," she said. "Ralph has been very ill. He isn't to be worried."

"Worried, Joan!" the Colonel exclaimed. "Oh, well, we must wait, I suppose. Memory is a thing that can't be forced. Still, I don't see what you are both to do unless Ralph can make terms with the Government, even looking at it from that selfish point of view. He is supposed to be dead, you know. He cannot claim the property. What are you both going to do? Do you intend to remain in hiding for the rest of your lives?"

"No, of course not," Lowick interrupted, sharply, "but it will be impossible for us to remain in England,

and we must have money."

"Oh, of course you can have that, my boy—anything you want up to five hundred a year."

"I—I shall be very grateful to you, Colonel. But I'm not going to take it, unless I indemnify you against loss. I will give you bills."

"Bills! Rubbish! I'm not a money-lender."

"No, but if anything were to happen—well, there's the estate, you know. They can't take that from me, and—"

"I wouldn't hear of it. If you gave me bills, they'd have to be in your name. That would be risky. I'll see that you get a hundred pounds tomorrow, and here's ten to go on with."

A few minutes later Colonel Endermine and his wife took their departure, and drove off to the hotel at Paddington.

When Colonel and Mrs. Endermine had departed, Ralph Lowick flung himself into a shabby armchair, and, leaning forward, held out his hands to the fire. Joan looked at him for a few moments without speaking. Then she came and seated herself on the arm of his chair.

"Ralph dear," she said, in a low voice. "This must not go on. It cannot. It all seemed so different on the island, and then—we didn't know of this war."

He did not answer, or even look up at her, but he shivered slightly as though he were cold, and moved his hands a little closer to the fire.

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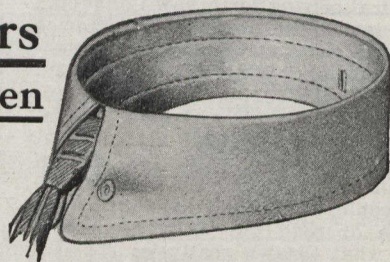
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