

# Doubling His Money

By J. A. HOLDEN

Illustration by Arthur Lismer

*The experiences of Bobby Spencer are put into fiction form. But the story "Doubling His Money" has been lived in a thousand ways in Canada during the past few years. There is no particular plot in the narrative, nor does it merely point the moral. It relates experience; and there are hundreds of people who could furnish from personal history like experience to that of Bobby Spencer.*



"Bobby entered the office, and for half an hour the salesman and the manager of the company regaled him with a hundred and one reasons why Glacier Park at Port Hudson could not fail to make his everlasting fortune."

THE popular craze got Bobby Spencer at last. All winter had he stood immune against the fascination of the gorgeous panoramic painting, the insidious attack of the blue-print, and the bold demand of the full-page newspaper ad. The sylvan beauties of the finest view lots of Paradise Park, as pictured by an insistent salesman, left him coldly wondering if the ice would be in good condition for the hockey match Wednesday night; the unparalleled opportunity to get in on the ground floor on Artico Acreage and "double his money" merely started him to thinking about that new motorcycle he thought of purchasing.

While the other clerks talked glibly of "quick turnovers" and "enhanced values" and declaimed loudly on the merits or demerits of "stuff" in the four-mile circle as compared with the eight-mile circle, Bobby was wont to declare them a bunch of simpletons for throwing their good coin away on tiny patches of farm land.

But one fatal day in April Bobby met an old Ontario friend who had beaten the real estate game in Calgary to the tune of a few hundred dollars, and when the shades of night had fallen on both the four and eight mile circles, that dread disease that sooner or later clutches all Westerners possessed of ten dollars or more had numbered one more among its victims. Bobby had the real estate craze!

Not in any mild form either, gentle reader. Far be it from our hero to do anything by halves. No little \$20 or \$30 plunge for him. No sir! Just as soon as he found a good thing, and he would know a good thing when he saw it all right, he was going to "invest" his whole savings of about \$150 and do without that motorcycle. What was a little old motorcycle anyhow compared with the opportunity that real estate offered to get a flying start on the road to Easy Street—to acquire a competence for that evil and rainy day when his feeble fingers could no longer punch the typewriter keys with vigour and with vim? What matter if he would have no money left to meet the second payment in six months? Long before that, the way real estate was booming, he would undoubtedly be able to sell at an advance; perhaps even attain to that highest pinnacle of the small realty speculator's ambition, viz., double his money in a few months.

The next evening, after wading through three or four solid pages of real estate advertisements in each evening paper, Bobby took a stroll along Real Estate Row, otherwise known as First Street, carefully noting all the maps, blue prints, bird's eye views, placards, etc., that filled the windows of the realty offices, that is, about every second window. Being evening, nearly all of the "curb operators" were enjoying a well-earned rest after the strenuous labours of the day, so that he was able to proceed nearly a block down First Street before a "window worker," seeing him gaze interestedly at a gorgeous panorama of factories and warehouses supposed to represent Port Hudson five years hence, hurried out of the office and approached our hero: "Thinking of investing a little money at Port Hudson?" he began. "It will be the best thing you ever did in your life, my friend. You can't make a mistake there. Bound to grow as big as Edmonton. Better come inside and let me show you why our new subdivision, Glacier Park, will double your money in six months."

BOBBY entered the office, and for half an hour the salesman and the manager of the company regaled him with a hundred and one reasons why Glacier Park at Port Hudson could not fail to make his everlasting fortune. It looked reasonable enough, too. If one bought property while the coming city was still in its infancy, the rapid growth that such an important commercial point was bound to experience must make his holding more valuable. He knew that hundreds of fortunes had been made in just the same way. Of course a twenty-five foot lot at \$150 two miles from the centre of what was as yet only a village did seem

a doubtful opportunity at first, but the stories of other lots in the same subdivision already resold at an advance of \$50 or more, and that oft-repeated story, the good old standby of the real estate agent, of Edmonton lots two miles out advancing from \$100 to \$1,000 in five years overcame his last scruples, and he finally left the office minus \$150, but the proud possessor (when the last payment had been made) of three lots in Glacier Park, Port Hudson, now a mere village but destined—so the salesman clearly demonstrated—to become the busy metropolis of the last Great West. Of course he intended to hold the lots for a few years, but he was not a bit selfish and decided that if someone really had to have them for building purposes he would let them go for half as much again as they had cost.

Now, indeed, was Bobby a charter member of the Real Estate Boosters' Club. A new interest in life possessed him. Did a bleak vista of half-cultivated land a few miles from the city look like farm land now? Not on your unearned increment, it didn't! Bobby's prophetic eye could picture pretty cottages, gently-sloping lawns, and happy children, where you and I could see nothing but wheat stubbles, scrubby trees, and busted fences.

Let one of his fellow clerks but swing the conversation ever so slightly toward the realty topic, and our hero was right on the job to demonstrate to all and sundry how Port Hudson, the gem of the North, could and would double, treble, and maybe quadruple the money of every mother's son of them that possessed the business acumen, foresight, and coin of the realm to grab a few lots there while the grabbing was good.

Day after day he scanned the real estate columns of the daily papers with the same feverish interest that the race track follower bestows on the dope sheet, and many were the "good things" he was compelled to pass up, until such time at least as someone insisted on taking over his Port Hudson lots.

May and June passed quickly enough for Bobby. Perchance on two or three occasions he had envied some friends who could take long trips into the country on their motorcycles while he had to be content with a street-car ride; but, he reflected, one could not have his pie and eat it, too; besides, a motorcycle was a poor rig compared with the motor

car he would have—some day. July came and with it a vacation for Bobby.

It was a beautiful summer afternoon when Bobby alighted from the stage at Port Hudson. The big river steamers being loaded with supplies and machinery, the numerous small craft and scows on the river, the fifty or more tents erected by new residents who could find no other lodgings, the astonishing number of new buildings in course of construction; all filled Bobby's heart with joy. Here was a city in the making if ever there was one! A dull imagination indeed that could not picture the coming metropolis spread over the verdant hills and across and beyond the mighty river that flowed so swiftly and energetically, as if in keeping with the spirit of the place.

BOBBY spent nearly the whole evening by the bank of the river, the mighty volume of which seemed to fascinate him, and retired to his not very soft cot in the corridor of the hotel (a room was not to be had at either hotel), filled with enthusiasm and joyous anticipation for the morrow.

The next morning Bobby arose bright and early and after breakfasting and watching a Hudson's Bay steamer get under way, walked leisurely to the first real estate office that met his eye.

"Glacier Park, eh," replied the man behind the roll-top to Bobby's inquiry. "Sure, I know all about it. Old Sam Hoggins' homestead. Claimed he couldn't raise even a decent beard on it, so he guessed he'd have to follow his neighbour's example and subdivide it. View lots? Oh, yes, fine view out there, but if you are going out you'd better take a compass along because

it's easy to get lost in the bush."

Bobby spent some time in the office discussing real estate conditions and the probable future of the town; and it must be confessed that his heart sank a little lower each minute, especially when he learned that good building lots much closer in than his could be bought for the same price. But, of course, they were not view lots, overlooking the country for miles and miles. After obtaining full instructions as to how to reach Glacier Park, Bobby purchased a cheap compass and started on his way.

For the first mile he enjoyed his walk immensely. The air was clear and exhilarating, and the wild raspberries that grew in profusion everywhere tasted better, he thought, than anything he had eaten since leaving Ontario.

Arriving at a point where the trail turned to the north, Bobby left it and made his way along a blaze that had been cut through the thick bush. Here he soon found the going to be anything but good. Fallen dead trees had to be climbed over. The underbrush had grown up pretty well and occasionally a whip-like gad stung his face. Very often he stepped on a soft spot and went in over his shoe tops. He wondered when the town would see fit to build sidewalks to Glacier Park and prayed that it would be soon. Then he remembered that the only apparent residents, the jack rabbits, would hardly have sufficient influence with the town council for that.

BUT poor Bobby's misfortunes were only beginning. Soon he arrived at the edge of a patch of muskeg and, deciding to go around rather than across it, inside of five minutes found that he had lost his way. He knew he could not be very far from the blaze he had been following, but try as he would he could not locate that blaze. It seemed incredible, but the cold fact stared him in the face. He tried retracing his steps; tried to figure it out with the aid of his compass and map; but it made no difference—that blaze could not be found. A hawk circling overhead laughed at him—so he imagined. But it was no laughing matter for Bobby. Finally he gave it up and headed due West, knowing that by proceeding in that direction he must reach the river and the rest would be easy.

But if following the blaze had been hard work, (Concluded on page 22.)