

Sheltered behind the car our assailants were in little danger of our bullets, and our ammunition was almost exhausted. We should either be burned in our trap or forced to capitulate. And with the mob in its present temper, what capitulation might mean we could only guess.

"It's all up, Grey," said I. "You've done your duty nobly, but we're beaten. Roll out the whisky to them."

"What whisky?" he demanded.

I pointed to the barrel.

Grey was a friend of mine, but I shall never forget the look that came into his eyes. I shouldn't have cared to be his enemy at that moment.

"You fool," he shouted. "That isn't whisky. That's blasting powder!"

If a moment before the situation seemed desperate, what shall I say of it now? There seemed nothing for it but flight. But how or where should we fly? We men might brave the storm for the night, and in the morning find our way back to Burke's siding, but for Mrs. Grey that was impossible. There seemed nothing for it but to hold out until the fire got into our car and take a chance—if you could call it a chance, in the snow.

But while I was reflecting on these pleasant alternatives an idea came to Burke.

"Blasting powder, is it? Then roll it out to them. Let them blow themselves to—"

The destination was never announced. At that moment something swept by like a fresh burst of storm from the north. At first we could distinguish nothing through the swirling snow, but soon we made out the forms of men on horseback, and the mob scattering in all directions, as though a bomb had been thrown amongst them. Resistance was swept away in an instant, the car was left to burn where it stood, and as the riders swung up to the caboose we saw the fire flicker on the shining buttons and accoutrements of the Mounted Police.

"Come in, Sergeant, come in, and bring your men," shouted Grey. "The Lord sent you just in time, to be sure. Such a ride as you must have had!"

"It was a bit unpleasant," the sergeant admitted, "but you seem to have had stirring times here, too. You've a nasty scalp cut there, Grey. What other casualties?"

We mustered for examination. Burke had a bullet-hole in his arm, and Findlay was swollen out of recognition as a result of his rough usage. Jimmy and I and Mrs. Grey had nothing to show for the skirmish.

"And now, Constable Findlay," said the sergeant, "will you explain why you should not be disciplined for failing to place the ringleaders under arrest?"

"Findlay did everything possible," Grey interrupted. "He charged the whole bunch single-handed, and we had to drag him in to save his scalp. I told him that it was glorious, but it wasn't war."

"And that, my dear sir, is just where you are mistaken. That is war—as the Mounted Police play the game. As soon as we begin counting odds our usefulness as a force is ended. We are expected to do the impossible, and, sir, we do it, or I wouldn't be here at this minute. Findlay should have effected his arrests—or stayed there. However, he appears to have shown a fair amount of pluck, and will escape with a reprimand."

"Thank you, sir," said Findlay.

"And now, Mr. Grey, if you can find shelter for our horses we'll stable-up and camp with you until the trouble blows over," said Graham.

Mrs. Grey had been digging deep in a box, but at this moment she emerged with a great parcel. Unwrapping it, she held aloft an enormous turkey—a regular, genuine, Ontario-fed gobbler.

"Everybody stays for Christmas dinner," she declared.

"Three cheers for Mrs. Grey," we shouted, and the old cupola rocked as we gave them.

Boys, I guess you don't know just how big a turkey looked in those days.

Bill rose from his pail, stretched himself, and prepared to turn in. The other boys still puffed silently in their bunks, but Warren said:

"How about the fill? Did he finish it in time?"

"Did he?" said Bill. "Did he? Well, men who fall down on their jobs don't get where Grey is now. Good-night, boys. Four o'clock comes early."



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