

a hunch, an idee. I'm goin' to name my mine after this pokerdot breed of pup. I hereby label her the Spotted Dog mine!"

There was a yell of applause. When it was subdued by the command of Peloo, Red added:

"The drinks is on me as a christenin', an' it runs into wine. Barkeep set up the swan-neck bottles, them with the goldy locks."

Peloo turned pale; for he would have to pay. Surely Red was making the bluff unnecessarily strong.

As they drank the wine Red whispered to Peloo, "P'raps that Hon'rab'll feel it's up to him to give me that pokerdot. Pour him another glass of wine; it'll make him loosen up."

"You are sure goin' some, Red," Peloo commented; "but kinder ease up on the buyin' now. You done your share."

AS the mine boosters finished their wine and were turning away, Fonsby slipped the collar from his dog's neck and handed it to the bartender. Then when they were in the outer room he told Achilles to get his collar. The dog went back and, standing on his hind legs, looked pleadingly at the drink dispenser. The latter handed over the leather strap, and Achilles came bounding out to his master.

At that instant Hank Pilkins entered the room with a brindle bulldog, named Esau at his heels. Esau was the bully of Nipissing in a canine way, and when he saw a dog seemingly in some kind of scuffle his perverted fighting instincts carried him into the fray with ferocious alacrity. In a second a wild scrimmage ensued. Men were bowled over like nine-pins by the fighting bodies caroming against their legs.

Between the casual interference of sprawling men and the great activity of Achilles, Esau missed his thrust for the enemy's throat, and found, to his angry astonishment, a set of long fangs buried in the back of his neck. He was being considerably chewed.

Pilkins saw this, and with an oath swung a heavy boot into the ribs of Achilles. As he poised himself for another kick a strong hand gripped his coat collar, and he was elevated parabolically, to descend head first full on top of his pugnacious dog. Scrambling to his feet he faced Red Meekins, who said with quiet menace:

"I don't stand for no man kickin' a dog as is only pertectin' hisself ag'in a fool fightin' dog. You jus' keep that Esau to home, or somebody'll put a pill into him."

Pilkins raised his voice in anger; but the manager of the hotel came between the two and assured Pilkins that he would have him thrown into the street if he didn't subside.

Fonsby held out his hand to Red, saying, "By Jove! Mr. Meekins, you did that deuced cleverly. Awfully obliged, you know."

PELOO, who had gone over the falls in the little cataract of men that had engulfed the dogs, heard this as he stood adjusting his disarranged whiskers, and promptly seized upon the opportunity to introduce business.

"There's a little room behind the bar. Let's git out of this noisy crowd," he said.

"By Jove! that's a corking idee," Fonsby agreed, "and you gentlemen will join me in a social glass, I hope."

Peloo nudged Meekins in the ribs with his elbow as they entered the private room, and pulling a chair to a little table he said, "Have a seat, your Hon. Lordship" adding in more flippant oratory, "Yank that stool up, Red!"

"It's jolly complimentary of you, Mr. Trout," Fonsby remarked as he sat down, "but I'm not a Lord, by any means. The governor is; but he's hale and hearty."

"P'raps I kinder got mixed in individuals," Peloo hazarded. "Readin' in the papers about Lord Fonsby I guess made me think you was him."

"The governor is Lord Ivington," Fonsby explained, rising to touch a button in the wall.

"He's kiddin' us about them names," Meekins whispered to Peloo.

"It's his stepfather, Red; that's how the names don't agree," Trout advised.

As Fonsby returned to his seat Red said, "Peloo was tellin' me you didn't want to sell this pup," and Meekins caressed the shapely mottled head which the dog, knowing out of instinct about the man's sympathy, had thrust across his knee. Fonsby's face showed mystification, and Peloo came to the rescue:

"Soon's Red sees that dog he was fer buyin' him an' I jus' said that I guessed there wasn't nothin' doin' in that line."

THE door of the room opened and a man, answering the call of the bell, entered, followed by a roughly dressed prospector. The latter took a quick

look at the little group by the table, and said:

"That New York chap is goin' out on the train to-night, Red, an' he wants to know if you're goin' to make him a price on that mine of yours or not. He says if you want to deal he'll hook up with you in half an hour. What'll I tell him?"

Meekins undiplomatically opened his mouth in astonishment. It was the first he had heard of a New Yorker with an offer; but Peloo scraped the toe of his boot up and down Red's shin beneath the table and took the latter's answer upon himself.

"Me an' Red an' this gentleman is purty busy, Tom. Jus' tell your friend that Red'll see him in New York."

"What you got to do with it, Peloo?" Tom asked with affected anger.

"Considerable—considerable, Tom. Mr. Meekins has placed his mine business in my office, an' the mine ain't fer sale."

"Does that go, Red?" Tom queried.

"It does. Peloo Trout & Co. is my agent."

Tom strode angrily from the room. Peloo chuckled and turning to Fonsby explained:

"Mr. Meekins had jus' plumb give away mines that has turned out worth millions; but he ain't goin' to sell this one fer the price of a prospect—not if Peloo Trout can help it! There's been about a dozen of 'em New York promoters tryin' to get on the soft side of Red. You see," he continued, "that Pilkins that owns the dog your pup licked found the biggest kind of a silver vein on Red's claim an' tried to beat him out of it. They all know this an' are dead stuck on gettin' his mine on the cheap."

"I'd like to see that vein, Mr. Meekins," Fonsby said innocently.

"Danged if I wouldn't too!" Red blurted out with even more innocence. Then he gave a sharp yelp of pain; for Peloo's boot had nearly cracked his shinbone beneath the table.

"Red's lookin' fer it," Peloo advised, "'cause Pilkins natur'ly wouldn't give his find away. An' it jus' seems 's if Pilkins had struck a streak of runnin' up ag'in Red's fist. That's the second time he's had a rough an' tumble argyment with Red."

AS Peloo held forth out of his plethora of words, he watched the Englishman's face from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, reading the look of intense interest that brightened Fonsby's blue eyes.

"Have you explored much for the vein?" Fonsby asked.

"He's jus' been rootin' round," Peloo hastened to substitute for the frank admission he was certain Red would make.

"I've ben kinder shy on capital," Red declared.

"Lost his money when that bank in Toronto busted last winter," Peloo explained.

This was just a trifle sudden for Red's equanimity. He laughed.

"You take your losses good naturedly. I like that," Fonsby remarked.

"I was jus' thinkin' of the feller I hired to locate that vein," Red explained, fancying he had detected a drawl of suspicion in the other's remark. "He was one of them fellers that's got a kind of crotched switch fer locatin' wells an' things. He tramped purty nigh all over that forty acres, an' all of a sudden he stopped still as though he'd been paralyzed in his j'int, his face all twisted up, and the switch that he was grippin' with both hands commenced to dip. Only I'm kinder mixed. It was an electric patent kind of crotch he had—that's the idee. Then he says to me, 'It's down there!' Then me an' a man trenched for two days, an' fin'ly we come on a groundhog's nest."

Fonsby sat back in his chair and laughed. "What did the man say?" he asked finally.

"I never heard. I guess he's runnin' yet."

"Red got hot under the collar an' kinder went fer that feller," Peloo elucidated.

FONSBY suddenly straightened up in his chair and said, "Look here! I don't mind saying that I've got deuced interested in your mine Mr. Meekins, and in yourself too, to be candid."

Red had to suppress another yelp of pain. Beneath the table Peloo's toe was cautioning him to be wary.

"You said something about lack of capital," Fonsby continued. "Now, I've come here to invest a few pounds if I find something—well, something, you know."

"Red's got it—he's got somethin' big!" and Peloo wagged his bushy head sagaciously.

"I'll tell you what you do," Red offered. "You come down an' bunk with me in the shack, an' when I've found the big vein I'll give you first chance to buy the mine."

"By Jove! that might cost a pretty penny! You'd want a million. Supposing I buy in now, and take a chance."

"Tain't for sale," Peloo declared, wagging his head despondently.

"I uster say that afore I see this dog of yours," Red declared; "but if you want to come down an' prospect, an'll bring this pup to the shack, I ain't sayin' we mightn't make a deal."

"What's a half interest worth?"

Peloo held his breath, fearing Meekins would be too modest in his demands.

"You best come down with me to-morrow an' look the mine over," Red answered "an' if it looks good I'll trade a half interest for this pup an' ten thousand dollars to boot."

Laughing over Red's unique proposal, the Englishman agreed at least to inspect the mine.

When the two men had parted from Fonsby, on the way out they met Tom. "What do I get out of it?" the latter asked.

"Out of what?" Peloo queried.

"Out of the sale. You don't mean to say you let English get away from you? When I see you go in there together I know what was doin', an' thought I'd boost things by springin' that yarn about a feller wantin' to buy. Didn't it help none?"

"You jus' leave that to Red," Peloo advised.

"Guess he'll make it right with you, Tom."

"That's good enough for me," Tom answered.

"Goodnight, fellers. Make your check payable at par, Red."

THE result of Fonsby's visit to the Spotted Dog mine was a deal through which he became a half owner. Strangely enough, the illuiveness of the big vein appealed to him as a matter of exciting interest. Unknown to the partners, and quite beyond the value they placed upon his intelligence, Fonsby had interviewed the recording officer. With boyish enthusiasm discarding the triple-rolled trousers for a pair of heavy overalls, he rolled up his sleeves and went to work, perhaps with more energy than aptitude.

Such little idiosyncrasies as trying to clean a lamp chimney with a stick of dynamite, its end twisted in a handkerchief, caused Red to exercise a wise supervision which prevented actual disaster—at least up to the time Achilles brought on the end of all things.

There always remained in Nipissing as a matter of discussion the question of which dog would have licked the other the night they hooked up if Pilkins hadn't interfered. The owner of Esau was ready to bet a thousand dollars that his dog could "eat up the piebald mongrel that Meekins chums with"; while Red avowed that he wasn't fighting dogs for a living but that if they ever got together on their own account he'd back the spotted pup.

RED and Fonsby had been trenching and blasting for two months, and with meager results. They had driven a small tunnel into the rocky cliff, following a calcite vein that at times held a blush of cobalt bloom as rosy as the cheek of a girl and again bleaching out in barrenness to an alabaster white. One morning Red drilled a hole in the tunnel, and, after their mid-day meal in the shack, went to a little pit where the dynamite was stored, returning with four sticks of the ferocious explosive.

"That drill this mornin' kinder sounded to me as though it was in metal. We'll put a shot in an' rip her up," he said.

Followed by the ever faithful Achilles, the two men plodded leisurely to their drift in the cliff. Fonsby held the four sticks of dynamite, handing three of them, one by one, to Meekins, who tamped them home with due caution in the drill hole, attaching a fuse. Then he said:

"Light the fuse, Fonsby, while I gather up these tools. Then we'll get out. P'raps when we come back this hole'll be full of silver."

Fonsby put the fourth stick of dynamite down, struck a match and lighted the fuse.

Red, having picked up his tools, called, "Come on! Sometimes these fuses run."

He was already on the move. Fonsby followed on the run, forgetting all about the finger of destruction he had discarded.

Achilles noticed this oversight, or perhaps he thought it a variation of the collar game. At any rate he harked back to his drill in retrieving, grabbed up in his jaws the little brown fiend, added the dangling fuse that was so much like his leading strap, dislodging it with one sharp pull, and cantered joyously after the fleeing men.

As Red galloped he cast a look over his shoulder to make sure that Spot was following. One glance assured him that Spot was, and that he was charged with dynamite.

"My God! Man, run! Run for it!" he gasped, and Fonsby, instinctively turning his head, saw the Nemesis on their track.

He quickened his pace. So did Red. Their heavy boots threw gravel, and all records for speed were being smashed.

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