

Canadian National Exhibition

August 28 - - September 13

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REAL IRON
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A Race with the Flames

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air swept down the river, bringing with it a shower of sparks and burning fragments, which fell sizzling into the water.

From the ground to the treetops seemed a solid mass of fire, while great tongues of red flame leaped high into the air.

"We'll have to take to the bush!" shouted Bill. "It's our only chance."

"That next bend the last before we come to the lake," replied Fred. "The belt of fire only follows a ridge, and it is not wide. That's why its ahead of the rest; but we have no chance at all if we take the bush."

"You are right," I said. "We'll get into the water and soak ourselves well, then cover up with wet blankets. If, as Fred says, the ridge is narrow, we will soon be through. Anyway, there is nothing else to do."

"Keep well covered," advised Fred. "Don't put your heads out at all. I will steer."

The heat was now well nigh intolerable. I looked ahead before taking refuge under the blanket. We were approaching an avenue of flame, through which it seemed impossible for anything living to pass. Already blazing branches were falling all around us, while to the roar of the fire and the crash of falling trees was added that hissing sound as the burning masses fell into the water.

It seemed certain death to go forward. To go back we were sure to be caught in a few minutes, with no chance at all of escape, while to take to the bush would mean a certain, though more agonizing death, for we would need wings to escape a fire fed by such a hurricane. Our only hope lay in running the fiery gauntlet before us, though our hopes of doing so were small.

I drew the wet woollen blanket over my head and paddled for my life. Every moment I expected to strike a fallen tree, but still we sped on. Every breath was an agony. The intense heat caused our wet clothing to give off clouds of steam we were compelled to breathe.

After what seemed an eternity, I felt the canoe turn sharply to the right, and knew that the bend was passed. I wondered how much longer I could stand the awful torture, and if I would go first. Perhaps Fred was wrong and the river turned again to the west. Well, I would die in the water if it came to the worst. Still the blanket flapped against my arm as I drove in my paddle deep and hard. My head was bursting. So this was the end.

Suddenly the blanket was jerked away. The bow of the canoe touched the shore. Bill was already uncovered. We looked around in surprise. The fire was still roaring behind us, but the wind coming down the steam was clear and cool and there was not much smoke.

"Thank God!" said Bill fervently. "But that was a close call!"

"Now, Fred," I said, "how far are we from the lake? We had better get into some safe place before we have breakfast."

There was no reply, and I looked around. Fred was leaning far forward, his paddle across the canoe. We quickly drew up and lifted him out. He was unconscious. His face was a mass of blisters. We laid him down and soaked him with water. After a few gasps he opened his eyes. They were terribly bloodshot, and he quickly closed them.

"Get on down to the lake," he whispered; "to the south shore."

We put Fred in the canoe, and in a few minutes reached the lake. How good its broad expanse of blue waters looked, and how fresh and cool the wind!

We made camp on a little point, from which we could plainly see the huge columns of black smoke rolling to the eastward.

Fred was in a bad way. We greased his face with lard and put a poultice of cold tea leaves on his eyes.

Did you notice, boys," said Bill, slapping his neck, "that we haven't been troubled by flies this morning?"

"This prospecting game sure has its moments of excitement," I remarked. "Nothing tame or commonplace about it. I thought it was all off with us when we headed into the fire, but I think I have a pretty good idea now just how much heat a man can stand."

"Hell can't have much on that," was Bill's reply. "And I say, old scout," he continued, turning to Fred, "it's you we have to thank for getting us out of that furnace. You certainly deserve the V.C. and a few other medals. I can't see how you managed to uncover your face at all. Why, I really boiled under the blanket!"

It was four days before Fred was able to use his eyes again. Even then his face was very sore, but he was otherwise none the worse for his terrible roasting.

That huge copper deposit may be there, but it is not for us. We decided to go back. Bill at last was satisfied, so we pointed our bow for the railway for supplies and then to the country north-west of Gowganda.

The Old Hickory

(Concluded from page 5.)

with that voice. It was when small Larry had passed the crisis in his fever and the doctor announced the danger-point over.

Lightning swift and blinding clove the sky before the elder Larry could reply, then came a tremendous clap of thunder and a splitting, tearing sound that held the three watchers rooted. Lightning continually streaked the heavens and by its aid they saw a strange sight.

Split from top to base with a long, gaping, yellow wound, Old Hickory wavered a moment in the surge and fret of the storm and then fell with a sound rivalling the thunder overhead.

A cry of dismay broke from the two women.

"The nuts! Such a fine crop they would a' been!" Elizabeth said, wistfully.

"The place that knew it shall know it no more!" quoted Larry, softly. "Sure, it's ungrateful enough we'd be to mourn for a few nuts now when we've got somethin' better to think of, an' it's pleased the lad'll be when he comes home to find the work done an' never an axe laid to its scraggy, old trunk."

Mary Jane clutched at him sobbingly. For a moment she thought him out of his head.

"Pa—don't!" she cried. "Don't you

remember? Larry an' Jimmy—Elizabeth's lad—why they're both gone."

"The boys—our boys—are safe!"

There was a husky ring in the old man's voice. "Yes," he continued. "Safe! I've jest telephoned over to Henry Hargrave—not ten minutes ago—an' he'll be here when the storm lifts a bit. We're to smoke the pipe of peace together this night."

"Yes, yes, yes—go on!" cried the women together, Mary Jane adding: "Is it mad you are, Larry Deane, to speak this way?"

"No, but 'tis soakin' wet I am, after huntin' all over the place for you! Less than a quarter of an hour ago the 'phone rang. 'Twas the voice of Dinny Baxter at the station answered me. 'Let me read you a cable-telegram, Larry,' he says. 'Go ahead, Dinny,' I replies. 'Sure you can't have much worse in store for me than what I've got already.' He says: 'Oh but this is something you may like real well to hear. It will interest you, I think.' So he read it an' I made him repeat it five times. 'Twas from Larry. It said: 'We are coming home, honourably discharged. Only five of the battalion left. Jim has lost an arm and part of my face is bashed in. Not a patch on what we are going to do to Old Hickory.'"