

The Holocaust

Written for The Western Home Monthly. By H. Mortimer Batten

WELL," expectantly queried Joe, Barry's clerk, as the latter entered the cabin and threw off his furs. "What's happened?"

"Same thing," replied Barry, impatiently, tossing his mitts into a corner. "Been on the spree again. We found him asleep on the sled, dogs nearly frozen, harness tangled, no end of a mess! Wonder he didn't freeze to death before we got to him, silly blighter!"

A short laugh broke from Joe's lips. "Just what I expected," said he. "Going to report him?"

Barry looked his companion squarely in the face. "Yes, I am," he said firmly. "It isn't good enough. Five hundred dollars in that packet all in five dollar bills! Anyone might have swiped the lot for all he knew."

Joe sucked hard at his pipe. "You'd have reported him long ago if you'd taken my advice," he said with a sniff. "Now you've got to. If the same thing happened again and the Super got to know about it, he'd play Hamlet with you for keeping mum."

Barry pulled off his moccasins and seated himself by the stove. "I know that, old son," he agreed mildly. "I hate reporting a man, and, of course, it means the sack for Culwood. He'll be hard put to find another job this time of year, and expect he'll hate me like poison. Anyway, it can't be helped, so let's have some supper."

Hal Culwood was the messenger between Great Dome Mine and the outlying prospect of Cranberry Creek, of which Barry had charge. Every Thursday Culwood left Cranberry for headquarters at Great Dome, travelling by canoe in summer and dog team in winter, returning with mail, wages and such business communications as were necessary between the two camps. He was due to arrive back at 3 o'clock Friday afternoon, but to-day five had arrived and still no Culwood. At six Barry and two of the boys had set out to meet him, finding him as described between the two camps.

Next morning Barry went across to the bunkhouse while the boys were at breakfast, and stooping over Culwood he whispered: "You'd best get your kit together, Hal. I'm going to Great Dome, and I want you to come along with me. Bring all your gear."

Telling Culwood to bring his gear was as good as telling him he wouldn't return, and the big man's eyes flashed angrily. He was in an evil mood that morning, and knew now that his excellent winter post was lost.

"Ya—ya—college boy!" he shouted out, loud enough for everyone to hear. "Say, boys, ain't it a dream bein' ordered round by these yer honkeydory tenderfeet!"

Barry flushed angrily, but he knew the folly of arguing with an angry man who has lost his job, and, therefore, has nothing further to lose. Barry was popular, and Culwood was ignored by the rest of the boys, which annoyed him still further.

"Say you," he yelled insolently, "I'll pack out when I get orders from the Super, not until. You can go to—"

This was more than Barry could stand. He must at any rate retain his authority in his own camp. He approached the big man with clenched fists, looking him in the eyes. "You'll pack out this morning, Culwood, so don't be a blame idiot," he said firmly. "You've done a foolish thing and you know it. No one will like you any the better for kicking up a shine."

Then he turned and strode from the cookhouse, leaving the remainder of the boys favorably impressed.

So Culwood got the sack in midwinter. He and Barry trudged in silence to Great Dome, where the young engineer made his report, and Culwood got his check. This, of course, spoilt his further chances of obtaining a messengership in the locality, and being a man of the trails, with a faint streak of Indian blood in his veins, he was more or less on his beam ends. The remainder of the winter he spent at Porcupine City, the central mining camp twelve miles by water from Great Dome, chopping boiler wood for the steamer which spring would bring, as a bird of passage, from the civilized waters of the south.

With the opening of the creeks Culwood invested his worldly possessions in an old motor boat with which, that spring, to earn a living conveying passengers, towing freight, etc., between the various camps which dotted the creeks. At about the same time Barry was promoted, and joined the central staff at Great Dome.

The young engineer had almost forgotten the unpleasant affair above related when one morning he left Porcupine by canoe for Great Dome. The water ran heavily against him all the way, and it was a stiff day's pull, therefore, he was much relieved when, two hours on his way, he heard a motor boat coming up behind him. It is customary for the launches to offer to take any canoes they pass in tow on such occasions, the lift being, of course, paid for, therefore, as the

An hour later they hove in sight of Great Dome. Barry could see the Super and the Surveyor standing at the landing stage, and he waited for Culwood to pull in.

But nothing of the sort. Culwood held the centre of the creek, and Barry yelled to him to stop. The shout did no more than attract the attention of the two engineers on the landing stage. They took in the situation at a glance, and broad grins began to overspread their faces. Culwood turned and grinned triumphantly at the helpless Barry. Then both the Super and the engineer shouted and waved to him to pull in, at which Culwood blew them kisses, and a minute later the whole outfit, with the canoe still in tow, disappeared round a corner of the creek.

They travelled non-stop for a solid two hours, when finally Culwood pulled in at the very last camp on the creek. Stopping his engine he turned round and looked at Barry. "Say," he shouted,



Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty, on the left, and Capt. Pringle, U.S.N., who commands an American tender overseas, are standing together on the deck of the American ship. Admiral Wemyss paid a visit on this occasion to part of the American naval forces in European waters. He examined a new type of gun, a destroyer, and visited and inspected the men on a U.S. tender.

launch hove in sight Barry made the customary signal by raising his paddle. A moment later he saw that it was Culwood's launch with Culwood alone in it, but even then it never occurred to him that after this lapse of time the man would bear him any malice. He forgot that Culwood had Indian blood in his veins, and was, therefore, not of a forgetful nature.

"Take me in tow, Culwood?"

"Sure," came the quiet response.

Culwood heaved out a line, and Barry made fast. He then prepared to draw in and climb aboard the launch, but to his surprise Culwood let in the clutch, and the launch swung forward, the rope tearing through Barry's hands. Almost instinctively Barry threw his weight to the right, but how he missed being capsize he never knew. The canoe jerked round, shipped a bucketful of water, and began to ricochet after the launch. Then Barry saw that the line was directly over the propeller, so that if he tried to pull in his keel would be struck by the propeller ere he could grip the gunwale of the launch.

"You'll let me know where you want me to put you off, won't you?"

Barry nodded. As he did so his wrist came in contact with the hilt of his sheath knife.

Well, unutterable fool that he had been! Why in the name of all that was wonderful hadn't he thought to cut the rope? During the excitement and humiliation of it all such a way of escape had never occurred to him, and now he saw himself not only the laughing stock of Culwood, but of his colleagues and the entire country side.

"I intended getting off at Great Dome," he answered, as the launch bumped the floating stage, "but guessed you were heading for this camp, so thought I'd come along." Then to the men waiting at the stage he added, "Say, is Billy Flint, the assayer, still here?"

"No, sor," came back in a broad Scottish accent. "He left us last fall. He's working along at the Great Dome now."

Barry looked crestfallen. He seemed to be wallowing deeper into the mire! He had not the faintest notion that his

old friend, Billy, was at his own mine for the Great Dome was a big place, and this fact entirely knocked the stuffing out of the little yarn he had invented on the spur of the moment about having come to see Billy on business. Culwood was grinning widely.

"Then I guess I'll have to go back with you, Culwood," he added, realizing that the less said the better.

"Ain't hitting out till to-morrow noon," Culwood replied briefly.

Barry saw that he was done. He unhitched, reversed his canoe, and set off down the creek in silence. When fifty yards distant he heard loud guffaws behind him, but did not condescend to look round. An hour later Culwood's empty launch again overtook him.

"Want a tow?" shouted Culwood, but the young engineer merely scowled and looked away.

Naturally Culwood made the best of his story, and everywhere Barry went during the succeeding weeks of spring he was greeted by broad grins and broader hints about joy-riding in the wake of a gasoline launch. He bore it all in good part, but secretly he swore that sooner or later he would get even with Culwood.

His chance came sooner than he expected. In these days Barry spent a good deal of his time at Porcupine, and he was there that fatal morning of July 11th, when the sun rose a sickly brown, with the air stifling with cedar smoke. For weeks no rain had fallen, and for weeks bush fires had simmered in every direction. Porcupine, at the lake margin, was fairly safe, but many of the outlying camps were recognized as veritable death traps in case of forest fire. Also there was Porcupine Landing across the lake, where scores of women and children would be burnt to death unless they were conveyed to this, the south, side.

At about eight o'clock a roaring hurricane set in, and even before anyone had time to realize it a gigantic horse-shoe of fire, fifty miles in width, was bearing down upon the camp from the unsurveyed areas of the northwest. A hot, brown gas hung in the atmosphere, so that objects at thirty yards looked weird and unearthly, and Barry, realizing the danger, telephoned through to Great Dome.

"Yes," answered the Super, "I guess we shall be all right here. I've got the men working back fires, and we've water galore. You look out for yourself, boy."

Barry had some of the company's papers with him, and it occurred to him to bury these in the moist sand at the lake margin, together with his money. Making his way down to the water he found dozens of men at the same game, each marking his site with a stump bearing his own initials, and laughing and jesting while they were at it, little guessing what they were in for.

"There's a mean swipe for you!" said one of them to Barry, pointing out across the lake. "Going to scuttle his launch in shallow water so as to save her."

Barry looked out. He could discern the outline of a motor boat, with someone moving about aboard it.

"Who is it?" he queried, and as he spoke one of the other two launches landed quite near to them with a batch of women and children from the perilous settlement across the water.

"Why, Culwood, of course," came the answer. "Do you reckon anyone but a drunken breed would do such a thing while there are still scores across the lake waiting to be brought this side?"

In a flash Barry realized the truth. The despicable wretch in the launch, thinking only of saving his own property, was prepared to allow scores of his fellow creatures across the lake to suffer hardship or perhaps miserably.

"Say, I'm not standing for that," cried the young engineer. "I've got pals across the lake, and I daresay you have. Come along and lend me a hand?"

The man shrugged his shoulders and sauntered off. It was no affair of his. Barry, alone, hurried to a canoe at the lake margin, pushed off, and a minute later boarded the launch just as Culwood took up an axe to stow in the floor. Instantly Barry pushed off Culwood's canoe and his own, and, caught by the wind, they drifted shorewards.

"What are you up to, Culwood?" he demanded, as the man turned on him savagely.

"What in thunder is that to do with