

"Yes, Mr. Petersham," said he in answer to a question. "When you went away last fall I did think things were settling down a bit, but a week ago while Puttick was on the eastern boundary I thought I'd go up to Senlis lake, where last year Keough had the brook netted. I was making a fire to boil my kettle when a shot was fired from the rocks up above, and the next I knew was that I was hit pretty bad through this knee.

"It was coming on dark, and I rolled into a bush for cover, but whoever it was didn't fire at me again. I don't think he wanted to kill me. If he had he could have put the bullet into my heart just as easy as in my leg. I tied up the wound the best way I could



His Face Was Like That of Some Medieval Prisoner.

Lucky the bullet hadn't touched any big artery. Next morning I crawled up the hill and lit signal smokes till Puttick came. He brought me in here.

"I suppose Puttick had a look round for the tracks of the fella who gunned you?" asked November.

"He did, but he didn't find out nothing. There was a light shower between dark and dawn, and the ground on the hill above there is mostly rock."

Such, then, was the story of our coming to Kalmacks, and for the next two or three days we spent our time fishing in the streams, the only move in the direction of the main object of our visit being that Joe, whom Linda insisted upon accompanying, walked over to Senlis lake and had a look at the scene of Worke's accident. The old tracks, of course, were long since washed away, and I thought, with the others, that Joe's visit had been fruitless until he showed me the shell of an exploded cartridge.

"The bullet which went through Bill Worke's leg came out of that. I found it on the hill above. It's a 45.75 central fire rifle, an old '76 model."

"This is a great discovery you and Miss Petersham have made."

Joe smiled. "There's nothing much to it, anyway. She lost her brooch somewhere by the lake and was looking for it when I found this." Joe indicated the exploded shell. "The mountains are full of 45.75 guns, 1876 pattern. Some years back a big ironmongery store down here went bust and threw a fine stock of them caliber rifles on the market. A few dollars would buy one, so there's one in pretty nigh every house and two and three in some. However, it may be useful to know that him that shot Bill Worke carried that kind of a rifle. Still, we'd best keep it to ourselves, Mr. Quaritch."

"All right," said I. "By the way, Joe, there's a side to the situation I don't understand. We've been here four days, and nothing has happened. I mean Mr. Petersham has had no word of where to put the \$5,000 blackmail these criminals are demanding of him."

"Maybe there's a reason for that." "I can't think of any."

"What about the sand?" "The sand?" I repeated.

"Yes, haven't you noticed? I got Mr. Petersham to have two loads of sand brought up from the lake and laid all round the house. It takes a rifle wonderful. I guess it's pretty near impossible to come nigh the house without leaving a clear trail. But the first rainy night, I mean when there's rain enough to wash out tracks."

"They'll come?" "Yes, they'll likely come."

But as it happened Joe was wrong. I believe that his reasoning was correct enough, and that it was the fear of leaving such marks as would enable us to gather something of their identity that kept the enemy from pinning upon our door the letter which finally arrived postally enough in a cheap store envelope that bore the Priamville postmark. The contents of this letter were as follows:

Petersham, you go alone to Butler's cairn 11 o'clock Friday night. Take the dollars along; you be met there and can hand it over.

Below was a rude drawing of a coffin.

Petersham read the note out to Joe and myself.

"Where's Butler's cairn?" he asked.

"I know it," said November. "But

ler's cairn is on a hill about two miles west of here."

"I suppose you won't go?" said I.

"With the money? Certainly not!" "You can hardly go without it."

"Why not?" "You would be shot down."

"I'd talk to the ruffians first and then if there was any shooting, I guess I'd be as much in it as they would."

"I suggest that we all three go," I said.

But Joe would have none of this plan.

"There's nothing to be gained by that, Mr. Quaritch. You but these fellows'll keep a pretty bright lookout. If they saw three of us coming they'd shoot us like us not."

"I was thinking I might slip right along to Butler's cairn and maybe get a look at the felons."

"No!" said Petersham decidedly. "I won't allow it. You say yourself you would be shot."

"I said we would get shot, not me alone. Three men can't go quiet where one can."

And so finally it was arranged, though not without a good deal of argument with Petersham.

"That's a fine fellow," remarked Petersham I nodded.

"The kind of fellow who fought with and bettered the Iroquois at their own game. I wonder what he will see at Butler's cairn?"

It was past midnight when Joe appeared again. Petersham and I both asked for his news.

November shook his head. "I've nothing to tell; nothing at all. I didn't see no one."

"Where were you?" "Lying down on top of the cairn itself. There's good corners to it."

"You could see well round, then, and if any one had come you would not have failed to observe them."

"Couldn't be too sure. There was some dark times when the moon was shut in by clouds. They might 'a' come then times, though I don't think they did. But I'll know for certain soon unless it comes on heavy rain. There's a fine little lake they call Butler's pond up there. You take your fishpole, Mr. Quaritch, and we'll go over at sunrise and you try for some of them trout, while I take a scout round for tracks."

This we did, but search as Joe would he failed to discover any sign at all. He told me this when he joined me at breakfast time.

After I had caught a nice string of trout we walked back to Kalmacks, circling round the house before we entered it. The sand lay undisturbed by any strange footstep, but when we got in we found Mr. Petersham in a state of the greatest excitement.

"One of the blackmailers has had a long talk with Puttick," he told us.

"What?" "Incredible as it sounds, it is so."

"But when was this?" "Early this morning, some time after you and Joe started. This is how it happened. Puttick had just got up and gone down with a tin of rosin and some spare canvas and tin to mend that canoe we ripped on the rock yesterday. In fact, he had only just begun working when he was startled by a voice ordering him to hold up his hands."

"By Jove, what next?" "Why, he held them up. He had no choice. And then a man stepped out from behind the big rock that's just above where the canoe lies."

"I hope Puttick recognized him."

"No. The fellow had a red handkerchief tied over his nose and mouth. Only his eyes showed under the brim of a felt hat that was pulled low down over them. He carried a rifle, that he kept full on Puttick's chest while they talked. But I'll call Puttick. He can finish the account of the affair himself. That's best."

Puttick answered to the call, and after running over the story, which was exactly similar to that we had just heard from Petersham, he continued:

"The tough had a red handkerchief over his ugly face, nothing but his eyes showing. He had me covered with his gun to rights all the time."

"What kind of a gun was it?" "I didn't see; leastways I didn't no see."

"Well, had he anything to say?" "He kept me that way a minute before he started speaking. 'You tell Petersham, says he, 'It's up to him to pay right away. Tell him unless he comes at once to Butler's cairn and takes the goods and leaves them there on the big flat stone by the rock he'll hear from us afore evening, and he'll hear from a way that'll make him sorry all his life. And as for you, Ben Puttick, you take a hint and advise old man Petersham to buy us off, and he can't be too quick about doing it either. If he tries to escape we'll get him on the road down to Priamville.' After he'd done talking he made me put my watch on the canoe—that I'd turned bottom up to get at that rent—and warned me not to move for half an hour. When the half hour was up I come right away and tell you."

"Tall or short was he?" "Medium-like."

"Medium-like?" "Medium-way did he go when he left you?" "West, right along the bank."

"You followed his trail after the half hour was over?" "He didn't leave none."

"Left no trail? How's that?" cried Petersham.

But Joe interposed. "You mean he kept to the stones in the bed o' the brook all the time?" "That's it. And anyway, if I'd got fooling lookin' for his tracks I'd 'a' got a bullet in me same as Bill Worke," ended the little man. "They're all watching for us."

CHAPTER XV.
The Men in the Black Hat.

WE were silent for a moment. Then Petersham turned to Puttick.

"What do you think of it, Ben? You have some experience of these squatters up here. Do you think they mean business?"

"There ain't much fooling about these mountain men," Puttick answered bitterly. "And now I says this to you, Mr. Petersham, and I can't never say nothing stronger. If you're minded to stay on here at this place, you must pay if you don't want Miss Petersham hurt or killed."

"My daughter?" "That's how I read it. What else could he mean? He said you'd be sorry all your life."

"Good heavens! Even the most hardened ruffians would not hurt a woman. You don't think it possible?" Petersham turned to me.

"I think that Linda runs a very great risk by staying."

"Then she shall go."

But when Linda was called and the facts made clear to her she absolutely refused to leave Kalmacks.

"You will force me to pay the money, then," said Petersham, "though I am well aware that this demand will only be the first of many. Whenever these blackmailers want \$1,000, aye, or \$10,000, they know they will only have to ask me to supply them. But I can't risk you—I'll pay."

Joe turned to Petersham. "If you climb down now I'll be right sorry I ever come with you. I don't hold with backing down under a bluff."

I, who knew Joe, was surprised to hear him offer so definite an opinion in such strong terms, but Linda clasped her hands.

"It's all nonsense, isn't it? Why, if any one attempted to hurt me Joe would make him regret it, wouldn't you, Joe?" She flashed him a glance of her glorious eyes.

"I'd sure try to hard enough," replied November. "And now, Mr. Quaritch, I'll ask Ben here to show me just where the felons stood when he held him up this morning."

So Joe went down to the brook, and I went with him. We were soon beside the canoe which Puttick had been mending.

"Here's where I was, and there's where he stood," said Puttick, pointing to a small mass of rock close by. "And there's the place I set down my watch."

November glanced over the details and then followed the bank of the brook for some distance. Presently he returned.

"Did you strike his trail?" asked Puttick.

"No, the stones lead right away to the lake, and like as not he came in a canoe."

"Like as not," agreed Puttick, and resumed his work on the canoe which had been so rudely interrupted earlier in the day.

We found Linda in the living room arranging some fishing tackle. She a once appealed to Joe.

"Oh, Joe, I want to try some of those English lures Mr. Quaritch gave me. I'm going to fish, and I want to use this two jointed pole. Will you fix it for me?"

"I'd like you to make me a promise, Miss Linda."

"What is it?" "Not to go out at all today."

"You don't think I'm in danger?" "You're in great danger, Miss Linda."

"Then you must go out with me, Joe. If you are with me they will not dare."

"Look here, Miss Linda, if you'll stay in the house just over today I wouldn't wonder but it might be quite safe for you to go out tomorrow—and even after."

"Joe, you mean you have discovered?" "No; I ain't discovered nothing, but if you stay in the way I ask maybe I shall." Joe took up his hat.

"Where are you going, November?" I asked.

"Over to Senlis lake, Mr. Quaritch. Will you see Ben Puttick and tell him I won't be back till late and will be cook the potatoes and the cornbread cakes if I don't get back to time? Miss Linda, will you please tell every one, even your father, that you have a mighty painful head and that's why you're staying in."

"Yes, Joe," said Linda.

After Joe's departure I took a look and sat with it in the veranda, where I was joined in due course by Linda and Mr. Petersham.

"It's cool here, the only cool spot in the place today," remarked Petersham. "Yes, and don't the spruces smell sweet?" said Linda. "Joe cut them to give me shade."

She pointed to a row of tall saplings propped against the rail of the veranda so as to form a close screen.

"Joe always thinks of things for people," she added.

Petersham glanced from me to Linda. "If your headache is bad you had better lie down in the house," he said.

"It is ever so much better, but I'll fetch some smelling salts."

I was about to offer to bring them for her when I caught her father's eye behind her back and remained where I was. As soon as she had gone in Petersham stepped up to me and whispered:

"To give her shade," he repeated. I looked around and nodded.

"There is always shade here," he went on. "The sun can't get in through the pines on this side. The wood is thickest here."

"That's true," I agreed, looking at the close grown junipers that stood in front of us. "Joe stacked these saplings against the rail for some other reason."

"Of course. He knew that Linda

would very likely sit here and be as afraid.

"Afraid? Of what?" said Linda and drew from behind us. "No one could hurt me here. Why I could call for help and you are both here. You could protect me."

"Not against a rifle bullet," said Petersham. "For my sake go to Linda."

As he said the words from far away came the sound of a shot. Distinctly I heard it of that memory with which the modern rifle speaks and it struck a dull, even drowsy note upon the air of that inauspicious afternoon of late spring.

"What can that be?" cried Linda.

As if in answer came the sullen far off sound three times repeated, and then after an interval a fourth.

"Shooting!" cried Linda again very white, her blue eyes wide with terror. "And it's from the direction of Senlis lake!"

"Ben! Ben Puttick!" roared Petersham.

But loud as was his voice, Linda's call rose higher.

"Here I am!" We heard Puttick's voice from inside the house, and he ran out a minute later.

"We heard five shots from Senlis lake," I said. "We must start at once, you and I. Mr. Petersham will stay with Miss Linda."

Puttick looked me in the eyes.

"Are you tired of your life?" he asked grimly.

"We have no time to think of that. Get ready!"

"There was five shots," Puttick said deliberately. "I heard 'em myself. That means Joe's dead, if it was him they shot at. If we go we'll soon be dead too."

"Oh, you coward!" cried Linda.

Puttick turned a dull red. "I'm no coward, Miss Linda, but I'm no fool. I'm a woodsman. I know."

"There is a good deal of sense in what Ben says," I put in. "I think his best place is here, with you. He shall stay to help you in case of need. I'll go and find Joe. After all, it's as likely as not that he was firing or perhaps some one else was firing at a bear."

I hastened forward at the best pace I could attain until from a six foot knoll I caught a glimpse of Senlis lake. The forest path here rose and fell in a series of short steep inclines. I labored up these little hills and ran down the slopes. Suddenly I came to a turn and was about to rush down a sharp dip when a voice, seemingly at my side, said:

"That you, Mr. Quaritch?"

"Joe! Where are you?"

"Here!"

I followed the voice and, parting some branches, saw Joe lying on the



Joe Leaned Against the Maple Tree and Looked Down on Him.

ground. His face was gray under its tan, and a smear of blood had dried upon his forehead and cheek.

"You're wounded!" I cried.

"His second passed through the top of my shoulder."

"His? Whose?"

"Him that shot at me."

"Did you shoot back?"

"He lies about ten paces west of that small maple."

"You saw him?"

"Hardly. He had a black hat. I saw it move after he fired his fourth, and I shot back. If you'll give me your arm, Mr. Quaritch, we'll go up and take a look at him."

With difficulty and with many pauses we reached the top of the little ridge. The dead man lay as Joe had said quite near the small maple. The bullet had entered his throat. He was a long haired, black bearded man of medium size.

Joe leaned against the maple tree and looked down at him.

"I seem to know the fellow's face," I said.

"Yes; you seen him the day we come, cutting wood by the shack?"

"Now, Joe, lean on me, and we'll try to make for home, for I saw he was very weak."

"Must just look around, Mr. Quaritch. See here! He was smoking his pipe. Look at the ashes—a regular handful of them. He must a lain for me all of a hour before I came along. Here's his rifle—a 30-30. Wonder who he is? Joe lay back, panting.

"You're not able to walk," said I.

"I'll go back to Kalmacks and get a rig to bring you home."

"No, Mr. Quaritch. It would never be right to do that. It would give the other felons warning."

"The others?"

"This dead fella's partners."

"You know he has some, then?"

"One anyway. But let's be moving. Cut me a pole so as I can use it as a crutch."

I did as he asked, and we commenced our long and, for him, painful walk back.

To be concluded.

Pianos, Phonographs, Accordions, Harmonicas, Violins and other Musical Instruments

We are now prepared to fill all your wants in these lines. For QUALITY CORRECTNESS and PRICE our instruments cannot be excelled by any firm in Canada. With every Piano or Phonograph we give a LASTING GUARANTEE, none that is to be good only until the Instrument is once used, but we together with the manufacturers stay by our guarantee for years after. Another point you must bear in mind: you will not have to wait for months in case you need ANY REPAIRS, as you will have to with most other machines. We have ALL REPAIRS CONSTANTLY ON HAND.

2000 RECORDS to select from. Prices from 20 cts. up. Send for our Catalogues. We will gladly mail it to you.

We have a large stock of **Silverware, Cut Glas, Clocks, Stationary, Religious Books and Pictures, Statues, etc.**

M. I. MEYERS Jeweller and Optician HUMBOLDT

CALL IN TO MY SHOWROOM and look over the New

BRISCOE SPECIAL

the Car with the Half Million Dollar Motor.

The Price is within reach of everybody wanting an up-to-date Car.

I WILL GIVE YOU A DEMONSTRATION ANY TIME

Let me know your requirements and I can supply your wants in anything for the Farm, FARMERS! I have a Portable Granary on exhibit at my ware-house in Humboldt. Double ply lumber and metal roof. Get my price before buying elsewhere.

LELACHEUR & GREIG

THE HUMBOLDT MACHINE MEN

Main Street HUMBOLDT, SASK.

Jetzt ist die geeignete Zeit um Eurem Vieh

STOCK FOOD

zu geben damit es in gutem Zustand bleibt. Vieh benötigt ein Tonic so aut wie die Menschen, und jetzt ist die Zeit es ihm zu geben, da Pferde und Rindvieh in der Zeit wo sie andauernd Trockenfutter erhalten allen möglichen Krankheiten u. Anstechungen ausgesetzt sind.

Sie haben eine vollständige Auswahl in Stock Tonics für Pferde, Rinder, und Schafel. Probirt ein kleines Paket davon und beobachtet einmal, wie Euer Vieh dabei gedeiht.

W. f. Hargarten

Apotheker und Drogist Bruno, Sask.

N. B. Bereicht nicht, mehrere Spezialität ist die Auszubereitung von Vorbereitungen für alle Apothekern u. Patent Besigmen

You are safe in a threefold way, if you bring your prescription to us: 1) We use for the prescription exactly what the doctor prescribed, every article being of standard strength, fresh and pure; 2) We examine and reexamine the prescription, whereby every error as to drug or quantity is excluded; 3) We are satisfied with a reasonable profit and charge the lowest prices for the best quality. These are three reasons why you should buy from us.

G. R. WATSON, HUMBOLDT, SASK.

DRUGGIST *The Rexall Store* STATIONER

Land and Farms!

I have a number of Farms and Wild Lands for sale at low prices. Some will be sold on Crop Payment.

For further particulars apply in person or by letter to

Henry Bruning, MÜNSTER, SASK.