

Hargrave was a semi-invalid and could give little or no help, even if he could be induced to agree to the felling of Old Hickory; and Larry Deane did not intend to ask his permission. The tree was as much his as Henry's! But when he had reached the picket fence surrounding the giant, Larry stopped. From the topmost twig to the lowest branch Old Hickory was covered with blossom!

She was going to bear, after three generations of sterility!

"Sure 'twould be a crime," said Larry to his wife, "to cut her down an' her with the biggest crop o' nuts comin' that ever I saw on a hickory tree!"

"An' charity needs all it can get this year," agreed Mary Jane. "Yes, 'twill be best to leave her be till fall. I think the lad would say so if he knew."

JUNE passed, and July with its great heat came in. Up at Sunnybrae, Elizabeth Hargrave laboured early and late, for the hay and grain were large crops, and she was single-handed. Hired men were harder to secure than ever before. Henry, with his weak back, could do little. He walked daily to the village, two miles away, for the mail and also for the exercise. He could not wait for the rural route delivery. He must needs be at the little post office to snatch the very first crumbs of news that came in.

Thus it was that he heard the news first. A kind neighbour who had no sons to send to the front, but could sympathize out of the largeness of his heart, drove Henry Hargrave home, that sorrowful afternoon.

"Mother," he faltered, as Elizabeth turned from her work in the garden. "Mother, the whole battalion's been wiped out!"

Elizabeth paled and clutched at a tree trunk for support. "Not—not the eighth battalion—our Jimmy's?"

Henry nodded.

"Are there—any particulars? How did—he die? Was he—"

"It was a bayonet charge, the papers say. The lads covered themselves with glory. They—he—why 'Lizabeth—" he sprang forward in time to catch her before she fell.

Hard work and much secret worrying had undermined the woman's splendid constitution. Her reserve strength was gone.

It was a dark evening—dark in more ways than one. Henry shut himself up with his sorrow and mourned alone. Elizabeth, rallying, could not bear the stifling atmosphere of the house. Restlessly

she paced the garden. Jimmy's little sisters had wept themselves to sleep. Everything was still. Not a grass-blade stirred. The air was heavy and sultry



"Two young men, lithe and straight, keen-eyed and brown of face, marched away together down the old grey road."

with now and then a restless, vagrant wind that rushed along high overhead in the tree-tops and ceased up there somewhere. That betokened a storm,

Elizabeth knew. She passed through the lower orchard and reached the river-bank, and then turning, began to climb the little rise leading to the line-fence. Under Old Hickory she stopped. She could not analyze the impulse that had led her here nor did she try. She only knew that something akin to sympathy had been tugging at her heart all evening.

It was so dark she could scarcely see six feet ahead, but—wasn't that somebody there, leaning over the little gate on the Deane side?

A sob—a woman's sob!

"Mary Jane!" she called, softly.

A pause.

"Mary Jane Deane?" repeated Elizabeth, approaching the small, bent-over figure in the old sunbonnet.

Mary Jane raised her white face. A flash of lightning just then showed the tears wet upon it.

"I—I kinder hoped you'd come, 'Lizabeth," she said.

"The gate's locked an' the padlock rusted," said Elizabeth, "but I reckon I kin climb over, Mary Jane."

Which she did. Awkwardly enough, but with genuine sympathy, Elizabeth put her arms about her sister-in-affliction.

"I—I was a-goin' right up to the house, bye-and-bye," said little Mrs. Deane. "I—I didn't care even if you'd a shet the door in my face!"

"I would never a-done sech a thing, Mary Jane."

"How—how'd poor Henry take the news, 'Lizabeth?"

"I can't rightly tell. 'Twill go hard with him. He's layin' down jest now, an' when I go back I'll make him up a bit o' supper. He ain't et nothin' sence—sence—"

A crash of thunder broke in upon them. Rain began to fall.

"The storm's breakin' right over us. Come to the house—quick, 'Lizabeth!" cried Mary Jane.

THE women ran at top speed across the fields to Maple Hollow. On the verandah stood Larry Deane the elder. He grasped Elizabeth Hargrave's hand and shook it, then he put his two big hands on his wife's shoulders. "I—I got somethin' to tell you, girls," he said, in a muffled tone.

"What—what's that you're sayin', Pa?" demanded Mary Jane, tremblingly.

Just once before had she heard her husband speak (Concluded on page 20.)

A RACE WITH THE FLAMES

Another of Those North Country Prospector Sketches Drawn from Life

By J. H. PATTERSON

"THIS blamed tropical climate gets my goat," said Bill, querulously, one evening, "and it's plumb forgotten how to rain."

"Say," said Fred, the Indian guide, with a grin, "maybe you remember one night on that winter trip we made two years ago, camped on Crooked Lake. Fifty below, you said, and the fire went out." His further description was interrupted by a pair of boots which he deftly dodged.

"Cut it out!" howled Bill. "Wouldn't I love a chunk of that atmosphere now. I would just revel in it. There's nothing cool around here. The water in the river gets warmer every day, and I don't believe there's a spring in the whole country."

"You would find it much warmer a few miles west," I remarked, pointing to the heavy clouds of smoke which hung on the western horizon and which had given us some grand sunsets.

"Bad time for a fire," said Fred, soberly. "Everything so dry. A strong west wind bring that fire down here quick and I guess we get caught."

"I had one narrow escape and that was enough for me," said Bill. "Which way would we hike if it did come," he asked.

"South," replied Fred, "there's a lake somewhere up this stream. Maybe seven, maybe ten miles. Nearest place I know to go."

"Well, I think we will pay it a visit to-morrow," I remarked, "and perhaps stay a few days. I don't like the look of that smoke, and, as Fred says, we are in a bad place to be caught by a fire."

We turned into the blankets untroubled by any thought of danger and slept soundly, for we were very tired.

We were on a wild goose chase. Bill Nash had been filled up by some prospector with stories of a great deposit of copper up near the head of the Groundhog River, and old hand that he was, got very enthusiastic over the story in which he firmly believed. He offered to share equally with me if I would go along with him. Against my better judgment, I consented, though it was partly from a desire to see the country. We took Fred along, as I would

not go without him. I had an idea that he brought luck. Well, he didn't on this trip. Fred was a Missinabie Indian, and a mighty decent one he was, too.

After we had chased over about four hundred square miles of country and found no indications of copper, I wanted to give it up, as I had seen all of the country I cared to see. But Bill was not discouraged, he wanted to keep on. So we went west to another stream and again took up the search.

The weather had been uncommonly warm and dry. We had had no rain for weeks, and for the past few days heavy clouds of smoke showed the existence of a large forest fire to the westward.

It must have been nearly four o'clock when I was awakened by Fred. Crawling from under the screen I went outside. A heavy west wind was blowing and it was laden with dense masses of thick, acrid smoke.

It did not take us long to dress and pack. I think in ten minutes' time we were in the canoe and away.

"You said we would visit that lake to-day," remarked Bill, "but if you had mentioned starting so early we might have packed last night."

"I sincerely hope that we may reach it," I replied, "but that fire is not losing any time, and the wind is certainly bringing it down."

The stream was crooked and rapid, and though we paddled our hardest, progress seemed very slow.

AS day broke the wind increased. We anxiously inquired of Fred the distance, but he was not sure. "Maybe seven, maybe ten miles," was all we could get from him, but he was sure that the river ran west from the lake.

We came to a portage. Bill and Fred picked up the canoe on their shoulders and carried it across without unloading.

Soon we began to see moose plunging across the stream. One came so close that he splashed us with water in passing, but he paid no attention to us at all. In some places the western shore was almost

alive with rabbits. The poor little creatures seemed to be as much afraid of the water as of the fire. They sat stupidly on the shore or hopped aimlessly up and down. Not so the squirrels, however. When they came to the water they plunged boldly in and swam across, their bushy tails held straight up in the air. The slow-moving porcupine hurried on as fast as he could. He, too, swam the stream and pushed on ahead. Poor fellow. I could not see any chance for him. It seemed to me that unless he knew of some lake near he should have staid in the water. A lynx travelled along the shore for some distance. He, too, was afraid of the water. Birds flew over us screaming. Every living thing was doing its utmost to escape the fire doom so rapidly sweeping down upon them.

WE came to another portage, which Fred said was the last. They carried the canoe over as before. As I was walking along behind them along the shore the rabbits barely moved out of my way. One I took by the ears and tossed clear across the stream. It quickly vanished in the bushes.

Out on a rock in the rapid sat a mink, very unconcerned he appeared to be. His chances were surely good, but his reflections were rudely broken by the lynx, which leaped from the shore to the rock, sending him sprawling into the water. Like a flash he turned and snapped at the intruder, but the lynx was well on his way to the next rock, from which he glared after the grey form as though he had a notion to follow him. In spite of our own danger, we all laughed.

We had now covered about eight miles, and every turn we hoped to be the last, but Fred always told us that it was not the one. He would know it when he saw it, as once he had camped there.

Soon we became conscious of a distant humming sound directly ahead. It rapidly became louder, till it developed into a sullen roar. The foe was upon us. As we reached the bend a terrible breath of hot (Concluded on page 20.)