

THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE:

Or, The Tragedy of the Wild.

CHAPTER XV.—(Cont'd)

And the meager forest-bred creatures hang back. Their outstretched tails droop, and are pressed between their legs; their backs are hunched, and they turn their long, narrow heads from the green glitter of the two pairs of terrible eyes. But the pause is brief, and the noise has died only for a second. One wolf moves a step forward, hunger overpowering his worst fears. As before, it is a signal. The whole pack leaps to the fray; struggling, howling, fighting as they come, ripping at comrade and foe alike. They care not a jot who goes down so long as they feast their starving bellies. And the battle is swift; so swift that it is almost impossible to realize that it is over. The pack, leaping and baying, pass on, following the blood trail of the man, leaving more bones upon the plateau, more blood upon the trodden snow. And the royal dwellers of that little plain have vanished as though they had never been.

The path has taken a downward slope, and the man looks ahead for the fair face, hungrily, feverishly. She has vanished, and his heart cries out bitterly, and his voice echoes through the barren hills with a dreadful despair.

And as he goes the path declines lower and lower, and up out of the shadows depths the tree-tops rise at him. The air he breathes is denser now, and the effort of life is easier. As the path declines, the mountain-sides rise higher and higher, until the blue vault, now shadowing with the purple of evening, obstructs the way, and the confines of the heavens are reached. A narrow streak of daylight shines above like a soft-toned ribbon set in a background of some dun-colored material; ahead is a barrier of snow and ice, with its appalling suggestion of dangers beyond, while below him, down in the depths of the gorge, the earth is clear of the wintry pall, and frowns up in a gloomy contrast. And, too, even the sparse vegetation has changed its appearance. It is ever the silent, portentous pine, but so crude, so vast, such as can be seen in no other corner of the earth.

He hastens on with all the speed his weary limbs will permit, stumbling as he goes, for the frost of the high altitudes has entered his bones, and he cannot now feel the touch of the broken earth. But his yearning heart is ceaseless in its despairing cry. Not a matter of where—where is she? The trees come up higher and higher, and the gloom closes in upon him, and he comes to the barrier.

Now he pauses under a dignity archway. Below it is black with age and the shadow of the deep; the super-structure of the deep; the superstructure alone is hung with snowy frost curtains, and these help to emphasize the forbidding nature of the dark, narrow under-world. Down, down he goes, as though he were journeying to the very bowels of the earth, heedless of the place, heedless of all but the shadow he seeks. And now, again, the nature of the world has changed. The barrenness is emphasized by almost skeleton trees of such size as no man has ever seen before. High up aloft there is foliage upon them, but so meagre, so torn and wasted as to suggest a wreck of magnificent life. Each trunk, and they are so few in that vast rift, might dwarf the greatest elm to a sapling, and yet their wondrous size would not be properly estimated. They are the primordial pines; a relic of the original, and, perhaps, their age must be counted with the extreme age of the earth's vegetation. They shelter nothing but barrenness, and stand out alone like solemn-headed sentries, the watchmen for all time of the earth's most dim and secret recesses, where storms cannot reach, and only the forest beasts can penetrate.

Again the poor, benighted brain finds relief. Down beside these monsters his eyes are gladdened once more with the fleeting vision. He sees the figure moving ahead, but slowly now; no longer is she the gay, laughing creature he has hitherto followed; she moves wearily, as though exhausted by the journey she has taken. His heart thrills with hope and joy, for now he knows that he is overtaking her. Her face is hidden from him, and even her fair form has taken on something of the hue of her dark surroundings.

"Aim-sa! Aim-sa!" he cries aloud. And again, "Aim-sa!" Till the gorge rings solemnly with the hoarse echoes, and the Wild is filled with discordant

sounds, which come back to his straining ears mingling with the bitter cries of the ravenous pack of wolves behind.

The figure pauses, looks round, then continues her slow-paced movement; but she does not answer. Still he sees her, she is there. And now he knows that he must come up with her. He toils on.

He talks to himself, muttering as he goes; and a train of incoherent thought passes through his brain. He tells himself that the journey is over. She has brought him to the home which shall be theirs. The heart of the Wild, where the mountains rise sheer to the sky above; where no man comes where a dark peace reigns, has ever reigned. Where snow is not, and summer and winter are alike. It is the home for a tortured spirit, the lower depths of the bosom of mother earth. He looks about him, and thrills with the consciousness of their solitude.

She no longer moves now, but turns and faces him. The sweet familiar features are clearly outlined to him, although the shadows are deep and the grim surroundings hold nought that is fair to the eye. He shakes back his shaggy head; he thrusts out his chest as a man proud as he approaches the woman he loves. He summons all his failing strength. His knees are bent with weariness, nor do they answer to his demands, and his torn feet drag wearily over the virgin path. The haunting cry of the wolves comes down to him from behind, but he sees his goal. The woman.

And every trailing stride lessens the distance between them.

He sees her stoop as though to adjust her moccasin. She moves again, but she does not stand erect. A half-articulate cry breaks from him. She is coming to him. Now he sees that her head is bowed as though in deep humility. His cry has left his throat; and all is silent. Suddenly she lifts her head, and her tall figure stands erect, gazing upon him with sombre, steady eyes, eyes which seem to have caught something of the dull hue of that awesome gorge. His heart leaps with joy. How tall she is; what superb forms! And she moves on with her body swaying gracefully to the rhythm of her gait. Her arms are stretched out appealingly towards him. And he sees that she is clad in the rich furs of the North. Clad as though for a journey. And he tells himself, with a thrill of mad desire, that she is ready for their journey. The journey of life they will travel together.

Now the wolf-cries come louder and more fierce. If he is deaf to them, the woman is not. Her head turns sharply, and a fierce light leaps into her eyes. The change is lost upon the man. He stretches out his arms and staggers towards her. They come together, and he feels the soft touch of her fur robes upon his face and hands. Her arms close about him, and her warm breath fans his fevered cheek. And he is drawn, willingly, closer and closer to her bosom.

But what is this? The embrace draws tight, tighter and tighter; he becomes rigid in her arms; he cannot breathe, and life seems to be going from him. He feels his ribs cracking under the pressure; he cannot cry out; he cannot struggle. And then there comes the sound of something ripping, as of flesh being torn by ruthless teeth. The man is quite still; a quiver of nerves; a sigh. That is all.

Down the path of that wondrous gorge comes the headlong rush of the wolf-pack. A great figure with lolling body looks up. Its broad head and short muzzle are poised alertly. So it stands, and under its merciless forepaws is the mangled corpse of Nick Westley. It is a monstrous grizzly, monstrous even for its kind, but such a creature as should be found where the products of earth bear witness to the countless ages that have passed. He turns from his victim with shambling but swiftly-moving gait, growling and snarling with terrible ferocity as he goes, but without hesitation. The monarch of the woods is no coward, but he is cunning as any fox, and he, unlike the mountain lion, knows the limitation of his powers. The on-coming horde would overwhelm him, therefore he goes with all speed. What he leaves will check the starving savages while he makes good his escape.

And his calculations are well made. The pack comes on. The scent of blood permeates the air, and, in a trice, the poor remains

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are swept from all ken, and the earth is cleansed of the last traces of the tragedy by the wolfish tongues. Fragments of clothing are scattered about, but even the bones are gone. The rended limbs have been fought for, and the victors have borne them off in triumph.

The last act of the tragedy is done, and the curtain rings down. But it will not rise again to shew the bowing players, those who are dead and those who are living at the end, for that is not the way of the ruthless Wild. The curtain there remains down for all time. He who would know more, he who would shake the players by the hand, must go behind the curtain for himself. Then will he learn the realness of the drama that has been depicted. If the solitude does not overpower his brain, if he escapes the dangers which await the neophyte who braves the Wild that he may hear the story Nature has to tell him, and returns to his warm fireside in civilization, he will probably have lost some of the lightness and flippancy of youth, and possibly a reflection of the eternal snows will have touched the hair of his head. Certain it is that he will return with a greater reverence for the Almighty power that created the earth—our fair, wondrous, beautiful earth—even to the heart of the Wild.

THE END.

FOREIGN POLICE.

How Different Countries Arm Their "Cops."

Policemen are the only ones in the world who go unarmed at all times and under all circumstances.

The German police carry revolvers for self-protection at close quarters, and heavy sabres, with edges as sharp as razors, for dealing with riots or serious street disturbances. These latter weapons they do not hesitate to use freely either upon occasion.

The French gendarme also carries a revolver, and a little short sword, which is, however, more for ornament than use. In real trouble he relies on his "shooter," which is a formidable weapon of a short, heavy "bulldog" type.

Spanish frontier police carry magazine rifles, and use them mercilessly on smugglers. The ordinary Spanish policeman relies upon a Browning magazine pistol, a weapon of a peculiarly deadly type.

Probably, however, the best-armed police in the world are the New York ones. They are called upon to deal with a particularly dangerous class of alien criminals, the dregs of Europe, and they take no chances. Both by night and day they carry revolvers, which they use upon very slight provocation. They also carry truncheons, which they call clubs. The "day club" is a comparatively light one, similar to the ordinary truncheon of the London policeman. But the "night club," which is carried by all policemen after dark, is a much more formidable affair, heavy, long, and capable of crushing in at a single blow even a negro's thick skull.

RAZOR WRINKLES.

Some Useful Hints for the Men who Shave.

When stropping the razor, turn it on its back, and not on its edge, and hold strop taut.

If you cut yourself, dab the wound slightly with vaseline, and wait for a minute. Wipe the blood away gently in the opposite direction to that in which the razor was travelling when the calamity took place and when you said that naughty word. Then apply a little more vaseline, and when the bleeding has stopped—as it will do in a minute—wipe again, and apply a little Fuller's earth. Thus you will conceal the cut.

The upward shave, which goes against the run of the hair, is the cleaner; but, as some find shaving against the grain rather painful, an alternative method can be adopted by shaving downwards, then sponging with warm water, and then shaving downwards again without lather.

If your razor is in good order, you should be able to do the upper lip in two strokes. The lower lip it is best to hold with the upper teeth to stretch the skin. Then shave upwards.

CHARITY IN ROME.

Relief Measures Taken for the Messina Sufferers.

When Messina was destroyed by earthquake, the suffering of the bereft residents called forth the best sympathies of the whole world. Italians themselves were not behind in giving aid; and Rome, known as the city where even prodigal Americans grow cautious about spending their money, became a miracle of generosity. "Sicily in Shadow and in Sun," by Maude Howe, contains a striking picture of the relief measures taken in the Italian capital.

A cart was drawn by two big army mules, one of them ridden by a soldier. At the back of the cart sat the bugler, a hard, merry, Irish faced man with a snub nose and a missing tooth. A second man in the cart, a rather plain, shabby fellow with a bandaged throat, had been chosen for his voice.

The bugler sounded his trumpet, the driver cracked his whip and the procession started. When the fiery call of the bugle trailed into silence, the voice of the tall man with the bandaged throat rang out above the noise of the crowd.

"Pro Calabria e Sicilia! Give much, give little, give anything! Every centesimo is wanted there!"

From every window fell an obole.

A hail-storm of coppers rattled on the pavement, envelopes with money folded in them came fluttering down like so many white birds. At an open window on the top floor two sturdy men servants appeared, and shrewd under a red striped bundle of pillows, another of blankets, and a third great packet of clothes.

From every house, rich or poor, there are many poor homes in the Corso,—came some offering. Two good beds were carried out from a narrow door.

The cart was now filling fast; the money-boxes were growing heavy. From a shabby window a pair of black pantaloons came hurtling through the air, and the crowd, strung up and nervous with a night of mourning—for Rome had mourned as I had never believed it could mourn for anything—laughed from pure nervousness.

At the shop of a furrier on the second floor two people came to the window, an elderly woman with a face swollen with weeping and a dark man who looked as if he had not slept. The cart stopped, and from the modest shop there hailed down no less than twenty warm, new fur coats and tippets—and this in Rome, the heart of thrift.

At Oliverie's, the grocer's, a great quantity of canned meats, vegetables and groceries was handed out. From a hosier's near by came two great packages of men's shirts, some of cotton, and dozens of brand new flannel shirts. At a tailor's, bale after bale of stout cloth was brought out and thrown into the cart.

Another bed with pillows was given by a very poor-looking woman. At the sight of this a man of the middle class took the overcoat off his back—it was a cold morning, too, with a good nip in the air—and threw it into the cart.

"If I had not seen it with my own eyes, I should not have believed it."

"Mamma, may I go over with Freddie in his yard?" "No, my son, you and Freddie stay in our yard and play." "But there's no fun in our yard, mamma; we've trampled down all our flowers!"

The Best Preserves

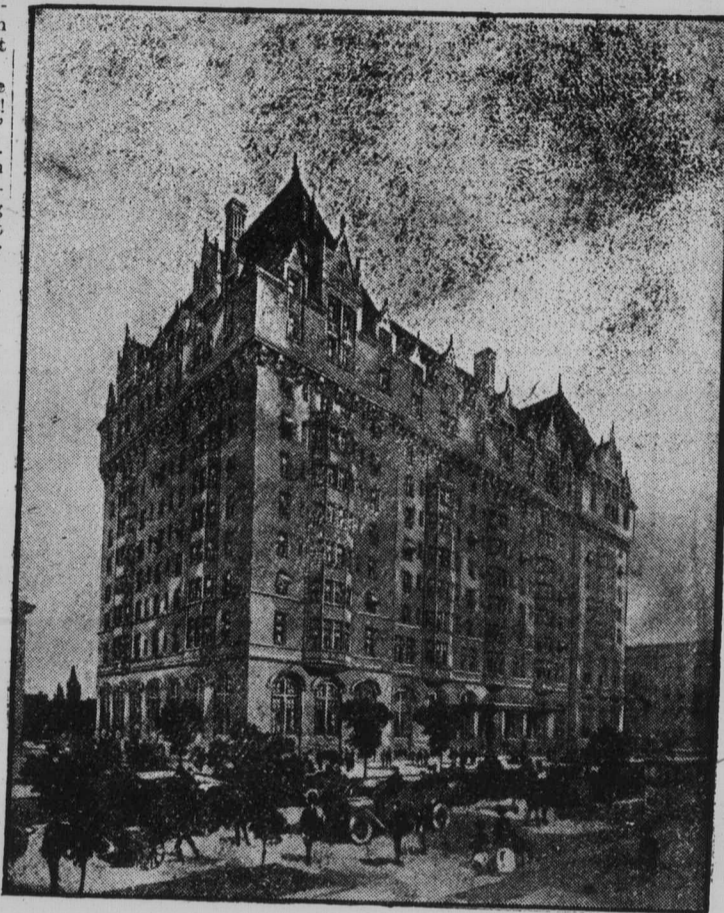
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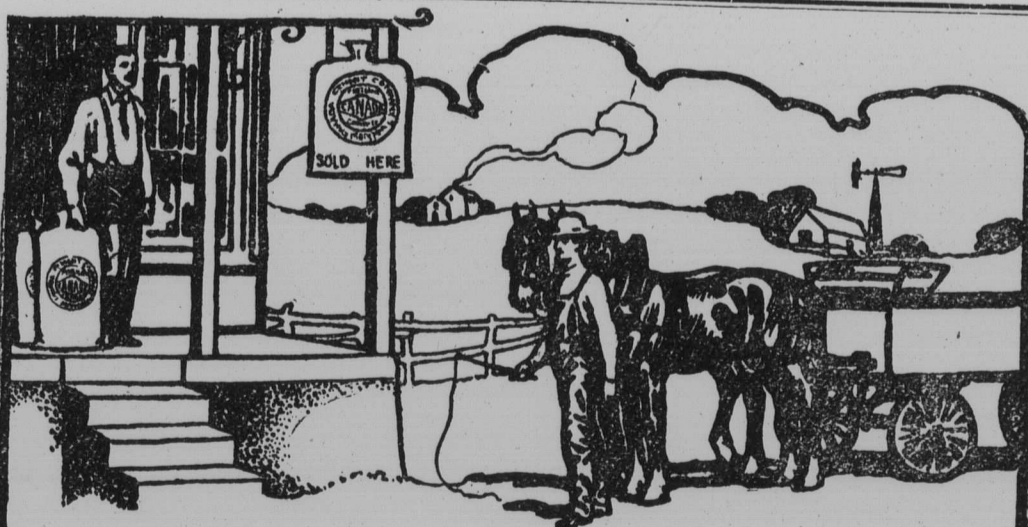
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Don't hesitate about doing this. We have requested him to assist to the best of his ability any farmer in his locality competing in this contest—whether it's a matter involving the application of cement, or how to go about winning one of the prizes offered in this contest. Do you realize that you have as good a chance as the next man to win one of these prizes? There are four for each Province, as follows:

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