

# THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE:

Or, The Tragedy of the Wild.

## CHAPTER VII.—(Cont'd)

And so the night passed. The elements warring with the fury of wild-cats, with the shrieking of fiends, with the roaring of artillery, with the merciless severity of the bitter north. And while the storm swept the valley the two brothers slept; even Ralph, torn by such conflicting emotions as he was, was lulled and finally won to sleep by the raging elements whose voices he had listened to ever since his cradle days.

But even his slumbers were broken, and strange visions haunted his night hours. There was none of the noisy peacefulness of his usual repose—the repose of a man who has performed his allotted daylight task. He tossed and twisted within his sleeping-bag. He talked disjointedly and flung his arms about; and, finally, while yet it was dark, he woke himself up.

Springing into a sitting posture he peered about him in the darkness. Everything came back to his mind with a rush. He remembered his appointment at sunrise, and he wondered how long he had slept. Again he crept to the shed door. Again he looked out, and finally passed out. Nick still slumbered heavily.

The fury of the elements was unabated, and they buffeted him; but he looked around and saw the grey daylight illuminating the snow-fog, and he knew that though sunrise was near it was not yet. He passed round the hut, groping with his hands upon the building until he came to the door. Here he paused. He would awake Aim-sa that she might prepare for her flight with him. There was much to be done. He was about to knock, but altered his mind and tried the latch. It yielded to his touch and the door swung back.

He did not pause to wonder, although he knew that it was Aim-sa's custom to secure the door. He passed within, and in a hoarse whisper called out the name that was so dear to him. There came no answer, and he stood still, his senses tense with excitement. He called again, again. Still there was no answer. Now he closed the door, which creaked over the snow covering the sill. He stood listening lest Nick should be moving on the other side of the wall, and to ascertain if Aim-sa had awakened and was fearful at the intrusion. But no sound except that of the storm came to him.

His impatience could no longer be restrained; he pounced his hand into the pocket of his buckskin shirt and drew out a box of matches. A moment later a light flashed out, and in one sweeping, comprehensive glance around him, he realized the truth. The hut was empty. "Gone, gone!" he muttered, while, in rapid survey, his eyes glanced from one familiar object to another.

Everything was out of place—there were signs of disorder everywhere; and the woman was gone.

Suddenly the wind rushed upon the house with wild violence and set everything in the place a-clatter. He lit the lamp. Then he seemed to collect himself, and went over and felt the stove. It was ice cold. The blankets were laid out upon the floor in the usual spread of the daytime. They had not been slept in.

The truth was forcing itself upon him, and his heart was racked with the torments.

"She's gone," he muttered again; "an'—as an afterthought, 'it's storming terrible. Where? Why?" He stood again for a while like a man utterly at a loss. Then he began to move, not quietly or with display of stealth. He was no longer the self-contained trapper, but a man suddenly bereft of that which he holds most dear. He ran noisily from point to point, prying here, there, and everywhere for some sign which could tell him whether she had gone. But there was nothing to help him, nothing that could tell him that which he would know. She had gone, vanished, been spirited away in the storm.

He was suddenly inspired. It was the realization of the condition of the night which put the thought into his head. With a bound he sprang back to the door and flung it open. To an extent the storm-porch was sheltered, and little drift snow had blown in to cover the traces of footprints. Down he dropped upon hands and knees. Instantly all his trailing instincts were bent upon his task. Yes, there

were footprints, many, many. There were his own, large mocassins of home manufacture. There were Aim-sa's, clear, delicate, and small. And those were those other two. He ran his finger over the outline as though to impress the shape more certainly upon his mind.

"Wide toe," he muttered, "long heel, an' high instep. Large, large, too. By G—! they're Injun!"

He gave out the last words in a shout which rang high above the noise of the storm; he sprang to his feet and dashed out round to the lean-to. At the door he met his brother. Nick had been roused by his brother's cry.

Seeing the expression of Ralph's face the larger man stood.

"By Gar—!" he cried. Then he waited, fearing he knew not what.

"She's gone!" shouted Ralph. "Gone, gone, can't ye hear!" he roared. "Gone, an' some darned neche's been around. She's gone in the blizzard. Come!"

And he seized Nick by the arm and dragged him round to the door of the dugout.

## CHAPTER VIII.

An interminable week of restless inaction and torture followed Aim-sa's disappearance. Seven long, weary days the blizzard raged and held the two brothers cooped within their little home. The brief, grey daylight dragged to its howling end, and the seemingly endless nights brought them little relief. The only inhabitants of the hut on the wild hillside that offered no complaint, and even seemed to welcome the change, were Nick's huskies. They displayed a better temper since the going of the White Squaw, although the change in their attitude was unheeded by their masters.

The antagonism of the men was no longer masked by sullen silence. It broke out into open hostility almost the moment their loss was discovered, and it took the form of bickering and mutual reprisal. Nick laid the charge of her departure at Ralph's door, applying all the most unreasonable arguments in support of his belief. Ralph retaliated with a counter-charge, declaring that Nick had caused her flight by thrusting his unwelcome attentions upon her. And every word that uttered on the subject added fuel to the fire of their hatred, and often they were driven to the verge of blows.

Nick had no reason in him; and, in his anger, Ralph was little better. But where a certain calmness came to the latter when away from his brother, Nick continued to fume, with his mind ever set upon what he regarded as only his loss. Thus it came that Ralph saw ahead—hazily, it is true—but he saw that the time had come when they must continue to shelter under the same roof, the roof which had covered them since the days of their earliest recollections.

But though he saw this necessity he did not broach the subject, for, like his brother, he looked forward to the abatement of the storm so that he might set out in search of the lost one. Besides, he felt that until Aim-sa was found he could not part from Nick. Even in his hatred for his brother, even in his calmest moments, jealousy supervened. Were they to part, Nick might be the one to find her, and then—No, they must wait till the storm had passed; afterwards it would be time to act. Meanwhile, by tacit consent they continued to live in the lean-to, reserving the dugout for the object of their love, against her return.

At length the weather cleared. The search began at once. Each day they set out for the forest and hills with hope buoying their hearts; and each night they returned with downcast looks, despair in their hearts, and with their brooding anger against each other a dark flame leaping within them.

Sometimes, in stolen moments, they visited the place Aim-sa had lived in. Every day Ralph would clean up the dugout and leave it ready for the White Squaw's occupation when she returned. Every article of furniture had its allotted place, the place which she had selected. With the utmost deliberation he would order everything, and never had their mountain home been so tenderly cared for. Then Nick would come. His brother's handiwork would drive him to a frenzy of anger, and he would reset the place to his own liking, at which Ralph's exasperation would break out into angry protest.

The metamorphosis of these men could not have been more complete.

## AN INTERESTING REPORT.

Published elsewhere in this issue is the Annual Report for the past year of the Board of Directors of the Canada Cement Company, as read by the President, to the Shareholders, at the Annual Meeting held in Montreal on the 21st of February.

The frank statement of the policy and the general attitude of fairness evidenced by this address, are such as to warrant more than passing comment. Any lay member of the community reading the Report must surely feel disposed to echo the hope expressed by the President, that the increased demand and increased output in the year to come will result in further savings in the cost of manufacture; and it further cannot be felt by the public at large that any such reductions that may be obtained will, according to the broad-minded policy of the Company, be used as an advantage to the customers of the Company—the concern depending for their profits upon increasing volume of business.

Especially interesting is the statement that the policy of the Company is such as to tend towards equalization of the price of cement throughout Canada so far as possible. Another noteworthy feature of the Report is the provision made for employees to become possessors of stock. This is, as pointed out, a policy already in force in some of the largest institutions, and shows that the Canada Cement Company are quick to appreciate any means of stimulating interest and confidence upon the part of the staff.

The strong financial position of the company is a well known fact, and all that is necessary to ensure the continued success of the concern is continued prosperity of the country, together with an increased realization of the importance and economy of cement as a building material.

They hated themselves, they grew to hate the home which was theirs, the Wild in which they lived. They set their traps and hunted because it was their habit to do so, but always with only secondary thought for their calling. The chief object of their lives was to find the woman who had taught them the meaning of love.

Winter was waning. The soft snow in the forest was melting rapidly. Every morning found their valley buried beneath a pall of white fog. The sun's power was rapidly increasing, and already a slush of snow-water was upon the ice-bound river. The overpowering heights of the valley gleamed and sparkled in the cheery daylight; the clear mountain air drew every-thing nearer, and the stifling sense inspired by the crush of towering hills was exaggerated as the sun rose in the heavens and revealed the obscurer recesses of the stupendous world. And now, too, the forest grew dank and moist, and the steady dripping of the snow upon the branches became like a heavy rainfall within the gloomy depths.

One day Ralph returned home first. He was dipping the supper. The sun was coking behind the western mountain-tops, and the red-gold reflection swept in a rosy flush over the crystal summits. The winter sky had given place to the deeper hue of spring, and, in place of the heavy grey cloud caps, fleecy puffs of white, little less dazzling than the snowy hills themselves, dotted the azure vault above.

The forest was alive with the cries of the feathered world as they sought their rest in their newly-built nests. It was not the bright chatter of gay songbirds such as belong to warmer climes, but the hoarse cries of water-fowl, and the harsh screams of the prey of lords of wing and air. The grey eagle in his lofty eyrie; the gold-crested vulture-hawk; creatures that live the strenuous life of the silent lands, fowl that live by war. The air was very still; the prospect perfect with a wild rugged beauty.

The train dogs were lying about lazily, but their attitude was deceptive. Their fierce eyes were only partially closed, and they watched the cook at his work, waiting for their share in the meal.

Presently a sharp snarl broke from one of them, and he sprang to his feet and walked round his neighbor in a hectoring fashion. Ralph just glanced up from his work, his attitude expressing indifference. The second dog rose leisurely, and a silent argument over some old-time dispute proceeded in true husky fashion. They walked round and round each other, seeming almost to tiptoe in their efforts to browbeat. Their manes bristled and their fangs bared to the gums, but never a sound came from their deep-toned throats. And such is ever the way of the husky unless stirred to the wildest fury. The other dogs paid no heed; the smell which emanated from Ralph's cooking-pot held them. Those who wished to fight could do so; their indifference plainly said so.

Ralph went to the shed and returned with some fresh logs. As he reached the fire he paused. The disputing dogs had attracted his attention. A quick spring in and out, a slash of the bared fangs, and the

shoulder of one dog was laid open. The other brutes were on their feet in an instant. The scent of blood had greater attraction for their wolfish senses than the smell of cooking food. They gathered round with licking lips. Ralph stepped back from the fire and raised aloft one of the logs he had brought. The next moment it was hurtling through the air. It took the combatants somewhere in their midst. They parted with a howl of pain, and the spectators hurriedly returned to their contemplation of the fire. In a moment temporary peace was restored. Ralph stood to see that hostilities were definitely postponed, then he went on with his work.

Suddenly up out of the valley came the sound of Nick's voice. It trolled harshly up the hillside, giving out strange echoes which confused the melody he essayed. The listening man recognized the words of "The Red River Valley," but the tune was obscured.

The unusual outburst held Ralph silent, wondering. Nick was not given to singing at any time, and the events of the last few days were not likely to inspire him. What had caused the change?

The voice sounded nearer. In spite of the tunelessness of the song, Ralph thought he detected a joyousness in the tone which was unusual. A shiver passed down his back, and his thoughts flew at once to Aim-sa.

(To be continued.)

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# MAPLEINE

## LUCID EVIDENCE.

It was a case of assault, and the down-trodden wife was laying her grievances before the magistrate.

"He started by giving me a 'bif on the nut,'" she explained.

"My good woman," rebuked the magistrate, "you mustn't talk like that here. I suppose you mean he gave you a blow upon the head?"

"Yes, yer worship, and then he tried to 'do me in' by chucking his bacey box at me."

"By which I prestime you mean he tried to injure you by precipitating his box of tobacco at you. Pray do try and avoid slang; and inform the Court what other injuries he inflicted upon you."

"Well, then, he—or—he," began the witness.

"Come along; don't waste the time of the Court."

"Er—excuse me, yer worship, I was wondering what was your favorite name for a 'swipe across the jaw'?"

The morn, look you, furthers a man on his road, and furthers him, too, in his work.—Hesiod.

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# CANADA CEMENT COMPANY LIMITED

## Annual Report of the Board of Directors

### TO THE SHAREHOLDERS:

Your Directors beg to present herewith the annual statement of the affairs and financial position of the Canada Cement Company, Limited, as of the 31st December, 1910.

In presenting the Balance Sheet, we call attention to the Company's strong financial position as disclosed by the large amount of cash on hand, and other quick assets, and the comparatively small amount of current liabilities. After providing for interest on our Bonds and Dividends on our Preferred Stock for the year, we have been able to set up reserves for depreciation, extraordinary repairs and renewals, bad debts, etc., and carry forward a substantial balance to Surplus Account.

The consumption of cement during the past year was not as large as anticipated. Our business also suffered on account of the Railways not being able to meet our full requirements for cars during the heavy shipping season; consequently we carry over from last year 781,116 barrels of cement.

Early in 1910 the price of our product was fixed at a lower price than cement had ever been sold for in Canada, excepting for a short period in 1909, but your Directors are pleased to state that the anticipated savings in manufacturing and distributing our products were such that they were able to still further reduce this price.

We trust, when you consider the above mentioned conditions, and also the fact that during 1910 our plants were only operated to 57.6 per cent. of their capacity, the profits shown will be satisfactory to the Shareholders.

During the current year, we look for a larger natural demand, which demand will be satisfied by continuing to manufacture a strictly high grade article, and by selling it at the lowest possible price. This anticipated increase will enable us to operate our plants to better advantage than in the past, but we do not expect that the demand will be sufficient to enable us to put into operation either of the two plants which have been idle since the organization of this Company. However, it is confidently expected that the increased demand, and increased output, will result in further savings in the cost of manufacture and distribution, and it is the policy of your Directors to give your customers the benefit of these reductions.

The Shareholders' profits will depend on the increased volume of the Company's business, the policy of the Company being the maintenance of such a stable position as will insure regular and uniform payments of interest on its bonds and dividends on its Preferred stock, and at the same time be in a position to withstand any unforeseen emergency that may arise consequent on the business depression or otherwise, which condition naturally necessitates the accumulation of, and the maintenance of, a large cash reserve.

It is also the policy of the Company to equalize the price of cement throughout Canada in so far as the physical conditions make such possible, and in furtherance of this policy, your Directors have arranged to purchase a site near Winnipeg, on which they will erect, this year, a mill to grind clinker, which will be shipped from one of our Eastern mills. The building, machinery, etc., will be planned so that, should it at any time in the future be advisable, a Burnside Department can be added, and the clinker produced on the property.

And further, an agreement has been entered into whereby this Company expects to acquire, in the near future, a property at Exshaw, which, added to our Calgary plant, and the projected plant at Winnipeg, will put us in the position of anticipating any extraordinary growth in the consumption of cement in the Great West.

With the view of educating the public, and popularizing the use of cement, in addition to the ordinary advertising, the Company has published a small book illustrating some of the many uses to which cement may be put, for which book there has been a great demand, 25,000 applications for same having been received during the past six months.

For the purpose of stimulating interest in the Company on behalf of the Employees, both in efficiency and cheapening production, as well as creating a feeling of mutual goodwill, your Directors deem it expedient to introduce a system, already adopted by several large industrial corporations with beneficial results, viz., to enable employees to become the possessors of Preferred and Common Stock at prices which will be attractive to them, the employees paying a fixed amount per share per month out of their earnings, and the Company carrying the stock for them, charging a rate of 5 per cent. interest. If the plan is put into effect, all dividends will be credited to the employees applying for the stock. Said stock will be held in trust for the employee for a term of five years, excepting in exceptional cases, such as death, when his heirs will receive what benefit a deceased employee has derived from subscribing to the stock.

Your Directors feel that the policy, as herein outlined, will, as nearly as possible, make the interests of the consumers, the employees, and the shareholders identical, and will insure to the most enduring and beneficial results for all concerned.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

On behalf of the Board of Directors,

WILLIAM C. EDWARDS,

President

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