

# THE INVERTED PYRAMID

BY  
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Author of "North of Fifty-three"

## CHAPTER XX

For a few days Rod went about a little, picking up threads of old acquaintance with places and people. The uneasy consciousness of a heart which might fail him at any moment troubled him now and then. Once or twice he felt that strange faltering. But it did not stop—not quite. He wondered if he had passed a crisis that first night at home when he felt himself locked in a grapple with death itself. And so he was very careful. It was easy to be apathetic, to be completely acquiescent. Nothing, he thought, would ever again make his heart swell with such repressed passion as the sights and sounds of the western front, the carnival of non-combatants in Paris and London, the bitterness with which for so long he had seen the agonies and endurance and destructiveness of war as sheer waste—blind, blundering waste, the offspring of cupidity wedded to arrogant ignorance.

He wanted to forget what could not be changed. Here it was easy to forget, at least to thrust it all into the background, now that he was home. For a time he would rest. When his heart strengthened he would take stock of his resources and move with determined purpose in some direction, toward some as yet indefinite goal.

In the meantime, free from military discipline, interminable parades, orders, red tape that fettered the hands of initiative and bound up a man's mouth so that he needed only two phrases in his vocabulary, "Yes, sir" and "No, sir," he went about in his native city observing, noting, listening in clubs, homes, on the streets, in hotel lobbies where he went to meet other men who had just come back.

As the landscape endured and the outstanding architectural features, many things had changed, contrary to his first glad impression, were still changing at an accelerated pace in this winter of 1919. In four years and a half his native city, when he came to examine it closely, presented a transformed physiognomy.

Its lifeblood, people and money, flowed in a heavier stream through complicated arteries. Vancouver was bigger and better, he heard on every hand. New industries, shipyards, shipping, more elaborate affairs. The war had done a great deal for British Columbia, an elderly banker naively remarked to him.

Rod conceded that it probably had. But it had also done something "to" British Columbia. He couldn't say just what. It wasn't clear enough in his mind. But he could feel it. Or perhaps it was only himself. He could not be sure. He could dimly apprehend a difference. His world was changed. Phil was dead. Grandfather Norquay took his long sleep beside other dead Norquays in the plot at Hawk's Nest. Grove flourished largely, a scintillating comet, streaming across the moneyed spaces.

Rod sometimes paused after dark in some distant part of the city to look at the flamboyant sign with a speculative interest, without the old resentment, but with a shade of disapproval. Grove was becoming a big man—Rod couldn't escape that conclusion—a big man in his chosen field. Scarcely a day but some newspaper quoted him. He figured in local print co-equal with the Fenwick Conference and the latest authentic report of Lenine's death. Nearly nine years now of waxing great in the financial firmament. Grove bade fair to win greater fame and fortune than that old forerunner of his who beat around the Horn to found a family in the wilderness where the land filled his eyes with pleasure and his soul with peace.

Would old Roderick have found pleasure and profit in discounting notes, clipping coupons at so much per cent, buying and selling bonds and mortgages, squeezing little debtors and bolstering up big ones for a consideration? Rod smiled at the quaint notion.

But he had evidently underestimated Grove's capacity. Grove had his community behind him. His finger was in every pie. His skill at extracting plums was envied and admired.

"He's what they mean when they talk about the greatest of our country," Rod thought cynically. "That sort of thing."

Oliver Thorn had sold his timber to the Norquay Estate and retired to live in a cottage on the Capilano slope fronting on the city, where he could, as he told Rod, spend his last years seeing the sun rise from behind the Connaught range and set behind the far, blue ramparts of Vancouver Island. John P. Wall, Grove's father-in-law, had made a fortune in building wooden ships and another in airplane spruce. Wall's youngest son had been killed overseas, but his eldest had been too precious an asset to the community to risk his life in war. Isabel was a beauty, still unmarried. (It seemed to Rod an astonishing thing when Mary told him Isabel was her dearest friend.) The De Mes and Richbons flourished, with one or two gaps in the younger ranks. They had grown richer with the war, vastly more sure of themselves, setting a pace in the social parade that lesser folk found hard to follow.

There were two avenues open along which Rod could saunter to exercise this detached observance of his own people: the times which automatically opened to him, and brief daily contacts with men downtown. Socially things seemed a little more feverish, people just a trifle keener in the futile pursuit of futile diversions, the dancing just a little more frankly sensuous, the drinking a little freer, the talk looser. If one couldn't or wouldn't keep the pace one was "slow." It amused Rod and it vaguely troubled him. These people seemed so remote from so many things of importance that pressed close on them, matters that constituted both a warning and a threat. Downtown it was worse. Uptown links—the strong, changed with everything else. He had aged. Losing Phil had been a blow. But he was a proud man—and he had two sons left. That grief had not put

care lines in his face, or caused the abstract brooding into which he sometimes relapsed. Rod understood, of course, that the war had completed the break-up of the old family life at Hawk's Nest which Grove's embarkation on a career had begun, or Grove's personality had begun. His father admitted that he no longer cared to live at Hawk's Nest.

"One doesn't like to be alone all the time," he had put it quite simply. "Too many ghosts haunt those corridors for an old man. And at one's age one does not care to set up an establishment in town. When any of the others find occasion in summer, I go to Hawk's Nest. Otherwise I live at the club."

Yet the place was kept up. Stagg, the butler, his wife who ranked as housekeeper, a cook, two maids, and two gardeners held a sinecure. One could, Rod assumed, step in and find Hawk's Nest quite as of old.

He came back to his father. What bothered him? It couldn't be money or affairs. The Norquay estate was rock-ribbed. Timber, land, gilt-edged securities. It must simply be that he was getting old and lonely. When a man is sixty and all his life has been spent in a well-appointed home, surrounded by a fairly numerous family and still more numerous relatives, he can hardly reconcile himself to the empty shell of a house, or the artificial atmosphere of even the most elaborately appointed club. Rod felt sorry for him. But if Grove hadn't failed to carry on the family tradition, Hawk's Nest would still be the year-around rendezvous of the clan, as it had always been. No effect without a cause. Rod put aside the thought that his elder brother could be blamed for a great deal if one chose to be critical.

His father sat smoking a cigar in a chair that commanded the club entrance, and he led the way to his rooms as soon as Rod appeared.

He took some papers off a table and sat fusing with them. He didn't seem inclined to talk at first, beyond a few casual remarks. Rod waited. He knew his father. He felt that something was coming—something that rested with a great weight on the elder man's mind. Since Rod came home there seemed to have arisen between them a more keenly sympathetic understanding than had ever existed before. It wasn't a matter of words. It was a feeling. Rod divined intuitively that his father had some deep trouble to share with him. He could not have defined any reason for this belief. It existed as a belief. In that conviction he waited.

"Five years ago," Norquay senior began abruptly. "I looked forward to sitting back with a pipe and slippers and a book while my sons carried on in the old way. For a hundred and thirty years, to speak precisely, we have gone ahead solidifying our position, doing well by ourselves and all connected with us. We seemed—as a family—to have acquired a permanence, a solidarity, beyond that of any family in this province. We have become a sort of institution. We were here first. Of the exploring adventurers, we were the first to take root. You know the family history. We have helped to make this country what it is. We have acquired a great deal of material power, yet I do not recall that we have ever abused it. In each generation we have had a lot of faithful service, and we have had it because we have scrupulously observed some form of obligation to those who served us. Men have trusted us as being persons entirely trustworthy. We have not been Shylocks. We have not been arrogant. We have never been greedy for more."

Five years earlier Rod would have assented, as a matter of course. Now he stirred slightly in his chair, as his father paused, and observed dispassionately:

"Would you include Grove in that last?"

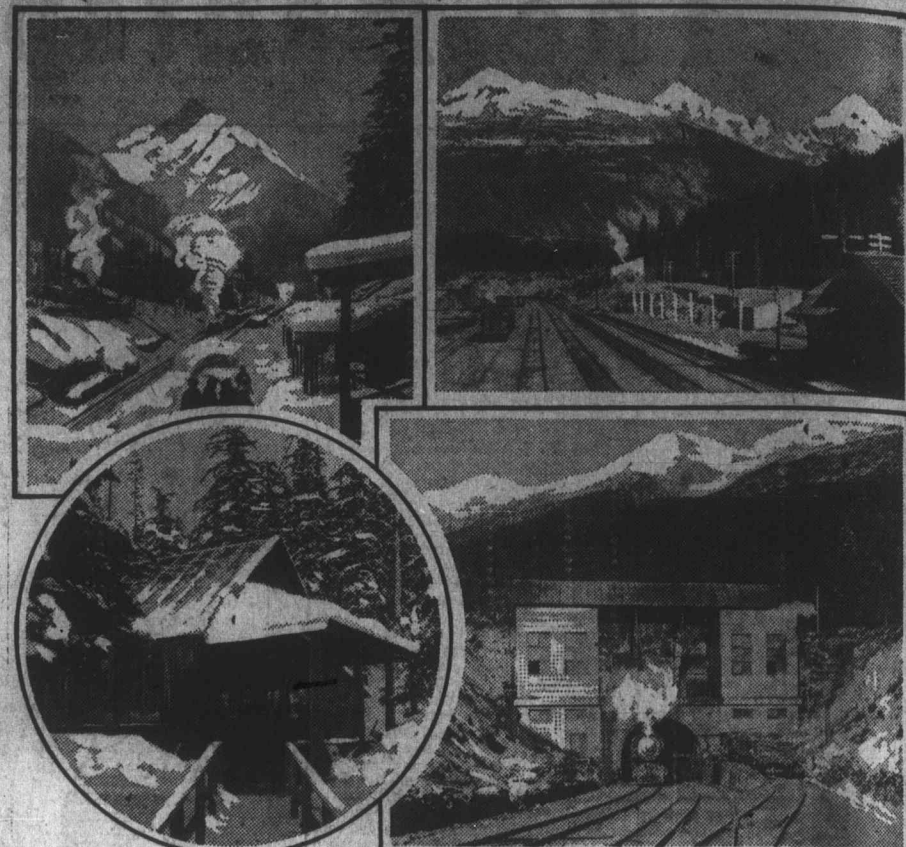
"I am coming to Grove," Norquay senior answered. "To arrive at Grove by a logical sequence is the reason for this summing-up of ourselves. A few weeks before your grandfather died he said to me, 'My father once prophesied that Hawk's Nest would some day hatch out an eagle. What's the last hatching? Sparrows. Sparrows!' Quite apropos of nothing. We hadn't even been talking. He grew very uncertain in his mind at the last. A great age, Rod. Nearly ninety. He scarcely comprehended the war. Grove was there with a house party. I think their high spirits annoyed him. Sparrows!"

He contemplated the rug with a fixed frown.

"I wonder if he were right," he said at last.

To be continued.

## 'LINING THE CONNAUGHT TUNNEL



Upper left—In spite of heavy snowfalls and below zero weather the work of lining the Connaught Tunnel is continued through the winter months. The cloud-wrapped heights of Mount Abbott and Ross Peak stand as western sentinels of the little town.  
Upper right—Glacier, B.C., showing Mount Macdonald, 9,485 feet, through which the five mile Connaught Tunnel passes, with an altitude of 10,000 feet, is on the eastern side.  
Lower left—The resident engineer's bungalow nestled among giant evergreens on the banks of the Illecillewaet River.  
Lower right—Western Portal of the Connaught Tunnel, showing the face boxes and the two huge 14 ft. steel fans which ventilate the "big hole."

High up on the crest of the lofty Selkirk with half a dozen of the finest mountain peaks in the world hunching their snow-clad shoulders about its rows of trim brown houses, lies the picturesque town of Glacier on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway through British Columbia. Three and a half miles distant from this little construction centre, which has virtually been called into being through the lining of the Connaught Tunnel, hangs the great Illecillewaet Glacier on the slopes of Mount Macdonald and two miles nearer nestles Glacier House, the annual mecca of thousands of summer tourists.

The lining of the "big hole" was begun in 1920 and when this work is completed the Connaught Tunnel will stand as one of the finest and most complete engineering jobs in the universe. Undertaken in the name of safety, the Connaught Tunnel has always been a "safety first" proposition. Throughout its construction days, during the eight years it has been in operation and the four years that it has already taken to line it, it has been singularly free from accident.

Nearly 500,000 sacks of Canadian cement will have gone into the lining of the Connaught Tunnel when it is finished. Practically all the machinery used in the work is Canadian made, including the huge compressors and powerful motors. The four types of reinforced steel collapsible forms, which are used in the various stages of the lining process, came from a western Canadian plant and the Sydney E. Jenkins Company, B.C., Limited, construction engineers are in charge of its lining.

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