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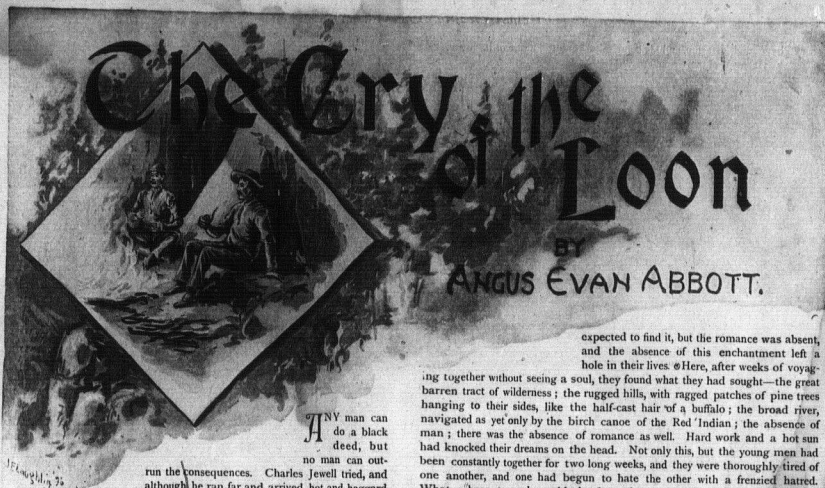
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BY
ANGUS EVAN ABBOTT.

Fate, in the form of a curious chance, waited for him in the very heart of civilization, London.

It had been a blistering day. In the northern regions of Canada the summer sun beats with tenfold force on the face of the earth, as if to make good the long months of darkness and frost that turn a quarter of the earth into an inhospitable wilderness. All this day the sun's rays beat down from a cloudless sky, and blazed up from the parched grass and white rocks, and even in the forest the very air, which sought shelter under the motionless branches of the trees, seemed to pant for breath. Even the broad river which lay between its steep banks was covered with a film of heat, and, so oily it ran seemed to have ceased flowing seawards. All day in the broiling sun two young men worked their way up the stream. Early in the forenoon they had reached a rapid in the great river: a rapid scarcely perceptible to the eye, for it was only a gradual fall of a few inches. But so swiftly flowed the body of water that the voyagers had found it necessary to make a portage, and the remainder of the day was spent in carrying their outfit and canoe along a quarter of a mile of river shore. It proved an almost insufferable task. The stones and rocks burnt the hand at every touch, and the flies and midges irritated them beyond all endurance. But the young men worked with dogged determination, and neither spoke to the other the whole day long. When all the effects had been placed far enough above the rapid to permit of the launching of the canoe on the next morning, the two silently prepared their camp for the night. A fire was built in the open space, and, although neither had any intention of sleeping under canvas on such a sultry night as must follow the day, still the tent was erected. Storms of rain, violent downpours, come suddenly in those regions, and it is a wise precaution to make ready for them in time. Supper was eaten, and one, Temple, lit his pipe in silence.

Charles Jewell and Philip Temple planned the trip they were now on quite six months in advance. While attending the University at Toronto they had spent many hours studying the scantily marked map of the far north, reading the exploits of Mackenzie and other Hudson Bay men, and posting themselves generally on travel and adventure in those northern latitudes. Night after night, when they should have been reading Greek or worse, they pored over the lore of the forest and planned. Their hopes were now realized—all but the romance. Life in the wilderness was much as they had

expected to find it, but the romance was absent, and the absence of this enchantment left a hole in their lives. Here, after weeks of voyaging together without seeing a soul, they found what they had sought—the great barren tract of wilderness; the rugged hills, with ragged patches of pine trees hanging to their sides, like the half-cast hair of a buffalo; the broad river, navigated as yet only by the birch canoe of the Red Indian; the absence of man; there was the absence of romance as well. Hard work and a hot sun had knocked their dreams on the head. Not only this, but the young men had been constantly together for two long weeks, and they were thoroughly tired of one another, and one had begun to hate the other with a frenzied hatred. What a boon to each would the face of a stranger have been! How each would have taken him to his arms and poured into his ears small troubles which had grown great through careful nursing! But there was no friendly stranger, and the two sat, Temple smoking a pipe, and Jewell nervously breaking the dry twigs which he picked from the grass.

Philip was the first to speak. He was not a good hater, and when he smoked, Peace always seemed to him an exceedingly pleasant maiden.

"A weird cry that, Charlie," he said in a low tone.

The night had fallen, and the cries from forest and stream were beginning. Jewell started, and looked quickly at his companion, who had not taken his eyes off the running water.

"What is that you say?" Jewell asked rudely.

"I say it's a strange, lonesome cry, the cry of the loon," the other answered gently. "It always seems to me ghostly."

"For heaven's sake none of your sentimental twaddle. I've had enough of it already. Don't make yourself more objectionable than—than God made you."

"Several times on this trip we have unforsaken our innermost opinions of one another. I have made a clean breast of mine, and I will give you the credit of leaving me in no doubt as to your opinion of me. Now, as neither of us have anything new in that line to disclose, I suggest we drop the subject. I am in no querulous mood to-night."

Temple spoke in an aggravatingly slow and quiet way.

"It's the first time—" Jewell was beginning hotly when Temple interrupted.

"Granted, Charlie. I grant you it is the first time. But there's the cry again, the loon, but where it comes from a person cannot tell. It seems to come from all sides of me, to be beating in the air with pinions of its own. It's a wild, strange bird, the loon, seldom seen, shy, alert, active, the spirit of the woods and lake."

Then followed a long silence, each man apparently intent on his own thoughts, and at intervals the strange sound, which had called forth the rambling remarks of Temple, sounded from the other side of the river.

"Our family is a peculiar one," Temple continued. "Sarcasm enters strongly into our lives and deaths. We believe in premonition, in signs, and omens. Have you heard of—heard of—"

Philip started. "Heard of why? Some fool thing I have no doubt the other said in spite of himself. He was being aggra-



ALL DAY IN THE BROILING SUN.