

# The Dynamite Jag

(Continued from page 15)

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beat it. Both subsequently went to the dogs when the eight-hour day strike tied up the Kootenay.

"But as for the railway itself, although we got mad when detained by an avalanche and called it a jerk-water road, and although we applied worse names to Jim Hill when we paid freight rates, it was a most magnificent example of engineering and pluck. Why, the wheels of the little engine and the narrow-gauge cars hung onto the mountain sides by their eyelashes and there wasn't solid ground enough on the off side of the right-of-way for a flea to hop along between us and kingdom come."

"Suppose you tell me the dynamite story instead of continuing this more or less truthful account of an American railway on Canadian soil."

"Twas Jack Fletcher I was talking about, wasn't it, young 'un?" cheerfully responded the Old Prospector. "Well, he had a cabin up near the Whitewater mine, about half-way between Kaslo and Sandon. The most extraordinary tragedy ever enacted in British Columbia took place in that little shack perched upon the side of a hill, amid the overpowering majesty of the mountains which surrounded it. You see I've got a happy turn for the picturesque, haven't I?" snickered the old man, and then he liquored again.

"Well, to make a long story short, Fletcher ran up against the toughest kind of luck. The vein on his fraction near the Whitewater suddenly ran out and all his visions of hard-won wealth faded in a moment. He was in a very despondent mood when one night Jack Thomas, a little Welshman who had a job on the railway, went up to see him.

"Got any whiskey?" was Fletcher's first question as Thomas entered.

"Not a drop," was the reply.

"O hell!" said Fletcher.

"The miner told the railroadman all his troubles and a brilliant inspiration came to Thomas.

"I've read of Mexican miners getting drunk by eating dynamite when liquor failed 'em. Why shouldn't we try it? I see you've got lots of sticks."

"Bah!" was Fletcher's answer.

"Whoever heard of a dynamite jag? Still, I'm willing to make the try if you are."

"And I'm blest if those two con-sarned fools didn't sit there for several hours and eat three sticks of dynamite between 'em. After a while Fletcher got good-natured, he forgot all about the lost vein and wanted to sing. Thomas, on the other hand, became as surly as a grizzly with a syrup can caught on his paw, and told Fletcher to shut up. Finally they got to fighting and Fletcher shot a hard right into Thomas' ribs. Instantly there was a terrific explosion.

"A few minutes later Fletcher came to my cabin—I lived about a mile away—and told me of the circumstances. He borrowed a lantern and said he intended to walk down to Whitewater and give himself up. On the way down he evidently decided to commit suicide for he threw himself into a deep ravine.

"We found his scattered remains the next morning. He had landed in a soft spot, but the concussion had been great enough to set off the stick and a half of dynamite which he had consumed."

"But I don't see how a dynamite jag would reconcile you to the loss of all the distilleries in the country," I remarked.

"You don't? Well, it's easy. I should fill up on dynamite, seek the nearest bluff and join Fletcher. When they filled a basket with my remains I should be reconciled to everything. Savvee?"

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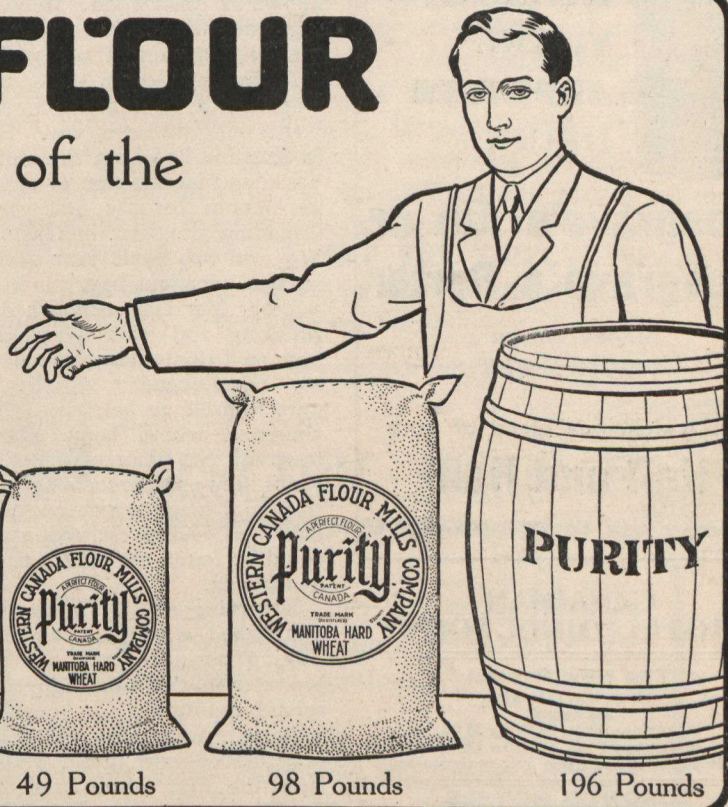
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