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Out of The Fire

Continued from Page 30

few minutes the men had him in the rig,
and hurrying back to the nearest shack
to give him the best of care and atten-
tion.

As it happened Laura Owen had called
at the house to learn from the men the
extent of the damage, and to ask
whether it had been possible to save
the crops a few miles away. As the
buggy drove up and unloaded its heavy
burden she caught a glimpse of the man
who had toiled with the heroism of the
night before, and curiously felt that in
some way the accident had struck at her
own happiness. She felt an interest in
this strong man she had never dreamed
would have been possible, and into her
face there came a look of genuine dis-
may. For several hours the man raved
in his delirium, and said things about
his relations and himself she had never
learned before. Above all else, too, he
gave expression to the dreams of his
life, and told the story of the hopes
that had found their rise in his life since
the night in the school house.

With the drawing near of the night,
and the realization of the lack of room
in the small shack, there came the
question of the disposition of the patient.
There was hardly room for the require-
ments of the family let alone the de-
mands of a hospital, and thus it was
suggested by Bill himself that he be
taken to his own shack, and that the
women-folk take turns in the nursing.
Their scheme seemed feasible, and know-
ing the independence of the patient it
promised to fit in with what they knew
to be his feelings in the matter. Laura
had heard the suggestion with some feel-
ings of dismay, and while she saw that
under present conditions it was the only
possible line of action, she wished that
in some way it could be made possible
for her to nurse the man to whom she
felt a tie. The more they talked the
greater the problem seemed to grow,
until, with a blush that came into her
cheeks, she suggested that if he were
moved on the morrow she herself be
allowed to act as nurse with the help of
the neighbors.

Thus it happened that on the next
day the patient was taken back to his
home, and placed under the care of the
volunteer nurse, all unconsciously to
himself, for while he had regained his
reason he was unable to understand what
was afoot.

Some three weeks after he was sitting
in the door of the shack fighting out a
battle with himself. The fire had
meant that he would be laid aside for
a month longer in the time when above
all others he was needed in his fields
early and late, and that in this year,
when the returns of his crop seemed to
spell the meaning of the great future
for him of success or failure. It was
while he was thus engaged that his
nurse returning from the school house
came upon him unawares, and stood for
some minutes watching the play of his
emotions beneath the bandages that
swathed his face.

"Well, well, Mr. Patient, how is it
to-day? I suppose to-morrow you are
planning going out into the wood-pile
or driving the binder, contrary to my
instructions," she said, with the playing
of the fun upon her face.

"No, Miss Nurse, you should know
by this time that there are no wood-
piles in this country, and all that we
burn is coal. This is not Ontario, Miss,
it's Saskatchewan," was the reply.

"Oh, they say that when a patient
begins to get irritable he is on the road
to convalescence, and I am congratulat-
ing myself that my amateur nursing is
not so bad after all. The only thing
I was afraid of was that I might give
you some lotion that the doctor left for
medicine, and I have been studying all
the things I ever learned about antidotes,
but I see that you are on the road to
recovery, and I am about to get my
dismissal. After to-day it will not be
necessary for me to come every day,
will it? she said with a banter that
brought a smile to the face of the man.

"Really, Miss Owen, I want to have
a very serious talk with you before you
get dismissed," he said.

"No, sir, serious talking is a pleasure
that a man who gets burned in the way
you did, has to forego for a time at
least, and it is contrary to my orders,"
she said with a smile that made it all
the more imperative that the man in
question unburden his heart.

Well, Miss, I can assure you that while
the boss of this shanty is able to sit in
the doorway the nurse is not allowed to
run it, and while you can refuse to hear
the serious talk I can at least talk," was
the challenge he flung out to her.

All right if you will get so spunky
I suppose you must have your own way,"
was the reply.

"Well, I wanted to ask you
why you have been coming here
every day after the school for
the last three weeks to tend a fellow
that you did not know except as a home-
steader out here on the prairie. That's a
very dangerous practice you know, for
people will talk, and when they talk it's
not the pleasantest things they talk
about either," was the introduction to
the matter.

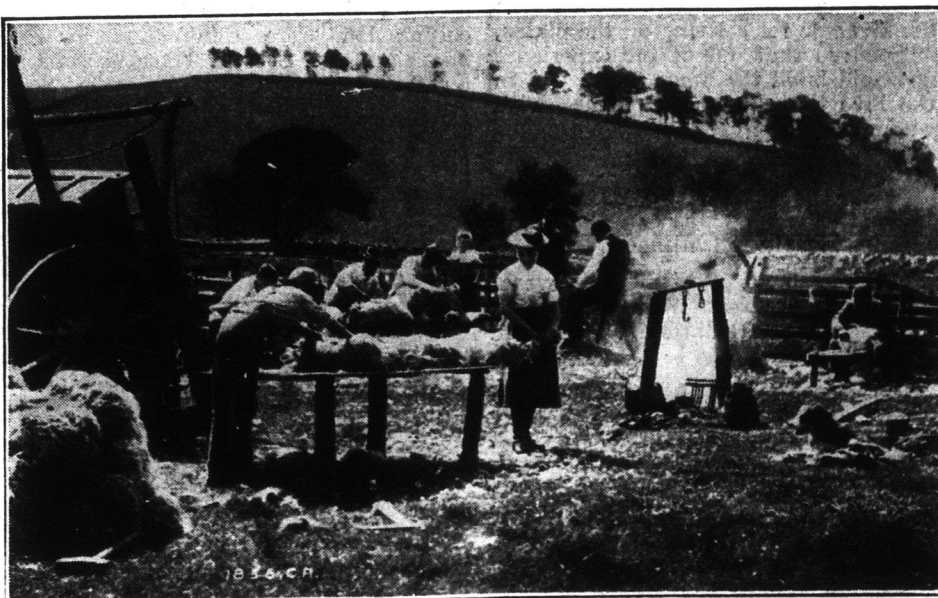
"Well, Mr. Tempest, I have come to
the place where I have made up my mind
that the things of life can be classified
into two great classes. The things that
really matter a great deal and those
that do not matter very much, the help-
ing out of someone who needs it is in
the first class, the things people say, as
long as you are able to help are in the
second class," she said, with a sense of
turning off the question.

"Say, but that's a great philosophy to
have about life, I never really thought
about that. Still, you know, I don't
want you to quit coming, and yet I
realize that for your own good, perhaps,
what you said about dropping your
daily visit is right. To be candid, how-
ever, I don't think you have answered
my question."

With a look that was far off, Laura
Owen remembered some of the things
her friend had said during those nights
of delirium, and as she looked at her
questioner she found her eyes filling
with tears. She realized the struggle
through which he was passing, and the
fight that he had put up that this year
should bring to him the fulfillment of
his dreams, and she saw, too, that the
enforced idleness spelled for him a great
disappointment.

"Mr. Tempest, the night that they
brought you into that shack you said

Continued on Page 32



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