

THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE:

Or, The Tragedy of the Wild.

CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd)

Now the barren crag seemed to thrust itself out an impassable barrier; a grim, silent warning that the home beyond was no longer for them, no longer the home they had always known. And the hard-breathing dogs toiled on, straining at their breast-harness, with bodies heaving forward, heads bent low, and quarters drooped to give them surer purchase. They, too, as though by instinct, followed the footprints. As the marks swung out to pass the jutting cliff from the dog followed their course; Nick, on the right of them, moved wide, and craned to obtain a first view of the hut. Suddenly he gave a great shout. The dogs dropped on their harness and crouched, snarling and snapping, their jaws clapping together like the sound of castanets, whilst their wiry manes rose upon their shoulders bristling with ferocity which had in it something of fear. Ralph reached his brother's side and peered beyond the cliff.

And as he looked his breath suddenly ceased, and one hand clutched his brother's arm with a force that bruised the softer flesh, and in silence the two men gaped at the vision which they beheld. There was what seemed an endless pause, while every pair of eyes, dogs' and men's alike, focussed themselves upon the strange, apparition.

A figure, calm, serene, stood before the door of the dugout, from which the logs had been removed. Like a sentry "at ease" the figure stood resting gracefully, leaning upon the muzzle of a long rifle. Furrowned the head, which was nobly poised, and a framing of flowing dark hair showed off to perfection the marble-like whiteness of the calm, beautiful face. The robes were characteristic of the northern Indians—beads, buckskin, and fur. A tunic reaching to the knees, and, below that, "chaps," which ended where woollen stockings surmounted moose-hide moccasins.

A wild picturesque figure; and, to the two men, something which filled them with superstitious awe and a primitive gladness that was almost overpowering. The dogs alone seemed to resent the intrusion. There was no joy in their attitude, which was one of angry protest.

Nick broke the silence. "White—white," he murmured, without knowing that he spoke aloud.

Ralph's face was working. His excitement, slow to rise, now overwhelmed him, and he answered in a similar tone.

"That hair," he muttered. "Dark—dark; an' them chaps w' beards of Injun patte'n. An' the muzzle-loadin' weapon."

Nick took up the argument as his brother broke off.

"It's a squaw, too."

"Her eyes, he says, was blue," Ralph murmured, breathing hard. "An' she was leavin' on a gun," Nick added softly.

"By Gar! It is!"

Nick turned to the dogs with the wild impetuosity of a man who knows not the meaning of patience. His fiery orders fairly hurled the brutes at their task, and the sled leapt forward. On, on they hastened, till they halted within a few yards of the silent figure.

The woman showed no signs of fear, a matter which both men set down to the fact that she was a queen among her own people. She still stood in the position in which she had watched their approach. There was not a quiver of the delicate eyelids, not a tremor of the perfect mouth. Proud, haughty, and masked by the impassivity of the Indian races, she awaited the coming of the strangers.

At last Ralph advanced towards her. "You're welcome to our shack," he said in Cree.

The woman shook her beautiful head, but smiled upon him; and the simple soul felt the blood rush from heart to head.

"Try signs," said Nick impatiently. "How's the White Squaw o' the Moosefoots goin' to savvy a low-down bat like Cree. I sed so 'fore."

The blue eyes were turned to Nick with a deep inscrutable smile. Nick felt that life at her feet was the only life possible.

And Ralph resorted to signs, while Nick alternated his attention between his idolatrous worship of the lovely woman, and clubbing his dogs into quiescence. Their angry protests had merged into something more abiding than mere displeasure at the intrusion. They seemed to be imbued with a canine hatred.

Ralph persisted with his signs. The woman read them easily, and replied in her own sign-language, which was wonderful to behold. The men read it as though they were listening to a familiar tongue.

She told them that she was Aimsa, which is the Moosefoot for "Blue-Sky"; and that she was the White Squaw, the queen of her people. She indicated that she was out on a "long trail" hunting, and that she had found herself in this valley, with a snowstorm coming on. She had seen the dugout and had sought its shelter intending to remain there until the storm had passed. She made it clear to them that a bull moose and four cows had entered the valley. She had trailed them for many days. She also, in her silent language, asked them if, when the storm had passed, they would join her in the hunt.

And to all she said Ralph replied in his less perfect signs, prompted by Nick with blundering impetuosity; and, at the end of the parley, a perfect harmony prevailed. Two great rough men, with hearts as simple and trusting as those of infants, conducted the woman within their abode, and made it clear that the place was hers for so long as she chose to accept their hospitality.

A fire was kindled. A meal was cooked. The hut grew warm and comforting. The dogs outside yelped pitifully, and often snuffed angrily at the sill of the door. And the White Squaw calmly accepted the throne of that silent world, which had so long known only the joint rule of the two brothers. She looked out upon her subjects with eyes which drove them wild with adoration, but which said nothing but that which she chose to convey. She wore an impenetrable mask of reserve while she watched the effect of the womanly power she wielded.

And that night saw a change in the ordering of the trappers' household. The two men talked it over after their meal. Ralph broached the subject.

He waved his arm, the bowl of his pipe gripped in his horny hand while its stem indicated the entire hut.

"Hers," he said, and his eyes were dragged from the object of his solicitude and turned upon Nick. His brother nodded as he puffed at his pipe.

"The shed," Ralph went on. "They huskies must burrow in the snow."

Again Nick nodded. "Wants sweepin' some," observed Ralph again.

"Yup. We'll fix it."

"Best git to it."

"Ay."

forest below was being slowly buried, and all the world about them seemed to be choked with the gentle horror.

But Ralph and his brother Nick feared nothing. They loved the labor; for was it not on behalf of the beautiful White Squaw!

CHAPTER VI.

For five days the snow fell without ceasing. Then the weather cleared and the sun shone forth, and the temperature, which had risen while the lolling snowflakes filled the air, dropped with a rush to many degrees below zero.

Again the Call of the forest came to the two men, claiming them, as it ever claims those who are bred to the craft of trap and fur; and, for the first time in their lives, the Call was hearkened to by unwilling ears—ears which sought to turn from the alluring cry, ears that craved only for the seductive tones of love. But habit was strong upon these woodmen, and they obeyed the Voice which had always ruled their lives, although with the skeleton of rebellion in their hearts.

The days passed, and March, the worst month of the mountain winter, was rapidly nearing; and with it a marked change came over the routine of the Westley's home. Hitherto Ralph and Nick were accustomed to carry out their work singly, each scouring the woodlands and valleys in a direction which was his alone, each making his own bag of furs, which, in the end, would be turned over to the partnership; but Aimsa joined them in their hunting, and, somehow, it came about that the men found it necessary to work together.

They no longer parted at day-break and only met again when night fell. It became the custom for a party of three to set out from the hut, and the skilled trappers found themselves willingly deferring to a woman in the details of their craft—the craft of which they were acknowledged masters.

(To be continued.)

WALKING DICTIONARY.

Prisoner on Trial Was Inclined to Be Funny.

"You are charged with—" began the magistrate.

"Charged?" interrupted the prisoner. "That reminds me of Richard III's remark at the battle of Bunker Hill. 'Charge Stanley—'"

"Never mind Richard," broke in his worship. "He's dead. Listen to me."

"Dead—yes, dead! How that word recalls Dryden's famous line in 'King Lear': 'We ne'er shall look upon his like again!' Or, as Chaucer very pithily—"

"Stop, sir! No Chaucer or any other sir. You are charged with—"

"Can't pay! Like the immortal Johnson, sir, I can say, 'My purse was stole.' 'Twas full of trash.'"

"A policeman found you lying in the gutter last—"

"Lying, you say! 'Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying!' as my friend Lord Bacon said."

"You were found in a drunken sleep in a gutter—"

"Oh, sleep! Oh, gentle sleep! Nature's soft nurse. Oft have I wooed thee—"

"You wooed her mistakenly this time. You used whisky of a very rank—"

"The rank is but the guinea stamp," murmured the old soaker.

"Of a very rank variety," proceeded the magistrate; "and the consequence was you went to sleep before you reached home—"

"Sweet home! There's no place like home," quoted the guzzler.

"Yes, a sweet home you have made it for your children," the magistrate said.

"Wife, children, I have none. With Sir Philip Sidney I believe that 'He who hath a wife and children hath given hostages to fortune, for they are an impediment to great enterprises.'"

"Your family is to be congratulated, then; and I shall feel less compunction in retiring you to jail for the next sixty days. Call the next case."

As he was led away the prisoner was heard to murmur, "Perhaps 'tis best. As Milton says, 'For solitude sometimes is best' society and short retirement urges sweet return.'"

A ROYAL DEBUTANTE.

Princess Maud Will Be Introduced at the Courts This Season.

Pretty Princess Maud, the younger daughter of the Princess Royal and the Duke of Fife, will be one of the most interesting debutantes at the coming season's courts. She is two years younger than her sister—tall, fair-haired Princess Alexandra—who came out, not at a court function, but at a ball given by Lady Farquhar for the late King and Queen Alexandra. To King Edward Princess Maud was much devoted, and was a great favorite with his Majesty. She is clever, and can speak fluently in French, German and Italian. In disposition she is lively, adventurous, fearless and full of initiative; and if at one time she was always getting her sister into trouble, she was always getting her out of it again. It was merry Princess Maud, who called her mother, who is extremely retiring, "Her Royal Shyness." The presentation of a royal Princess is always of great interest. She is not, of course, formally presented, but enters the throne room where the presentations are made with the royal party, and sits behind their Majesties while the court is in progress with other members of the royal family. After her debut, she usually appoints a lady-in-waiting, who escorts her to any social functions she may attend.

STANDARD BANK'S RECORD FOR 1910.

1910 a Year of Steady Progress and Expansion.

The past year's business of the Standard Bank as disclosed in the 36th annual statement show this institution to be making continued and steady progress. During the year eight new branches were opened in Ontario and a corresponding number in the Western Provinces, making a total of 96 offices in the Dominion. The net profits amounted to \$373,908.25 after allowing for all charges, which figures out on the basis of 18.66 per cent. on the paid up capital, and which added to the balance carried over from 1909, makes a total of \$427,282.48, which was disposed of as follows:—Dividends, \$240,000 (12 per cent.); Officers' Pension Fund, \$7,500; Written-off Premiums, \$25,000; added to Reserve Fund, \$100,000; to Profit and Loss Account, \$54,782.48.

The general statement shows: Circulation, \$1,987,102; Deposits, \$20,413,503; Capital, Rest and Surplus Profits, \$4,616,566. The total Assets are \$33,427,328, or which \$9,232,348 is in cash and immediately available securities. The loans and discounts amount to \$23,925,354.

Shareholders, customers and friends of the Standard Bank will be much pleased at the strong condition of the Bank in all departments. The same Directorate was re-elected as for 1909 and Mr. W. F. Cowan was re-elected President and Mr. Frederick Wyld, Vice-President.

The annual statement is being printed in booklet form. It contains information of a general and specific nature regarding the affairs of the bank as related to Financial Canada. A copy will be sent free upon application to the Head Office, Standard Bank, Toronto.

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DIET OF CENTENARIANS.

The One Absolute Requisite Is That It Shall Be Simple.

Ask the nonagenarian or centenarian as to his diet. Will he answer in the terms of the bill of fares published monthly in some so-called health journals, where we find suggestions for luncheons bringing within the compass of a single meal samples from every class and category of noncarnivorous substances—as if the mere essence of animal meat redeemed and made tolerable every incongruous mixture of food. "Thus," says the Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette, "we find berries with cream; banana fritters and stuffed dates, roast chestnuts and custard, baked potatoes and peanut cream, vegetable salad, rice-sago pudding and a glass of milk—a combination that would turn the stomach of an ostrich into a reeking yeast pot.

"Or will he suggest a line of simple essentials, such as a breakfast on fruits, fresh or cooked with some kind of dry, whole meal cereals; a lunch of two or more fresh vegetables prepared in salad form with perhaps a dish of well cooked rice, corn meal, or coarse dry bread; and an evening meal of a bowl of sweet fresh milk, oatmeal or whole meal zwickbun.

"Carnaro, the famous Italian nonagenarian, lived during the last twenty years of his life on a diet largely consisting of a little wine, coarse bread, macaroni and cheese, eaten twice a day. Emmanuel Swedonborg, the great Swedish philosopher, scientist and seer, whose writings still continue to illumine minds of ever increasing numbers of devotees, and who died a nonagenarian, subsisted almost exclusively during his last two decades on a mixture of milk and weak coffee, enjoyed together with dried wheaten buns (rusks). Thomas Edison, Dr. Kellogg, Alfred Wallace, while non-vegetarians, seldom eat but once or twice a day, and very simple meals.

"A couple of years ago I met at Long Beach, Cal., an old man who at the age of ninety-five years was as vigorous as a man of fifty and in full possession of all his faculties and senses. For twenty years his dietary had consisted of baked onions and pumpnickel, with now and then a meal of baked apples or dried beef. However, no specific rules other than that of simplicity can be traced in the habits and customs of those who inherit the kingdom of earth.

"They may find their elixir of life on a diet of oatmeal and sweet milk, as in Scotland; on baked potatoes and salt, as in Ireland; on black bread, sauerkraut and small beer, as on the Rhine; sour milk and barley cake, as in Bulgaria; white bread and black wine, as in southern France; macaroni and cheese, as in Italy; rye, bread, salt fish, sour milk, as in Sweden, &c. Every

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LONG SERMONS AND KING.

Preachers Can Exceed the Customary Ten Minutes.

The recognized time for a preacher to occupy the pulpit when preaching before the late King was ten minutes. King George, however, has never quite approved of these very short sermons, and it has been intimated to the chaplains in ordinary attached to the Royal Household, from whom the preacher for the morning service at Buckingham Palace is usually selected, that their sermons may be of greater length than they were customarily in the late reign. An intimation of this sort amounts practically to a command, but it is doubtful if it will be very welcome to some of the chaplains who were in the late King's Household, who have during the past years rarely preached a sermon of more than ten minutes' duration. When the King is at Buckingham Palace on Sunday the preacher for the morning service is selected by his Majesty; the selection is usually made on Friday, and the chaplain who has been chosen is notified of the fact by the Sub-Dean.

SPOILT!

"This is my daughter, and she will show you what to do," said the lady to the new servant.

"Your daughter!" said Susan. "Is it possible? Why, you look more like twin sisters."

"I can assure you she is my only daughter," replied the lady, highly pleased with the remark.

Then Susan said: "Well, she certainly looks old enough to be your sister"—and that spoilt everything.

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