

THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE:

Or, The Tragedy of the Wild.

CHAPTER II.

The stormy day was followed by an equally stormy night. Inside the dugout it was possible, in a measure, to forget the terrors of the blizzard raging outside. The glowing stove threw out its comforting warmth, and even the rank yellow light of the small oil lamp, which was suspended from the rafters, gave a cheering suggestion of comfort to the plain, rough interior. Besides, there were food and shelter and human associations within, and the mind of man is easily soothed into a feeling of security by such surroundings.

The trappers had rescued the victim of the storm. They had brought him to the shelter of their humble abode; they had refreshed him with warmth and good food; they had given him the comfort of a share of their blankets, the use of their tobacco, all the hospitality they knew how to bestow.

The three men were ranged round the room in various attitudes of repose. All were smoking heavily, while on the top of the stove stood a tin billy full to the brim of steaming coffee, the scent of which, blending with the reek of strong tobacco, was good.

Victor Gagnon was lying full length upon a pile of outspread blankets. His face was turned towards the stove, and his head was supported on one hand. He looked none the worse for his adventure in the storm; in fact, he was looking very well indeed. He was a small, dark man of the superior French half-breed class. He had a narrow, ferret face, which was quite good-looking in a mean, small way. He was clean shaven, and wore his straight black hair rather long. His clothes, now he had discarded his furs, showed to be of orthodox type, and quite unlike those of his hosts. He was a trader who kept a store away to the north-east of the dugout. He worked in connection with one of the big fur companies of the East, as an agent for the wholesale house dealing directly with trappers and Indians.

This was the man with whom the Westleys traded, and they were truly glad that chance had put, in their power to befriend him. Their associations with him, although chiefly of a business nature, were decidedly friendly.

Now they were listening to his slow, quiet, thoughtful talk. He was a man who liked talking, but he always contrived that his audience should be those who gave information. These two backwoods-men, simple as the virgin forests to which they belonged, were not keen enough to observe this. Victor Gagnon understood such men well. His life had been made up of dealings with the mountain world and those who peopled it.

Nick, large and picturesque, sat tailor-fashion on his blankets, facing the glowing stove with the unblinking, thoughtful stare of a large dog. Ralph was less luxurious. He was propped upon his up-turned bucket, near enough to the fire to dispense the coffee without rising from his seat.

"Yup. It's a long trail for a man to make travelin' light, an' on his lone," Victor was saying, while his black eyes flashed swiftly upon his companions. "It's not a summer picnic, I guess. Maybe you're wondering what I come for."

He ceased speaking as a heavy blast shook the roof, and set the lamp swinging dangerously. "We're good an' pleased to see you—," began Ralph, in his deliberate way; but Victor broke in upon him at once.

"O' course you are. It's like you an' Nick to feel that way. But human natur's human natur', an' maybe som'eres you are jest wondering what brought me along. Anyway, I come with a red-hot purpose. Gee! but it's blowin'! I ain't likely to forget this storm," Gagnon shuddered as he thought of his narrow escape.

"Say," he went on, with an effort at playfulness. "You two boys are pretty deep—pretty deep." He repeated himself reflectively. "An' you seem so cosy and free too. I do allow I'd never 'a' thought it. Ha, ha!"

He turned a smiling face upon his two friends, and looked quizzically from one to the other. His book was open, but behind it shone something else. There was a hunger in his sharp, black eyes which would have been observed by any one other than these two backwoods-men.

"You allow was a big fancy in your way o' speakin', Victor," observed Nick, responding to the grin. "Hit the main trail, an' see if you can't find a good place to set a trap."

Ralph had looked steadily at the trader while he was speaking; now he turned slowly and poured out three pannikins of coffee. During the operation he turned the visitor's words over in his mind, and something of their meaning came to him. He passed a tin to each of the others, and sipped meditatively from his own, while his eyes became fixed upon the face of the half-breed.

"There was some fine pelts in that last parcel o' furs you brought along," continued Victor. "Three black foxes. But your skins is always the best I get."

Ralph nodded over his coffee, whilst he added his other hand to the support of the tin. Nick watched his brother a little anxiously. He, too, felt uneasy.

"It's cur'us that you git more o' them black pelts around here than anybody else higher up north. You're a sight better hunters than any durned neche on the Peace River. An' them hides is worth more'n five times their weight in gold. You're makin' a pile o' bills. Say, you keep them black pelts snug away w' other stuff o' value."

Gagnon paused and took a deep draught at his coffee. "Say," he went on, with a knowing smile, "I guess them black foxes lived in a gold mine."

He broke off and watched the effect of his words. The others kept silence, only their eyes betraying them. The smoke curled slowly up from their pipes and hung in a cloud about the creaking roof. The fire burned fiercely in the stove, and with every rush of wind outside there came a corresponding roar of flame up the stovepipe.

"Maybe you take my meanin'," said the Breed, assured that his words had struck home. "Them black furs was chock full o' grit; an' grit that was gold-dust. Guess that dust didn't grow in them furs; an' I 'lows foxes don't fancy a bed o' such stuff. Say, boys, you've struck gold in this lay-out of yours. That's what's brought me out in this all-fired storm."

The two brothers exchanged rapid glances, and then Ralph spoke for them both.

"You're smart, Victor. That's so. We've been working a patch o' pay dirt for nigh on to twelve month. But it's worked out; clear to the bedrock. It wa'n't jest a great find, though I 'lows, while it lasted, we took a tidy wage out of it."

"An' what might you call a 'tidy wage'?" asked the Breed, in a tone of disappointment. He knew those men so well that he did not doubt their statement; but he was loth to relinquish his dream. He had come there to make an arrangement with them. If they had a gold working he considered that, provided he could be of use to them, there would be ample room for him in it. This had been the object of his disastrous journey. And now he was told that it was worked out. He loved gold, and the news came as a great blow to him.

He watched Ralph keenly while he awaited his reply, sitting himself up in his eagerness. "Seventy-five dollars a day," Victor's eyes sparkled.

"Each?" he asked. "No, on shares."

There was another long silence, while the voice of the storm was loud without. Victor Gagnon was thinking hard, but his face was calm, his expression almost indifferent. The smoke continued to rise. "I 'lows you should know if it's worked out, sure."

The sharp eyes seemed to go through Ralph. "Dead sure. We ain't drawn a cent's worth o' color out of it for nine months solid."

"Tain't worth prospectin' fer the reef?" "Can't say. I ain't much when it comes to prospectin' gold. I knows the color when I sees it."

Nick joined in the conversation at this point. "Guess you'd a notion you fancied bein' in it," he said, smiling over at the Breed.

Victor laughed a little harshly. "That's jest what."

The two brothers nodded. This they had understood. "I'd have found all the plant for big work," went on the trader eagerly. "I'd have found the cash to do everything; I'd have found the labor. An' us three 'ud have made a great syndicate. We'd 'a' run it dead secret. Wi' me in it we could 'a' sent our gold down to the bank by the dogs, an' bein' as 'ud even 'a' found what the yeller came from. It 'ud a been a real fine game—a jo-dandy game. An'

it's worked clear out," he asked again, as though to make certain that he had heard aright.

"Bottomed right down to the bed-rock. Maybe ye'd like to see fer yourself?"

"Guess I can take your word, boys; ye ain't the sort to lie to a pal. I'm real sorry." He paused and shifted his position. Then he went on with a cunning look; "I 'lows you're like to take a run down to Edmonton one o' these days. A feller mostly likes to makes things hum when he's got a good wad." Gagnon's tone was purely conversational. But his object must have been plain to any one else. He was bitterly resentful at the working out of the placer mine, and his anger always sent his thoughts into crooked channels. His nature was a curious one; he was honest enough, although avaricious, while his own ends were served. It was different when he was balked.

"We don't notion a city any," said Nick simply. "Things is confusin' to judge by the yarns folks tell," added Ralph, with a shake of his shaggy head.

"Them fellers as comes up to your shack, Victor, mostly talks o' drink, an' shootin', an' an' women," Nick went on. "Guess the hills'll do us. Maybe when we've done w' graft an' feel that it 'ud be good to laze, likely we'll go down and buy a homestead on the prairie. Maybe, I sez."

Nick spoke dubiously, like a man who does not convince himself. "Hah, that's 'cause you've never been to a city," said the Breed sharply.

"Jest so," observed Ralph quietly, between the puffs at his pipe. Gagnon laughed silently. His eyes were very bright, and he looked from one brother to the other with appreciation. An idea had occurred to him, and he was mentally probing the possibilities of carrying it out. What he saw pleased him, for he continued to smile.

"Well, well; maybe you're right," he said indulgently. Then silence fell.

Each man was wrapped in his own thoughts, and talk without a definite object was foreign to at least two of the three. The brothers were waiting in their stolid Indian fashion for sleep to come. The trader was thinking hard behind his lowered eyelids, which were almost hidden by the thick smoke which rose from his pipe.

The fire burned down and was replenished. Ralph rose and gathered the pannikins, and threw them into a biscuit box. Then he laid out his blankets, while Nick went over and belted the door. Still the trader did not look up. When the two men had settled themselves comfortably in their blankets, the other at last put his pipe away.

"No," he said, as he, too, negotiated his blankets; "guess we want good sound men in these hills anyway. I reckon you've no call to get visitin' the prairie, boys; you're the finest hunters I've ever known. D'y'e know the name your shack here goes by among the downlanders? They call it the 'Westley Injun Reserve.'"

"White Injuns," said Nick, with a grin followed by a yawn. "That's what," observed Victor, curling himself up in his blankets. "I've frequently heard tell of the White Squaw, but white neches sounds like as if it wa'n't jest possible. Howsum, they call you real white buck neches, an' I 'lows there ain't no redskin in the world to stan' beside you on the trail o' a fur."

The two men laughed at their friend's rough tribute to their attainments. Ralph was the quieter of the two, but his appreciation was none the less. He was simple-hearted, but he knew his own worth when dealing with furs. Nick laughed loudly. It tickled him to be considered a white Indian at the calling which was his, for his whole pride was in his work.

Nick was not without a strong romantic side to his nature. The life of the mountains had imbued him with a half-savage superstition which revelled in the uncanny lore of such places. This was not the first time he had heard mention of a White Squaw, and although he did not believe such a phenomenon possible, it was seductive to his superstitious love of the weird. Victor had turned over to sleep, but Nick was very wide awake and interested. He could not let such an opportunity slip. Victor was good at a yarn. And, besides, Victor knew more of the mountain lore than any one else. So he roused the Breed again.

(To be continued.)

PESTS.

The girl who tells you how popular she is with the men.

The man who tells you how popular he is with the women.

The woman who used to hold you on his knee when you were a baby.

The person who calls you to the phone, and says, "Do you know who this is?"

People who send postcards from outlandish places without signing names or initials to the flippant messages.

HOW FELT HATS ARE MADE

HAIR OF RABBITS AND OTHER ANIMALS ARE USED.

Machinery Is Now Employed For Operations Which Formerly Were Manual.

Hats were first manufactured in England in 1510, and superseded caps or soft headgear in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Wool was the material first employed in forming felt hats, but in time, as European trade with America developed, the fur of the beaver, being finer and softer, came into use, hence the term beaver was long synonymous with hat.

For about three centuries the beaver hats dyed black and prepared with much skill formed the head covering of the higher classes in Great Britain. This headgear distinguished them from the middle and humbler classes, which continued for some time to wear the less expensive caps and bonnets.

Political and religious differences have often been marked by the form of hats. The Puritan of the reign of Charles I., adopted the steeple hat, high and narrow, with a broad brim and devoid of ornament. The Cavalier during the same era wore a lower and broader crown, with a feather stuck on one side.

THE QUAKER HAT

low in the crown, with a broad brim and plain, dates from the origin of the sect of the middle of the seventeenth century.

Felt hats are made in a wide range of qualities. The finer and more expensive qualities are formed entirely of fur; the commoner qualities use a mixture of fur and Saxony wool. For the lowest kinds says the Electrical Record, wool alone is employed. The processes and apparatus necessary for making hats of fur differ also from those required in the case of woolen bodies; and in large manufactories, especially in America, machinery is generally employed for operations which formerly were entirely manual.

Hatter's fur consists principally of the hair of rabbits (technically called coneys) and hares, with some proportion of nutria, musquash and beaver's hair, though the latter has been for many years extremely scarce, and generally any mixings or cuttings from furriers are also used. Fifty years ago the hatter beat his fur with a bow into a triangular piece of felt which, when laid together by two straight edges, assumed

THE SHAPE OF A CONE.

The felt was next shrunk between cloths which were kept hot and wet by frequent dipping into a kettle of boiling size, care being taken to preserve the triangular shape of the felt.

Having been shrunk to about one-third its original size or to proper dimensions for a hat, the conical bag was drawn over a block and tied tightly at the point where the crown spreads out into a brim. The brim portion was next pulled and stretched into shape with a special instrument. While still on the block the hat was dyed and again washed, stiffened and dried. If a long nap was desired, the surface was carded; while to obtain a smooth finish it was rubbed with pumice stone. It was then ready to be "trimmed," that is, to have the band, binding, lining and sweatband put on. Beginning with the cutting of the fur, these processes are now performed by electrically operated automatic machinery.

MAXIMS AND MORALISINGS.

Be wisely worldly, but not worldly wise.—Quarles.

He makes no friends who never made a foe.—Tennyson.

Duty only knits her brow when you fly from her. Follow her, and she smiles.—Carmen Sylva.

The moment anybody is satisfied with himself, everybody else becomes dissatisfied with him.—Unidentified.

Presents make the heart grow fonder.—Frank Clemens.

When the right kind of a person has too small a place, he does his work so well as to make the place bigger.—L. B. Briggs.

My rule is to go straight forward in doing what appears to be right, leaving the consequences to Providence.—Benjamin Franklin.

A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good humor in those who come within its influence.—Addison.

Hanging is too good for a painting that is badly executed.

A friend who isn't in need is a surprise, indeed.

"Eat and Be Merry!"

Stop starving yourself—stop suffering the pangs of indigestion—stop worrying about what you dare and dare not eat. Eat hearty meals of wholesome food, take

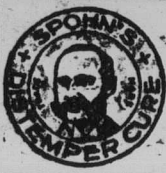
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NEW EPOCH OF SURGERY

PREVENTIVE TREATMENT FOR PERITONITIS.

Dr. D. Wilkie, of Edinburgh, Uses Vaccine with Success on Bagbits.

A series of inoculation experiments which may mark an epoch in the history of abdominal surgery soon will be made the basis of a new preventive treatment for peritonitis at once of the great London (England) hospitals.

Original experiments which have been carried out at the laboratories of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh by Dr. D. Wilkie under grant from the Carnegie trust consisted of inoculating rabbits with vaccines and other substances as preliminary to abdominal operations to lessen or remove the danger of peritonitis.

ONE CASE IN FIVE FATAL.

Dr. Wilkie points out in the record of his experiments published in the Medical Chronicle that in spite of the great advances in recent years in intestinal surgery one of every five cases in which an intestine has to be cut and joined together again terminates fatally. Acute inflammation, resulting from the action of germs attacking the lining of the membranes of the abdomen either during or after any operation on an intestine is the operating surgeon's chief dread.

The original experiments were carried out to discover if possible some means of preparing the patient before the abdominal operation so as to make him better able to withstand peritonitis should it result. Rabbits, previously inoculated with small doses of vaccines made from bacteria combined with small doses of nuclein, were subjected to the same abdominal operation as un inoculated rabbits, the appendix being removed in each case under ether anesthesia.

PREPARED ANIMALS LIVED.

Immediately after the operation 30,000,000 live and violent bacteria, such as ordinarily are found in fatal cases of human peritonitis, were injected into the peritoneal cavities of both sets of animals, resulting in the deaths of the unprepared animals in a few hours from acute peritonitis. The absence of ill effects in the prepared animals have lent great encouragement to hopes that similar preparatory injections in human beings will be of good effect. Already apparently successful results are being obtained in a few cases in man. It is hoped that on these or similar lines the key to the successful treatment of what at present is the most fatal of all surgical complications will be found.

FAT PASSENGERS.

Amusing Incidents of Travel in the Old Days in England.

Had he lived in our day of steam, electricity and motor-cars, Daniel Lambert, most famous of fat men, would not have been driven, as he was in his own day, to having a special vehicle constructed for his conveyance. Other stout men, somewhat less fat and less prosperous, who had to make use of ordinary coaches built for human beings of standard size, experienced and made a vast amount of trouble, as Mr. J. B. Walkenside, writing recently of coaching days in England, has amusingly shown.

Mr. Benning of Bath having been refused a place in the coach because of his corpulence, on the excuse that the places were all engaged, made no demur, but coming early to the starting-place, simply got in, pulled down the blinds, set-

ted himself comfortably, and fell asleep.

Other passengers arriving and peeping in at his enormous bulk, protested to the hostler that it was impossible to travel with such a giant. The argument awakened Mr. Benning, who lifted the blind drowsily declared that he should not get out, but if anybody chose to pull him out he would offer no resistance, and went to sleep again. When he again waked up, at nearly an hour past midnight, he looked out to see at what town the coach was stopping—and found himself still in the inn yard at Bath. The horses had been quietly taken out during his nap and put to another coach which chanced to be in the stable awaiting minor repairs, and he had been left behind.

An immensely fat Quaker of Huddersfield, having been first refused transit unless he would go as lumber at ninepence per stone, although even then he was assured he would be an inconvenient variety, since he could not be split for better packing, as was usual, was finally told that he would be accepted as a passenger, but he must pay for two places.

"I will not dispute thy decision, friend. I shall need them both," he assented, good-humoredly, and paid the money down.

The next morning he made an early appearance, accompanied by a sister as fat as himself, and the two climbed into their places, from which it was impossible to dislodge them. Neither could the other intending passengers squeeze in with such an elephantine pair, and the proprietor had at last to consent to send them on by post-chaise.

"I applaud thy decision, friend," commented the huge Quaker, placidly. "Rachel and I are not unsocial, and doubtless we should have enjoyed the gentlemen's company had no mishap occurred. But had we chanced to lurch upon them in descending a hill, I fear the conversation so interrupted would never have been resumed. Rachel is tender-hearted, but she weighs three hundred pounds, and I myself am four and forty pounds heavier. It is best that our fleshy burden should afflict ourselves alone."

SMILE A LITTLE.

Smile a little in the sadness Of this world's rough, weary day; Scatter on its pathway gladness, Driving sorrow far away.

Smile a little as you meet them— Those who plod the path of pain; Smiles and good words when you greet them Raise them up to life again.

Smile a little as beside you Men toil up the weary hill; They will cheer instead of chide yet If you give it with a will.

Smiles are helpful in the sadnest Of our life down here below, Turning pain to joy and gladness— Leave them everywhere you go.

GOSSIP AND SCANDAL.

Many People confuse gossip with scandal, but the two things are quite different, says the Gentlewoman. The scandal monger is usually detested, while the gossip is often universally popular. In fact the popularity which it brings in its train is one of the strongest incentives to gossip. A really accomplished gossip is a social acquisition. Thousands of people who do not gossip themselves like to listen to it. It saves them the trouble of talking. The gossip is generally good natured. The scandal monger seldom is. After all, what is more interesting than human nature? That is the stock in trade of the gossip, as it is of the novelist and dramatist.

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