

THE WILDCATTERS

A Tale of the Cobalt Country.
By S. A. White

A NEW SERIAL STORY

CHAPTER I.

"TELEGRAM, sir!"
Carl Glover swung round on the pedestal of his chair in the rotunda of Toronto's biggest hotel and grasped the yellow slip. The typewriting was for a moment illegible. Then his hasty glance cleared, and he read:

"Wreck on Northern near Scardon. Uncle hurt. come at once."

R. R. GAINES.

Glover jumped with an impetuosity that sent the chair skidding along the tiled floor. He was at the elevator shaft in an instant and inside his room the next. It took but a few moments to throw some necessary articles into a grip, to dash for the street and catch a car. The news had spread, and many people crowded about the bulletin boards.

Glover looked at his telegram again, when someone plumped in beside him.

"Hello! Carl!" roared the leonine voice of Jerry Bland, "heard of the spill?"

For answer Carl passed the telegram. Jerry's monstrous tone subsided into a muffled, "Phew! hurt, eh? Likely serious, when they want you. Who's Gaines?"

"Roadmaster. He must have been on the train. What one was it, did you hear?"

"The Express from North Bay. It struck a freight."

"Ah! And she runs fast. I wonder if it's very bad."

"Think a lot of him?" Bland interrogated.

"You've hit it, Jerry. He's done everything for me. Why, I'd be like those," pointing to a group of street-gamins, "if it hadn't been for him. When I was left an orphan down in that little village by the Humber—you know it, Jerry—he was the only living relative. Just Old Jake Graham between the Children's Home and me! But he did it, Jerry. That was before his strike in Cobalt—and they were hard days for him. Yet he sent me through collegiate and university without a murmur. Now, I'd hate to lose him just as I am getting my first chances at real life."

"Carl, I can't picture you as a waif. At Varsity we called you 'The Prince,' and you seemed to fit the name always."

But Carl's thoughts were roaming far, backward and forward, even to the little village by the Humber.

They shouldered it into the Union Station, and discovered that a special train with doctors, nurses and officials was being sent out. The telegram from Gaines was Carl's passport to it.

"Good bye," was all Jerry said, as he left him to get his own train.

"Good-bye, old man," came back in an equally husky voice.

CHAPTER II.

EVENING lay in soft shadows along the ridges above the roadbed as Glover's train pulled into the scene of the disaster. Gaines was on the steps before Carl could get off.

"It's all right," he said hastily. "That telegram has worried me. I intended to say why he wanted you, but in the rush I didn't. See? It's business—Cobalt mines or something to look after. Graham's not seriously hurt. He will have to lie up for some weeks though. He broke his leg and one or two ribs, but is not dangerous, at all. You understand?"

"Quite," Carl said, with satisfaction. A great weight had been lifted from his mind. "Is he here?" he asked.

"No, we sent him up to North Bay with the first of the rescued. He wants you up, too, as soon as possible. We will have the rest out shortly."

"I will help," said the nephew, throwing off his long coat.

"No," Gaines interposed. "There are plenty of crews at work, too many, in fact."

"How many casualties?"

"Too many——" and then the official attitude asserted itself, and no more information was forthcoming.

Gaines was off. Left to himself, Carl went farther up and mingled with the crowds. It was indeed a bad smash. Through some blunder of operator or despatcher the heavy freight was on the line when the passenger should have had it. A sharp curve, snaking through the bluffs, had hidden the two trains from each other. One

hundred feet from a fringing cover of rock evergreens the giant moguls ploughed together unchecked. The awful impact had demolished both locomotives. One lay like a heap of scrap iron, only a twisted, battered mass of boiler plates, wheel flange, rod, shaft, guard, and lever, in place of the perfect mechanical power it had been. The other seemed to have been heavier and to have driven catapult-like, on lifting from the rails at first shock, clear through and over the upper works of the lighter. It lay, with its tender, nose down in the roadbed. A cloud of steam was escaping with horrible hiss, wrapping the whole tableau in a white, filmy mist. Crushed by this engine, two cars were splintered to matchwood, and here most of the injured had been found.

Down beside the scrap iron heap another coach was jammed V-shaped against a jutting angle of rock with sides and bottom almost cut away by rescuers' axes. Only three of the passenger cars suffered in the collision. Two others were jarred off, but having ploughed along the ties, stood nearly upright. The express car was somewhere in the stream beneath and the awful horror of it struck Carl when he saw where every car might have been. Fate's hand seemed to be in it. The string of freight cars lay sprawling down the embankment almost to the river's edge, like a child's blocks carelessly thrown aside after play. Both engineers, with their firemen, had been killed at their posts, and the express messenger was buried in the waters with his coach.

Slowly the twilight gloomed bluff and evergreen expanse, and a new, white moon came trembling up among wide-eyed stars. Carl climbed high into the rocks till sounds below became faint; then he sat watching. Each chaotic mass of wreckage showed now but indistinctly upon and beside the shattered road. The auxiliary lay grimly waiting with huge derrick arms and wrecking machinery ready for its turn. Moving human figures passed to and fro, to and fro, now in shadow, now thrown boldly into relief by the glare of fires where they were burning all useless rubbish beside the line. In places he could see them go round and round, round and round in the one spot, and knew they were jacking. Crowds of people surrounded them, often impeding and interfering with the work, and Carl saw these throngs ordered back more than once by some official. It was a strange, wild panorama with the stolid gray crags and vistas of green ridges for a setting. The little stream ran as a silver dribble, mirroring its width of sky pure-clouded over quiet blue.

Getting impatient, Carl wandered down again and hunted up Gaines, who was directing operations. They hoped to be through in a few minutes, he said, if the North Bay train would only come in as soon. There proved, however, some delay, and it was half an hour before the pleasing blast of her whistle sounded up the road. When she slid down the cuts, the remaining wounded were made comfortable in berths, and Carl boarded the caboose. Quickly they reversed and glided north while the wrecking cars drew up, beginning their throb, roar, rattle, and clank as they tore away each blockading mass from the track.

CHAPTER III.

JAKE GRAHAM lay in the private ward of the General Hospital at North Bay, with his legs and ribs in bandages, yet his cheery, light-heartedness belied the pain he felt. There was nothing of complaint in the voice that hailed Carl when he arrived.

"Hello, boy!" he said, giving a strong hand-grip. "I'm used up, you see. Not like some poor beggars, though! Did you see them?"

"Only a few," Carl answered. "Some were pretty bad. But yours—is it a clean break?"

"Straight!—so Doctor King said. Two ribs are cracked, also. It means six weeks in bed and three more on the crutch. Exasperating delay! I don't mind the pain; a little does one good, but I've got this mine development right on my hands. That's why I've sent for you. Do you understand, boy? This must be looked after right away. You're to do it."

"Me?" Carl cried. "Why, I wouldn't know pay ore from slag."

"You'll learn. Freeman, the boss, knows his business, and you'll soon get the run of things. You have executive ability, and you can manage those affairs for me just as I till I get out again. Two months from now I'll

OUR NEW SERIAL

The Wildcatters

A Tale of the Cobalt Country

By S. A. WHITE

Author of "The Stampeder," etc., etc.

Love and life in the mining districts of Northern Ontario is the theme of the new story which is to run in the CANADIAN COURIER during the next fourteen weeks. Rita Theodore, "The Lady of the Clan" is as strong a character as ever has appeared in native fiction, while Carl Glover, "The Prince," is a typical young Canadian with the bloom of a college career still showing. These two and the "wildcatters" of Cobalt are the leading figures in a most original and stirring romance.



A Lover of the Out-of-Doors

S. A. White, the author, was in the first rush to Cobalt and knows the mining life fairly well. His previous story "The Stampeder" described the mining life of the Yukon in its early days. For a number of years he has been contributing outdoor stories to the leading publications of Canadians. His first book appeared last year. His father is a prominent Canadian naturalist, and a brother is lecturer on Forestry at the University of Toronto. Like W. A. Fraser, his literary work is done in a small Ontario village, and fame is rapidly coming that way. For a time, he was both pedagogue and writer; now he devotes all his time to articles and stories of Canadian life.

The Wildcatters

is a strong story and should prove popular with the readers of THE CANADIAN COURIER. It has plenty of sentiment, is full of action, and radiates a sustained interest. The people whom the author creates are real flesh and blood. No anæmic puppets whine in this northern country—only strong, keen, passionate men and women.