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**KINDRED OF THE DUST**

By PETER B. KYNE

CHAPTER XXXVI

His canine loyalty bade Mr. Daney defend The Lairds Ewe Lambs.

"Well, maybe they didn't recognize you," he protested. "A good deal of water has run under a number of bridges since the McKays girls saw you last."

"In that event, Mr. Daney, I charge that their manners would have been extremely bad. I know town dogs that smile at me when I smile at them. However, much as I would like to assure you that they didn't know me, I must insist, Mr. Daney, that they did."

"Well, now, how do you know, Nan?"

"A little devil took possession of me, Mr. Daney, and inspired me to smoke them out. I walked up and held out my hand to Jane. 'How do you do, Jane,' said I. 'I'm Nan Brent. Have you forgotten me?'"

Mr. Daney raised both arms towards the ceiling.

"Oh, God! Cried the Woodcock, and away he flew! What did the chit say?"

"She said, 'Why, not at all,' and turned her back on me. I then proffered Elizabeth a similar greeting and said, 'Surely, Elizabeth, you have not forgotten me! Elizabeth was rael fun ny. She replied: 'So sorry! I've always been absent minded!'"

"Ah, do not hurt him!" Daney pleaded anxiously. He's a good, kindly gentleman. Spare him! spare him, my dear!"

"Oh, I wouldn't hurt him, Mr. Daney, if I did not know I had the power to heal his hurts."

Suddenly she commenced to laugh, albeit there was in her laugh a quality which almost caused Mr. Daney to imagine that he had harkles on his back and that they were rising. He much preferred the note of anger of a few minutes previous; with a rush all of his old apprehensions returned, and he rasped out irritably:

"Well, well! What's the joke, any how? Tell me and perhaps I may laugh too."

"Oh, no, Mr. Daney, you'd never laugh at this one. You'd weep."

"Try me."

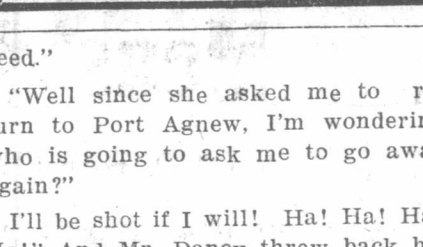
"Very well. You will recall, Mr. Daney, that when Mrs. McKaye rang me up in New York, she was careful even while asking me to return, to let me know my place?"

"Yes, yes. I was listening on the line. I heard her and I thought she was a bit raw. But no matter. Pro-



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"Well, since she asked me to return to Port Agnew, I'm wondering who is going to ask me to go away again?"

"I'll be shot if I will! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" And Mr. Daney threw back his head and laughed the most enjoyable laugh he had known since the night an itinerant hypnotist, entertaining the citizens of Port Agnew, had requested an adventurous gentleman in the audience who thought he could not be hypnotized, to walk up and prove it.

"Egad, Nan," he declared presently, "but you have a rare sense of humor! Yes, do it. Do it. Make 'em all come down—right here to the Saw dust Pile! Make 'em remember you—all three of 'em—make 'em say

"What is this interesting news, Andrew?" Mrs. Daney asked, with well-simulated disinterestedness. She was knitting for the French war relief committee a pair of those prodigious socks with which well-meaning souls all over the United States have inspired many a poor devil of a poilu with the thought that the French must be regarded by us as a Brobdingnagian race.

"We're arranging a big blow-out unknown to The Laird and Donald, to celebrate the boy's return to health. I'm planning to shut down the mill and the logging camps for three days," he replied glibly. At late he was finding it much easier to lie to her than to tell the truth, and he had observed with satisfaction that Mrs. Daney's bovine brain assimilated either with equal avidity.

"How perfectly lovely!" she cooed, and dropped a stitch which later would be heard from on the march, in the shape of a blister on a Gallie heel. "You're so thoughtful and kind, Andrew! Sometimes I wonder if the McKays really appreciate your worth."

It was with a feeling of alert interest that he awaited in his office, the following morning, the arrival of the ladies from The Dreamerie. They arrived half an hour late, very well content with themselves and the world in general, and filling Mr. Daney's office with the perfume of their presence. They appeared to be in such good fettle, indeed, that Mr. Daney took a secret savage delight in dissipating their nonchalance.

"Well, ladies, I decided yesterday that it was getting along toward the season of the year when my thoughts stray, as usual, toward the Sawdust Pile as a drying yard. So I went down to see if Nan Brent had abandoned it again—and sure enough she hadn't! He paused exasperatingly, after the fashion of an orator who realizes that he has awakened in his audience an alert and respectful interest. "Fine kettle of fish brewing down there," he resumed darkly, and paused again, glanced at the ceiling critically as if searching for leaks, smacked his lips and murmured confidentially a single word: "Snag!"

"Snag!" In chorus.

"Snag!" In some unaccountable manner, it appears that you ladies have aroused in Nan Brent a spirit of antagonism."

"The idea!"

"Fiddlesticks!"

(To be continued)

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