

of the camp were not frost-proof, and the sash of the single window did not quite fit the hole in the gable.

"Have you ever been to Confusion?" he enquired.

Gabe inclined his head. In his eyes shone a retrospective light.

"And did you see any of the boys?"

"Yes," replied the 'breed. "An' got my head broke, maybe."

"I should like to have a look at them, one of these days," remarked Archer.

Next morning before the stars were washed out of the sky, Gabe and his team of four short-faced, heavy-limbed dogs (very unlike the wolfish "huskies" of the Labrador) took their departure coastward. The sled was piled high with a three-months' catch of pelts—fox, lynx, bear and marten. A few packs of it belonged to Archer, who set half a dozen traps along Ripping Brook. The furs were being sledged out to a store-keeper at Norris Arm. On his return trip Gabe would bring provisions and ammunition to Archer, and a package of newspapers and magazines; for the little two-room store at Norris Arm was the solitary's touching-point with civilization.

Several months later, on a cold, unclouded evening, Archer appeared at Rotten Harbour. It was his first visit to the place. He slipped his short, round snow-shoes of the pattern of the country, from his feet, and knocked on the door of the nearest cabin. Skipper Pat Donovan welcomed him, and addressed him by name, for word of him had gone up and down the coast. He shared the old couple's supper and later, when stools were drawn close to the little stove, he pressed great store of tobacco upon Donovan and made the dame's heart glad with a package of tea.

"Ye be a gentleman, sir," said the old man simply, "even if ye do wear skinnywoppers, like any o' the b'ys." Skinnywoppers are the native watertight, high-legged moccasins. A wave of red crept from Archer's beard and flushed about his eyes. He asked if the Confusion Bay men had been causing trouble, of late.

"Indade an' indade they has," cried the old woman.

"May the devil fly away wid them," exclaimed the skipper, with fervour. "An' it's meself that's tellin' you," he continued, "that they is the b'ys that can't go to a decent wake widout elbowin' the praste himself—God bless him—an' wantin' to fight the corp—God rescue its soul."

"Surely they treat Father Quinn with respect," said Archer. "I have heard that he is as good a doctor as he is a priest, and that he has risked his life more than once for the people of these parts."

"Sure, he's all that, an' may every hair o' his head turn into a wax candle to light him to glory," returned Donovan, devoutly. "But they b'ys o' Confusion has the devil's own itch in they's blood, an' they wudn't step to loo'ard o' St. Peter himself—God forgive me for sayin' so."

"Himself is tellin' you the trute, sir," said the old woman.

"An' now," the skipper rambled on, "me own brother's son, Foxy Tim Donovan, do be after marryin' one o' they Sullivan girls. They courted some in Carbonear, 'way 'round in Conception Bay, a year ago come Easter, when she were out to service an' he were workin' in the Bell Island iron mines. But they don't be courtin' much now, b' jabers."

"Why is that?" enquired Archer.

"Sure, sir, he'd be batted like he were a swile," replied Donovan, with a note of relish in his voice. "But I'm tellin' 'e, sir, as how Foxy Tim's weddin' is set for nex' Thursday, come willy or nilly."

His wife looked at him with puckered eyes.

"Who be they—willy an' nilly?" she asked.

"It's a way o' speakin'," said Donovan.

"I'm t'inkin' they belongs to some oder harbour, maybe," murmured the old woman.

"How will he manage it?" enquired Archer, his interest thoroughly aroused. The skipper told him what he knew of the lover's plan of campaign. It seemed good enough, taking for granted that the relatives of the bride did not overtake them.

"I should like to lend him a hand. By Jove, I don't know what would be better sport than outwitting those beasts."

Donovan shook the ashes from his pipe, and regarded the black bowl of that trusty friend with an unseeing stare.

"Hand!" said he, presently. "Sure, sir, it'll be the head o' ye, an' the only one ye's got, that ye'll be lendin' him. An' they Confusion b'ys 'ill bate all the learnin' out o' it."

"I think I'll risk it," said Archer.

Donovan glanced at his old wife, and shook his head.

"B'jabers," he said, "ye'll know more about it when ye come back dead."

Archer called on Foxy Tim that same night, and found the determined young man glad enough to accept his help. When they set out for Confusion Bay early next morning, their plans were matured. Tim had a good team of dogs. His sled was well provisioned, for the trail from Confusion to the nearest point of the railway was a long and desolate one. They travelled slowly all day, and camped that night on the open barren behind the notorious village. They were afraid to light a fire, but well-fed, and wrapped deep in their furlined sleeping-bags, they spent the night comfortably enough. The dogs added to their warmth by sleeping close against them.

When the inhabitants of Confusion Bay scanned the horizon next morning they were amazed to see a man—an outsider—seated at the edge of the cliff above them, unconcernedly smoking a pipe. They stared. They shouted to one another. They shook menacing fists toward the intruder. Then, grabbing up faggots of wood, lumps of stone, dory-paddles, and anything else that lay at hand and that might serve to smash a human rib with, they started inland and upward to welcome the audacious stranger. The paths that led up the face of the cliff to the barren behind, were steep and twisted, but the boys of Confusion approached them on the run. Archer (for it was he) watched their ascent with calm interest, and just as big Corney Sullivan gained the level he jumped to his feet and struck inland at a brisk trot. Corney dashed after him, in the track of the round snow-shoes, shouting lustily and flourishing a sinister looking club. As the others reached the level they joined in the chase. But the snow, which was wet, heavy, and knee-deep, put them to a disadvantage that was soon marked by the distance between the hunted and the hunters. Archer slackened his pace and shifted his course. He headed for a low hill overgrown with var and spruce. Now and then he looked over his shoulder and waved signals of disdain with his mittened hands. The fighting boys heaved their supply of stones without effect. Their anger grew to madness. The blood-lust rose to their brains like the fumes of liquor. They dashed on, breathlessly, stumbling, cursing, blind to everything but the long-legged stranger ahead. Archer went over the wooded hill with the mad pack of human wolves on his trail. He led them across a valley, over another rise, and into a partially frozen marsh. In the marsh they floundered, almost at a standstill. On a knoll on the far side the quarry halted and turned. He withdrew his right mitten and produced a heavy revolver from under his coat. His eyes flashed with pleasurable excitement. Whatever trouble had driven him into the wilderness was for the moment forgotten. He reviled the slowly advancing bullies, punctuating his remarks with bullets that zipped into the snow in front of their feet. Two of the fellows turned back for their sealing guns. They were halted in short order. Jake Walsh, who had been in such a hurry to thump and kick the stranger that he had left his cabin in his socks, was in a very bad way. At last he sat down and nursed his aching feet in his hands.

Shortly before noon Archer regaled himself with a drink from his flask, and ate a few cakes of chocolate, while the fighting boys of Confusion Bay glared up at him in sullen silence. After finishing his frugal repast he advised his audience to go to their homes and live in peace. Then he started back for Rotten Harbour. He travelled steadily and at a good pace until he reached Donovan's cabin, at midnight. He rested there for several hours, eating a little, and sleeping; and then, with kit and sleeping-bag on his back, continued his solitary and whimsical journey.

While Archer tramped toward his distant camp, under the high, unconcerned stars and pale banners of the north lights, the fighting boys of Confusion Bay frantically followed the cold trail of a dog-team, and Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Donovan rushed joyously toward Harbour Grace in the second-class carriage of the Port-aux-Basque express.