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Further details can be obtained on application to G. J. Desbarats, C.M.G., Deputy Minister of the Naval Service, Department of the Naval Service, Ottawa.

G. J. DESBARATS,
Deputy Minister of the Naval Service,
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Ottawa, March 12, 1917.

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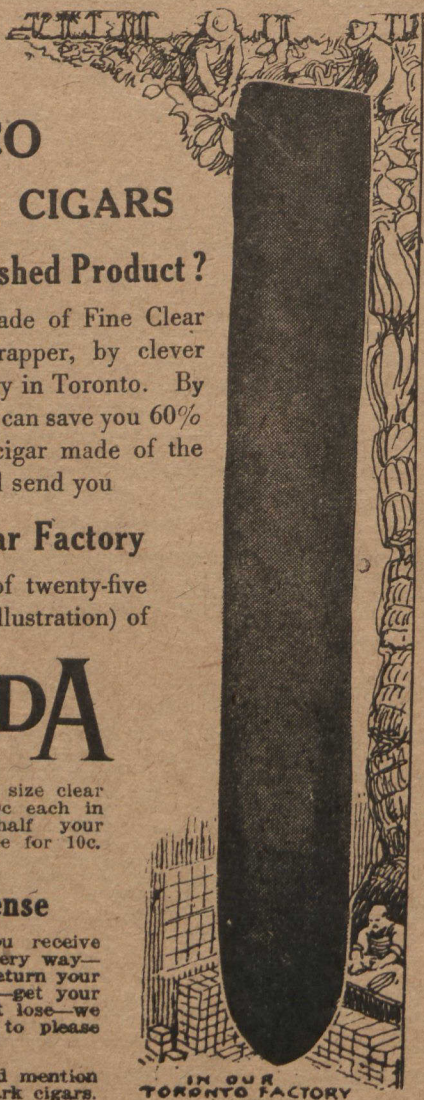
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"Listen!" Alma leaned forward and pounded in one open palm with the other hand clinched in a fist. "If Jack went back on me; if my father would drive me out into the mountains to die and be eaten of coyotes; if you were the last, the very last man in the world, I would not marry you. I would go into a convent first!"

"You! In a convent!" He took his pipe from his mouth and the walls echoed his laughter.

THIS was almost the last conversation between them, for Alma relapsed into one of her silent moods, and Jessop spent much time down by the mountain of snow, watching its almost magical vanishing.

"They'll be swinging some sort of an old plank across the ravine to-day, Alma," he said at breakfast, a morning or two later. "Let's go down and look on."

But Alma shrank. "I won't come," she said sullenly. "There will be a crowd. The whole camp will be there to stare at me. Pop and Jack can come and find me."

Jessop tapped the table a moment or two in silence. "Better go, Alma," he said at last. "It'll look better for you, the more anxious you are to get shut of me and this."

But Alma only glowered in dark obstinacy. "How silly you are! How could they think I would not be anxious to leave? But I will not be stared at." Then she would say no more, but spent all morning alternately gazing from the window and running the cards, while Jessop devoted himself to cleaning and loading a brace of pistols.

About noon Alma, gazing for the hundredth time from the window, gave a little cry, "Jack and pop!" and rushed to the door, leaving it open behind her. Like a bird she flew over the threshold and would have thrown herself into her father's arms, but he caught her wrists and pushed her back a step or two, anything but gently.

"Why wasn't you down at the bridge?" he asked sternly. The old man had changed in this fortnight. There were anxious puckers about his eyes, which were at once brighter and more sunken than ever. His parchment skin looked livid and lifeless, and his mouth had tightened until it was drawn in and pinched.

"Why wasn't you down at the gully waiting for us?" he asked again, "hiding up here in that cabin like you'd as lief stay there as not! What do you suppose the camp thinks of you now?"

"Yes, Alma, why wasn't you at the bridge?" echoed the great, blonde, handsome Swede beside him. His tone was appealing, puzzled, hurt.

Alma looked at him a moment in frowning, puzzled incomprehension; from Tillotson to her father she glanced and then back again. Then, as the meaning of their attitude flashed over her, she fell back a pace or two from them, swaying a little, her face grown white as the truth of Jessop's hateful prophecies surged over her in waves of bitterness. "Dios!" she muttered with stiff lips, a sob rising in her throat. The loyalty she had never doubted, had leaned against as if it were an oak, was but a broken reed.

One moment she despaired hopelessly, a brief moment. Then she tossed high her head in hot resentment. Her mouth was set in a thin,

scarlet line of obstinacy, her eyes burned, but their expression was unreadable. With a slow movement of her body, expressing infinite scorn, she swung away from her father and lover, and with her eyes upon the far horizon superbly ignored them.

"Oh, Alma, my Alma, don't act this way," pleaded her lover, his voice broken with emotion. "Why wasn't you at the gully? Wouldn't he let you?" He pointed a finger at Jessop, who stood a little apart watching the scene with folded arms, his pipe thrust between his teeth. "Oh, Alma"—his voice wavered and trembled—"why don't you answer your pop? Ain't you just as good as when you come?"

But Alma's seven or seventeen devils were all in full possession of her now. Petted, spoiled child that she was, she could not bear to be thus treated, chidden and questioned, where she had expected a rapturous welcome, and one of the seven devils, a newly acquired one, the demon of silence, stood her in good stead. She rightly divined that this attitude of non-explanation would prove far more maddening to her inquisitors than the vials of her wrath poured freely upon them.

But although her father's silence was as grim and unbroken as her own, Tillotson continued to plead, "Oh, Alma, ain't you the same? Just tell us, ain't you the same?" Until at last, driven to fury by his bleat, she dropped her pose of insolent indifference and proud defiance, and whirling suddenly about, scorched him with her glance.

"How can I be the same when I been living up her two weeks with Bill Jessop?" she flashed.

Tillotson sprang toward Jessop, but Gallito's hand had shot out and caught him by the arm with a grip of steel, holding him back, and the Swede threw his hands over his face and sobbed and trembled all over his big frame.

"Good Lord, Alma!" Jessop strode angrily forward, his face white, heavy creases between his brows. "What the devil you queerin' yourself this way for?"

Her father looked at him, a slow and bitter smile about his lips, then he gave a little nod of acrid comprehension. Tillotson dropped his hands from his face, his gray eyes blazed through his tears, and again he made as if to spring at Jessop and again the old man held him with those long, lean, bloodless fingers from which age had taken nothing of their grip.

"You keep out of this, Bill Jessop," he said in a low, cold, deadly voice. "This is between the girl and us. I'll settle with you later. Alma, you answer the question that was asked you. Are you the same as when you left, or not?"

A wailing wind swept down from the peaks and blew a great cloud of snow, fine as dust, through the heavy damp air. The mocking cry of coyotes at an almost incredible distance sounded near at hand in these white, waste solitudes; a bird flew from one tree to another, and the sound of a breaking twig was like a pistol shot.

MOMENTS passed, and still Alma had not obeyed that parental command. It was not repeated, which was characteristic of Gallito. He merely waited until at last Alma lifted her eyes, eyes so like his own, and unwaveringly met his gaze.