

The Political Heeler

HIS MOTTO: "TRUTH IS MIGHTY—SCARCE"

You can tell him at sight by his studious air
And his far-away glance of pre-occupied care
And the negligent grace of his disarranged hair
And his necktie forlorn,
And the desperate attempt he makes not to swear
If you tread on his corn.

His smile when he smiles is childlike and bland,
Which will captivate hearts unused to the brand,
And the affable way that he clings to your hand
Resembles love-making,
And unkind remarks if your vote he can't land
He's quite above making.

He'll corner a man when he thinks no one sees,
With a hand on his arm and "a word if you please,
Ah, what is your reference in—Limburger cheese,
Now hist! and no more,
Come up to our rooms; we'll discuss this at ease,
But you're wrong I am sure."

He hangs round your door with a beastly cigar
And wants to shake hands and know how you are,
And dines with you maybe and rides in your car,
While he tries to find out
Just anything private you yourself would for
From talking about.

He has morals (I'm told) of no higher hue
Than is commonly found on a well blackened shoe,
And when at their best, just a very dark blue—
A reprobate quite,
Which doubtless is terribly shocking to you,
But I'm sure it is right.

He's an uncanny person to know on the whole,
For while you've a vote you've a lien on his soul,
And can realise too any time till the poll,
Tho what you would get on
A worthless commodity of cobweb and hole
I'd not like to bet on.

To conclude: brother purists, we're all well agreed
It's a parasite, wicked and damnable breed,
But yet now and then their cases we plead

"Poor sun of a gun,
Better keep him around, there's a chance I may
need

Him myself if I run."

—L. Owen.



A Day of Fire Ranging

There had been no rain for a week and Sunday, the nineteenth of June, was hot. Clouds of black flies and mosquitoes hovered in the sultry air. Our breakfast had been eaten in the midst of a thick smudge and the frequent slapping of face and neck. I had retired to our tent, and had carefully closed every perceivable opening, even the smallest, and was considering the beauties and delights of camp-life on Rabbit Creek during the fly season.

Billy, my partner, stood outside, and looked down the line towards the gravel-pit.

"They're burning above the pit, and I think we'd better go down," he said.

"Is there any danger, do you think?" I enquired.

"No, I guess not, but you can't tell what a fire 'll do, and I think we'd better be there."

I climbed warily out of the tent, closing it as quickly as possible and proceeded to follow Billy, on the run.

A dense cloud of yellow-grey smoke rolled up into the hazy air. As I drew near I heard the crackling of the flames, and the occasional cry of a human voice. Quick movement impressed me as being out of place, for nature that day was in one of her sleepy moods.

The gravel-pit had been opened only two days before, and the tents and snacks had been put up on the west side of the track. On the east side rose the hill of gravel, which was to become the pit, and behind it, range above range, heights of granite, covered with a foot of moss, and an earth formed of dead leaves, twigs and fallen shrubs which gave anchorage to a thick growth of balsams, birch and spruce.

A man had been left, during the night, in charge of two bonfires on the edge of the hill, but they had spread and begun to burn back into the wood. The company had called out their men, and dug a trench around the fire, which they thought sufficient to check it. When Billy and I arrived on the scene it was burning inside this trench and since there was little wind, there appeared no great likelihood of the flames crossing it. The chief danger was, that the large balsams, which burn very hotly, might fall across the trench while burning, and start the fire on the other side. We advised that the highest trees be cut down, and this element of danger lessened. The fire was coming closer to the trench and unfortunately a wind was springing up.

The Dagos, over a hundred of them, stood resting on their shovels or threw dead branches and limbs back from the trench. The water-boys carried their pails and cups from man to man along the line, and the cry of "aqua" formed in the pleasant Italian tone a constant accompaniment to the sizzling and crackling of the flames.

The wind increased. Down by the railway track, large piles of pine cut for trestles had caught fire, and were now burning furiously. Along the sides of the fire there was not much danger, for although the trench had been abandoned to the north, a double trench had been made directly along the front of the fire in that direction. On the faces of the foremen a nervous tension manifested itself. The Dagos alone were placid and indifferent.

Only thirty feet now remained between the trench and the red front of fire. The heat was intense and the question in every mind was whether we could remain at the trench as the fire reached it.

The flames, like small red banners, ran up the loose bark of the birch trees and breaking off formed a picture, vividly illustrative of those lines of Dante's,—

"O'er all the sand, fell slowly wafting down
Dilated flakes of fire, as flakes of snow
On Alpine summit."

Back where the fire had been burning all morning, some large red-pines having lost their pre-