

The Price of Life

BY WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE.

PART I.

Gedon Larocque drew his hunting knife and placed it on the rough shelf from which he intended to eat, beside the pot of steaming tea, from near which two candles sent an uncertain light to battle with the darkness of a low-roofed cabin, perhaps fifteen feet square.

Bunk piled with blankets, a stove and two benches were the only furnishings. It was brother to a thousand others in the mountains of French Canada.

"Boule!" exclaimed Larocque, peering into the shadows. Out of a corner came a huge, lumbering, yellow-brown shape that became a dog of many breeds as it padded into the candlelight.

Boule, whose predominant strain was St. Bernard, had drawn Larocque's pack into the mountains that day, and in the morning he took the down trail with his master upon the sled, making the return trip to the village of St. Barthelemy in less time than a man would.

"Fetch the pack!" At the command Boule walked to the door, which Larocque opened for him. In a moment he was back, holding firmly but carefully in his teeth a small pack-sack. He dropped it near the shelf and Gedon Larocque, his great frame shaking with chuckles of delight, paused to flatter the dog with many caresses before he went about the business of feeding his own very empty stomach.

Five minutes later the man finished his meal, wiped his knife on the leg of a bottle saucier and returned it to its sheath. He gathered the scraps left from the meal, considered a moment and added to them an end of bread and a chunk of cold pork which he had not needed.

It was his intention to leave the cabin at daybreak and eat his first meal in the village, therefore he would not need the extra food. As he bent to put the food upon the floor the thick fabric of his shirt drew taut over banded muscles.

Between him and the dog there was a kind of resemblance; both had the same great shoulder muscles, the same depth of chest and the same steadfastness of eye.

Boule gulped his supper. His tongue rasped here and there until not a crumb was left, and then, with a dignified wag of his tail, he returned to his usual corner.

The man made up the fire and lighted his pipe, leaning back against the logs of the wall with great contentment. Things were going well. For the sugar season he had secured under contract a maple forest, including this cabin.

To-morrow he would bring up equipment for tapping the trees and roasting sugar and establish himself. In six weeks, or by the end of April, when the snow finally would disappear, he expected to have many hundred pounds of sugar to sell.

Into the pleasant reverie of Gedon Larocque came a faint sound, the breaking of crusted snow under a foot.

His eyes sought the door. From behind the door came a growl. A few seconds passed; then the wooden latch lifted and the door swung inward.

A man well under middle age, with a forward-thrust head and a quick, roving glance, entered the cabin.

"Good evening, M. Albert Dinele," greeted Larocque in a quiet voice, which nevertheless carried repugnance. "I thought you were in the village."

"I was," replied the newcomer, briefly, as he sat down.

"You will stay all night?" said Larocque, for hospitality was an iron law of the woods. "Will you bring in your pack?"

"No. It is moonlight, and I shall go down to-night."

Gedon Larocque thereupon pushed his tobacco pouch across the shelf toward Dinele and felt that his duty was done. He spoke sharply to the dog, who had continued to growl, and resumed his pipe.

While a man could count a hundred there was silence; then Dinele lifted his head from a contemplation of the floor and spoke.

"You've got the contract from Le Blanc for the sugar season here?"

"The same thing—we are to sign at the end of the week."

"You are lucky, Larocque. I tried to get this contract."

"I heard."

Gedon wondered what his visitor was driving toward. He knew him well enough to know that his remark was not preliminary to a request for work.

"This one season will start a man on the road to wealth."

"I believe it will."

"It has always been so—you were the lucky one."

"Perhaps."

"You were elected Mayor when I tried to get the office."

"True." Larocque was now interested. "Yet it was a fair fight."

"You won something else before then?"

"What do you mean?"

Dinele's upper lip twitched and his brilliant, black eyes now met Larocque's gaze with a look in which hatred smouldered.

"I mean Catre Benoit!" Gedon Larocque started, and for the first time he suspected that the visitor had come with some sinister purpose.

"It is not necessary to mention Madame, my wife!"

"Only in passing, old fellow!" Albert Dinele emitted something between a snarl and a laugh. "She is one of the things between us!"

"Dinele, did you never consider that you were not elected Mayor because men did not like you well enough? That you once did Leblanc, who refused you the contract, an evil turn? And that Mme. Larocque might have married you but for the day you beat your dog half to death?"

If there had been anything needed to send Albert Dinele completely into the fury toward which he was pressing himself, these reminders were sufficient. He leaped to his feet—and backed away.

Larocque smiled inwardly at the precaution. He had no thought of laying hands upon Dinele, whom he knew for a coward.

"I came here to-night to say that if you do not promise that contract to me now you will wish, before the end of the week, that you had given me all you own!"

The door slammed. Boule, with a grumble, went back to his place, and his master, refilling his pipe, laughed long and heartily. He had little fear of any snare that Albert Dinele could set for him.

Larocque did not give a thought to physical danger, for he believed his enemy loved his own skin too well to take chances. And so Gedon smoked his pipe with an occasional peaceful chuckle, indifferent to the uncurtained window in the wall against which he leaned.

It was when he arose to go to bed that the fact of the window was brought home to him with heart-gripping suddenness. Almost in the same instant he heard a little tinkle of glass, a breath of air fanned his cheek and something thudded into a log on the other side of the room.

He dropped to his hands and knees as the report of a rifle reached him.

From that position he blew out the candles upon the table—at once to curse himself for a fool. If he had left them lit Dinele would have believed he had scored a hit, and he would have been led to investigate. Larocque wanted nothing so much as to get his hands upon the man who had fired at him from ambush.

Since it was too late for that, he must prepare for defence, and he bitterly regretted that he did not have the habit of carrying a rifle into the mountains. Five minutes before nothing would have induced him to believe that Albert Dinele would have dared to risk murder, even under the present favorable circumstances.

First of all, Larocque crawled to the door. He remembered that there were sockets for a bar on each side of the door. Reaching up, he tested them and found that they were solid—and the bar he discovered in a corner under a litter of dirt.

Boule, who had been moving about with a rumble in his throat, made him reasonably sure against surprise, and yet he felt better when the bar was in place.

The window came next. Larocque took the benches in his big, thick hands and pulled off the uprights, leaving long nails protruding from the pieces of plank that had been the seats. These he pounded into place over the window, standing carefully on one side.

A resolute man might have rushed the cabin—but not the one outside. Therefore Gedon felt his precautions to be worth while.

It was probable that the enemy had a modern rifle, but it was not probable that he would use much ammunition in blind firing at door or window. He must keep the superiority which his weapon gave, for he had committed himself so that failure would make him a fugitive.

Fortunately the bunk was placed so that it was out of the line of possible fire either from window or door, and Larocque at length lay down with a chuckle, after calling Boule to a place of safety.

With daylight he would consider the problem of getting out. Or he could wait. He could stand the strain of waiting much better than Albert Dinele, the coward. And the big man drifted off to sleep, confident that his dog would warn him of attack.

Out of the depths of sleep Larocque was jerked as if by tongs of red-hot iron. He gave a cry, rolling and striking out with his hands, full of the consciousness of agony, but unable to understand what it was that racked him with pain.

With complete wakefulness came the realization that low in one side was the centre of his torture. The shirt there was wet and sticky to the touch. He sat up, dizzily, to feel the nose of Boule against his hands—a

big tongue grab fingers. What has

For a few seconds the edge of the bunk had been no one in the dog would have given but desperation he lighted a candle staggered back to the bunk.

Blood was flowing from a that would have prostrated a less heroic strength and stature. With the salt that was always in the cabin, and strips from his undershirt, he stopped the bleeding and managed a fairly good bandage. He drank deeply from the water-pail and felt better. Gedon Larocque was not superstitious, but the mystery of the wound disconcerted him. Al did not seem possible to have been done by a human hand no doubt that Dinele was in some way responsible.

Respect for his danger came with the thought. Mercy because he knew Albert Dinele for a coward he had held him in contempt, forgetting that cunning is often the peculiar and formidable weapon of the coward.

But Larocque did not have an opportunity to speculate long upon the immediate cause of his wound, for the sound of creaking wood came from the window, and he knew that the besieger was trying to get in. With a roar Boule flung himself against the pieces of plank.

A bullet bored through one of them and struck the stove with a clang. Then came a blow against the window covering and Gedon searched for means to forestall the attack; for just at the moment he was in no shape to welcome his enemy. He gathered all of his strength and sought to below in his ordinary full-throated voice.

"Come on, Dinele!" he cried. "I'm waiting!"

The attack ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and Larocque thanked Heaven that he had to deal with a coward. A braver man, armed, would have pressed the fight to an end, but Dinele would not now, if ever, risk attack upon a Larocque able to defend himself. Evidently he had counted upon having only the dog to deal with—and Boule could be shot without great danger.

By this time Larocque was again faint, but he thought it better not to lie back upon the bunk. Painfully he crawled to the stove and filled it; then dragged the blankets to the floor and lay down with his head upon the shoulder of Boule.

Faintness swept over him in waves, and through the night he was often no more than semi-conscious. Thus morning found him in the same spot.

The cabin was filled with gray light, for something of the day filtered in around the door and the window-covering and through crevices. Larocque returned to full consciousness. He felt better although an effort to stand erect sent him reeling against the bunk, and he knew that he must be content to mope on all fours or risk the re-opening of his wound.

In this manner he secured a drink, and saw with uneasiness that the water-pail was but half full. The wood supply also was low, and after he had built up a small fire he determined to save what was left for an emergency.

It was while Larocque was resting from his efforts that a realization of a new and potent danger came upon him. He felt that he was hungry, and that a little food, even cold, would be welcome to his weakness.

Then he remembered, with a feeling akin to dismay, that there was no food either for him or the dog because of the prodigality of last night.

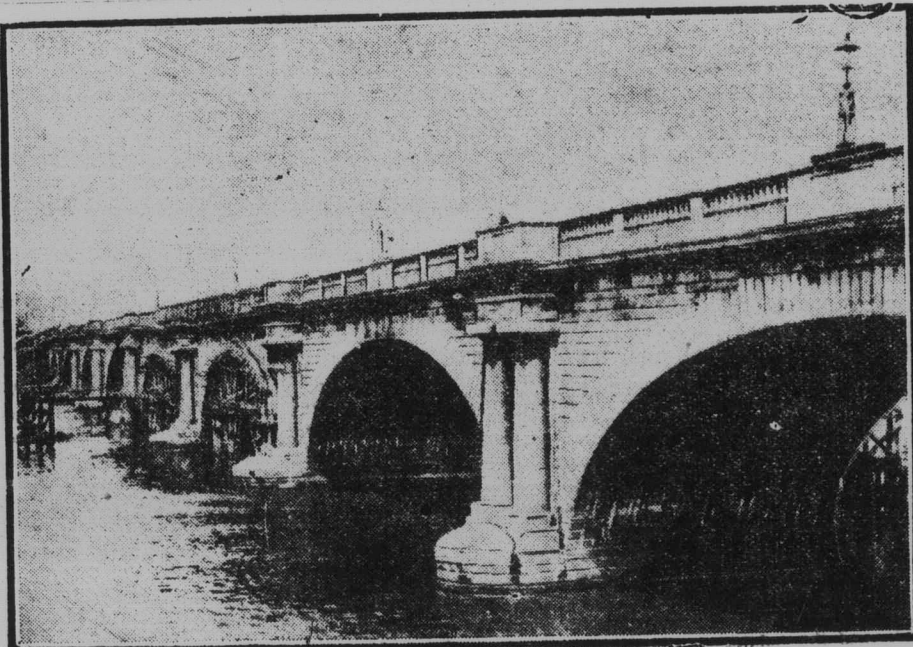
Death had drawn a net about him, and even to his optimistic nature it seemed that the odds were in favor of the net.

The danger hinged upon the equally important matters of food and a reason. There was, when he came to think of it, a practical certainty that it would be at least a week before any one would search for him.

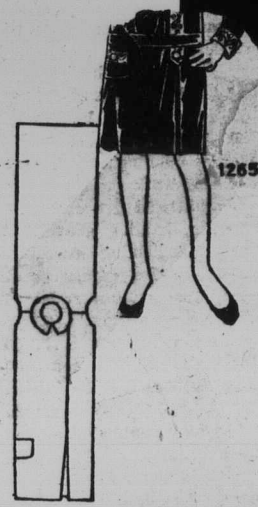
(To be concluded.)

More Bills.

"Any mail for me to-day, sonny?" "Yes, dad, a letter with a baby window."



Waterloo Bridge, one of the most beautiful bridges in the world, which spreads across the Thames in the heart of London, is doomed. The bridge is not only the most beautiful, but stands out in history. It was erected in memory of the famous battle. The London Commission favored razing the spans affected as it was unsafe. But a certain part of the structure is sinking and cannot be stopped.



A SMART FROCK FOR THE JUNIOR MISS.

This charming little one-piece frock will be found suitable for all daytime wear and is very simply fashioned. There is a set-in inverted plait at the left side-front, thus providing for the necessary skirt fullness. The dress has an opening at the neck for a short distance down the centre-front and the neck is finished with a trim round collar. Trimming braid is effectively used for the strap at the left side, cuffs on the long tight-fitting sleeves, and top of the useful patch pocket placed at the right side, while a narrow belt completes this practical and chic little frock. No. 1265 is in sizes 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. Size 8 requires 2 1/2 yards 36-inch material, and 1 1/2 yards trimming braid. 20 cents.

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Minard's Liniment for Colds.

Reading Aloud.

When there is so much to read there is little time for conversation; nor is there leisure for another pastime of the ancient firesides, called reading aloud. The listeners who heard while they looked into the wide chimney-places, saw there pass in stately procession the events and the grand periculous of history, were kindled with the delights of love, touched by the romance of true love, or made restless by tales of adventure;—the hearth became a sort of magic stone that could transport those who sat by it to the most distant places and times, as soon as the book was opened and the reader began, of a winter's night.—Charles Dudley Warner.

So slow are the dawn of dawn to start. The stormy breast, stations of despair. Dark as the night, and fretful as the air. Fleeter than hounds that go with bells thinned— My wrists of all their strength have none to spare. When those black hunters lean upon the wind. What if the sudden thunder of their feet. Wakes like a dream some farmer from his rest? Dreams had I, too, farmer, before these fleet. Steeds of the night were broken from their nest. Their weary flanks are green and white with foam; Sleep, brother, sleep; I bring my horses home.

—Robert Nathan.

4000 B.C. Tomb.

Wonderful discoveries are revealed by Dr. Reisner, the Egyptologist, in a deposit of his discovery in the pyramids of Giza of a six-thousand-year-old tomb.

It is that of Queen Hetepheres, mother of the Egyptian King Cheops and wife of King Seneferu, who reigned two thousand years before King Tutankhamen was born.

The framework of the canopy of the sarcophagus, says Dr. Reisner, is an astonishing piece of construction.

All the tenons and mortises are sheathed in copper and look like those of a modern bed. The upright pieces at the corners are clasped together by a copper bar with a slot and tie-plugs and attachments for curtains or doors formed by copper staples driven into the beams.

Other pieces of gold-cased furniture consist of a large bed, a carrying chair, two arm-chairs with papyrus flowers under the arms, and a head-rest. In a gold-cased jewel box bearing the name of the queen were twenty silver anklets, ten for each ankle.



Not His Honey.

"If you think you're gonna sit on my knees you're gonna get stung." "Oh, So you're the Bee's Knees, eh?"

Useful Even If Dead.

Chestnut trees killed by blight are still valuable as timber for a year or two.

and nature hardly anything merely that they are, for the most part, distinguished in separate provinces of poetry; that Shakespeare is above all the dramatic, and Milton the epic poet of the literature; the difference how much deeper, and declares itself unmistakably at almost every point. Now, this is not entirely due to an inborn, personal difference in the genius of these two representative poets; it is due also to the difference in the spirit of the times they represent. For in a sense even Shakespeare was "of an age," as well as "for all time." So far as we can guess from his work, he seems to have shared the orthodox politics of the Tudor times, distrusting the actions of the populace and staunch in his support of the power of the king.

In the true spirit of the Renaissance, Shakespeare's work is taken up chiefly with humanity in this world rather than with its relations to any other; his dramas are alive with the crowding interests and activities which came with the Revival of Learning. But the England in which Milton lived and worked was stirred by far different emotions. Inspired by far different ideals, Milton interprets and expresses the England of Puritanism, as Shakespeare does the England of Elizabeth, and to understand the difference in the spirit of their poetry, we must turn to history and grasp the broad distinction between the times they respectively represent.—Henry S. Pancoast, in "Introduction to English Literature."

Not Commonplace.

Think you the world is commonplace? Behold our baby's shining eyes. That see each humble, homely thing With wonderment and glad surprise.

The tassel on the study lamp— Its charm one likely never guesses Until he sees the rapt delight. Our baby's rosy face expresses.

Burnished buttons on a dress, A neighbor's scarlet hat— Our baby finds a world of joy In lovely things like that.

The sailing clouds, the wind-blown trees, A barking dog, a kitten small— Our baby views them with concern, Nor thinks them commonplace at all. —Maude DeVorse Newton.

Two Years is Cheapest Age.

The average cost of maintenance of a human being is at the lowest point at the age of 2 years, says a statistician.

In its second year of existence a child consumes less food, wears out fewer clothes and has less sickness than in any other period in its existence.

From that age until 20 years the maintenance cost gradually increases. It is at its peak during the adult period from 20 to 60 years of age, after which it begins to decline.

The average adult has a maintenance cost of \$585 a year. For those over 60 years the cost is approximately \$300.

Inspiration.

It was a golden thought to me So early in the morn When all the world was singing high, With joy of being born.

It is a silver thought to me Now that the day is done— A quiet thought that lingers low And nestles with the sun. —Blythe Sherwood.



Approved of Clubs.

Mrs. Gabb—"You certainly approve of clubs for married women?" Mr. Stabb—"Yes—Good heavy ones."

A farmer's job may be arduous, but what could be more trying than a dressmaker's work?