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turned. He was reading the last of the notes, when Merton burst in. The boy was white and haggard, and he caught Fordyce's arm and stared at him as if too agitated to speak. At last he said, brokenly:

"Come at once! She is dying!"

Fordyce shook for a moment or two, just as an ox shakes at the first blow of the pole-axe; then he drew himself up, set his face hard, and reached for his hat.

"How did it happen?" he asked, when they had got into a cab.

The boy was crying, and could not find his voice for a moment.

"She got a chill—at least, that's what they say; but—I don't know.

She's been ill for some time—all the while you've been away. And Claymire—Claymire—"

"He has struck her again?" asked Fordyce, with terrible calm, as if he were making a casual remark about the weather.

The boy flung his hands over his eyes.

"She has asked for you every day," he said.

"Every day?" echoed Fordyce, hoarsely.

After a few minutes' delay they were shown into the room where she lay.

Fordyce went straight to the bed. He scarcely saw Claymire's big form by the door or heard the man's oath.

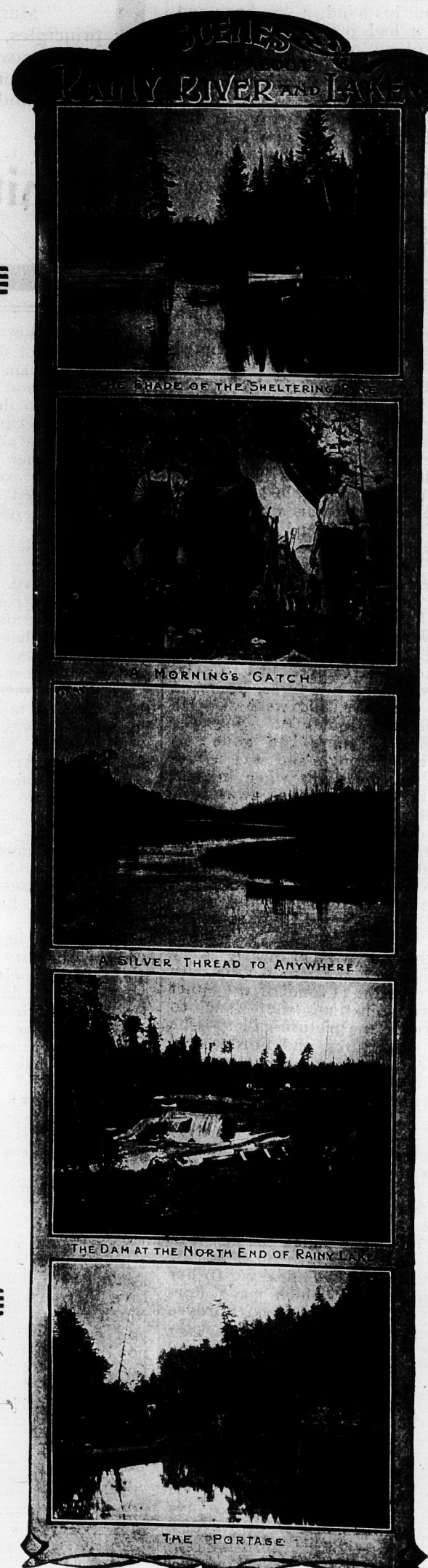
She looked up as Fordyce approach-

ed and held out both hands, and the shadow of a smile—a smile of infinite love and tenderness and pity—dawned in her eyes and altered the curve of her lips.

"I knew you would come," she said.

"I have been waiting. I think you have come just in time. Yes, you may kiss me now for the first and last time. You will not break your word, for we are going to part forever. And—and it is 'good-bye!'"

When he rose from his knees and went by Claymire, the men swore again, and raised his fist; but Fordyce looked at him steadily. Claymire's hand dropped, and Fordyce passed out with his misery.



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