

was the moment, the moment of telling, when this new, wild rapture born within him turned to bitter yearning. Alice Blendon loved him, too, but that was the end. Her word was given to another one for whom she had thought she cared till Clive came into her world.

His dream was over. The harmony of his being was spoiled for ever. That was the reward of his search for Carl. He took back home with him a deep yearning and agony. Whether it was greater for Jean Thurston than for himself he could not say, but as he saw the colour leaving her cheeks and the light fading from her grand eyes day by day, Clive thought it must be more bitter for her.

Yet faith is faith! Alice Blendon's word was pledged to one, Charles Hooper, of Ottawa. Clive would no more have thought of asking her to break the engagement than Alice Blendon would have thought of requesting a release. Word of honour was sacred to her and to Clive.

Furthermore, in this pitiable situation Fate's strange whim had influence. By chance Carl had chosen the name, Charles Hooper, to hide his identity in the West. Thus there were two men named Charles Hooper, the real one of Ottawa and the false one on Doan's ranch.

CHAPTER V.

EVENTS, which were as threads in the loom of the weaver, followed fast for those concerned in the circumstances of the tale, events which need but a few words to picture.

Through boldly displayed advertising, tremendous booming and the shrewd machinations of Jasper and Jasper, solicitors, the CONSOLIDATED DIAMOND COBALT company forced its stock to the first place among paper-mines and even among real mines. The shares were offered at twenty-five cents. The form of advertising was unchallengeable. The authorized capital was given. The names of the directors were boldly typed. A statement of the development to date and the proposed development with new capital for which the first shares were offered accompanied a mining engineer's glowing report of the riches contained in this property. It gave the values of assays which had been made. It invited inspection and, indeed, some intending investors did visit the place. They found the development as stated and everything as claimed. There were bags of ore packed ready for shipment. There was every indication that the mine was producing and that with increased capital there were fortunes in it. Some drifting had been done, but it was on veins which existed only in imagination and in the mining engineer's report. The engineer, by the way, was a barber from some part which is of no consequence. The mine of the CONSOLIDATED DIAMOND COBALT was a salted mine and salted by men old at the game.

Because it told its falsehoods in the biggest, boldest and blackest type, and buoyed up these falsehoods with indisputable evidence which was in reality only a blacker lie, the CONSOLIDATED got the boom for which it had hoped and worked.

Many a man was induced to put varying amounts into this stock. Among them was one, Henry Thurston. Throughout the neighbourhood that knew him Thurston was counted as a wise and cautious man, but wiser and more cautious men have fallen into the same predicament. He invested largely like many others. It was about this time that Thurston first met Jasper. The lawyer had come down to the village on the Humber's banks for the purpose of collecting old accounts which his avaricious mind would not allow him to forget. He was bleeding thousands with his Cobalt swindle, yet he could not overlook the village poor who, in their extremities, had come under his lending thumb at one time or another.

Henry Thurston sought him out to enquire into the CONSOLIDATED, knowing Jasper was one solicitor. Needless to say, the lawyer's smooth tongue convinced him that his investments were quite safe and persuaded him to put more into the stock at the first opportunity. Thurston invited him to his home, and there the lawyer for the first time set eyes on Jean. Such love as his narrow soul was capable of was stirred up in that visit. He made it a point to have more than one business call to the Humber village, and his visits at the Thurston home became quite frequent. Judging the time ripe, according to his professional instinct, he, with all due ceremony, presented his suit. To his shame and chagrin it was quietly refused. Subsequent advances were decisively cut short.

Jasper was forced to swallow his baffled pride and desires, but he never thought of giving up his end because of one defeat. Thus far in his career all things had come to him if he waited, and used his hook-or-by-crook tactics. For this he would wait.

The one rival, Whitmore, still visiting in the country, and the only one who seemed in his way, was removed by a few meaning words. Jasper told him plainly, when he saw in what direction the other's attentions lay, that if he did not want his real character spread over the place he had better spend his thoughts and time elsewhere. Whitmore knew that the lawyer could and would do what he said. He was in possession of all facts connected with him, for Jasper, with his brother, had been his defence in the scrape which ended his college career.

In view of this, Whitmore thought it wise to use discretion and left the scene. He knew Jasper's methods and actions were such as would cause any honest person to despise them, yet he had no substantial accusation to bring against the lawyer.

For the time being Jasper had the upper hand. The investment of Henry Thurston gave him a pretext for still visiting the house to talk over the prospects of CONSOLIDATED DIAMOND COBALT. Thus, though secretly wishing to avoid Jasper, Jean was frequently brought in contact with him.

But that was a hard winter in Alberta, the herds were greatly reduced, and in the shifting, Carl returned East.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the first spring month wrapped wild Temiskaming in green a lone prospector wandered among the northerly regions up near the head-tributaries of Montreal River. He pushed farther north than the late rich finds on that same water, driving his canoe through long, tortuous rapids which would have dismayed any other man, and portaging over rough miles of broken way that no other person would have attempted. But the solitary seeker, strong-framed as he was, gloried in the obstacles in his path. He gloried in the battle of the rapid and the muscle-straining toil of the portage. The lone life was the life he wished for, and in his limbs was the search-fever, the subtle, forceful, fever which always prompted and ever lured with thought of unearthing hidden wealth. With him he had a pick, a shovel, a hand-drill, some pounds of blasting powder, blankets, in which to sleep, and provisions to last weeks if augmented by fish and game. He went with more knowledge of what to find and how to find it than many who have posed as practical prospectors, all their lives. Moreover, he went to win! Through the sweet, spring months he pursued the invisible silver-god who ever evaded his grasp. High hope of morning faded to sullen disappointment at eve as each day filed by and the man would roll himself in his blankets, within his tent of boughs against the timber or under his up-turned canoe on the shore, sick and weary of the quest that brought nothing but emptiness.

Spring merged with summer, and beneath the hot sun that held the still air thick and stifling between the rocky walls of gorges and sent the fly-pestered moose to plunge his body in shallow, marshy borders of lake or river, the lone prospector still persevered in his toil and search. Each evening he took the sinking weight of disappointment into slumber and forgot it. In the fresh, cool hours of dawn his blood rushed strong and there was no thought of past failure. The man went a-seeking with renewed energy, hopeful and exultant of the end. He would still farther north into the heart of the wild. Only those who had themselves pushed far knew of the lone prospector who had gone beyond them, but when the rich strikes on the Montreal River grew into prominence the doings of all the bands or single searchers operating or staking claims in that vicinity were recorded in the Cobalt weekly letters.

Bland, who had never given up the idea that Carl was somewhere in the mining-grounds of the vast region of Temiskaming, or farther west on the Superior shore, watched these reports eagerly for any hint which might disclose his friend's whereabouts.

One day he talked with Lewis, who had staked claims near the late finds on the Montreal. Lewis was one of the few who had seen the lone prospector of the north-land, and he was telling Bland of the nervy seeker who had gone with his outfit into the difficult country beyond their camps. He did not know his name, but his partner did. The partner was down in the American cities just then trying to interest capitalists in their strike in order to get financial backing. However, Lewis had seen him and gave Bland a description of him. Jerry slapped his thighs with exultation.

"Jove!" he cried. "It's Carl. I'll bet a big C bank-note that it's Carl!"

Immediately Halycon got the following summons: "It beats the deuce, Clive! Carl's up in the north, prospecting. I knew he never went West. That North Bay agent must have been blind on the night he said he sold a ticket to him. I saw Lewis from the new camps on the Montreal, and he told me of a lone prospector who had gone in beyond them. He didn't know his name, but the description just suits Carl. Come at once, old boy! Come prepared to do the hardest canoeing and portaging you've ever done in your life—even harder than the three of us did on that Maine moose-hunt! Do you remember it? Lewis says it is deuced rough, but come, and come quickly. We will follow him and bring him back if we have to tie him down."

Clive lost not a moment in acquainting Jean of this news, and the glad light that sprang to her eyes would have been enough to make him go even if he had not already made that resolve.

He left to his men the reaping of the harvest, took his tried canoe and camp outfit from the garret, and shipping it ahead from Toronto, set out for Cobalt.

(To be continued.)



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