

take it any way you like." With that he turned and stabbed the fire viciously.

"Dou you mind my suggesting that it's hot enough already," said Jenkins, "and, further, did Strong tell you anything about what route he was taking?"

"Not a sign," snapped Alderson. "I sent you a copy of his letter."

"Can't we get word to him somehow, to worry through?"

"You might, if you had a balloon and could drop into his camp. Who is going to find a man in that God-forsaken wilderness?"

"Well, I was just thinking that a million is a good deal of money in these latter days. That's two hundred and fifty thousand apiece, my Christian friends. Mind you, I'm not saying he won't do it," ruminated Jenkins, "but if he does, he's a wizard. If he does, boys, what are we going to do about it?"

There was a little silence—they had not considered that part of it. Alderson, himself, involuntarily began to wonder what life would be like in the woods at forty below zero, and then added: "I think we ought to do the decent thing. What do you fellows say to five per cent. on gross profits."

Jenkins whistled. "Are you aware that means fifty thousand dollars?"

"Yes, I am; and I'm also aware that you never considered five per cent. much of a rake-off."

The others laughed, and Jenkins joined in. "Well, if it comes down to the fine thing, I don't know that I would do the work for the money, myself, and if he makes it, I guess he earns it."

"But what about Strickland in this deal?"

"Well, Angus never objected to giving five per cent. off for cash, and I don't think he will this time. By the by, when is he coming back?"

"I cabled him when I got the offer. He wrote he would be here about the third week in April."

"Well, then, he'll be in at the death, one way or the other," grunted Jenkins.

The big blue print was unrolled, and Strong's probable course was followed across its white-ribbed surface. Finally Alderson put a heavy forefinger down on a long, narrow lake. "If he's there, now, we'll do it. If he isn't, we will retire and smile, if we can."

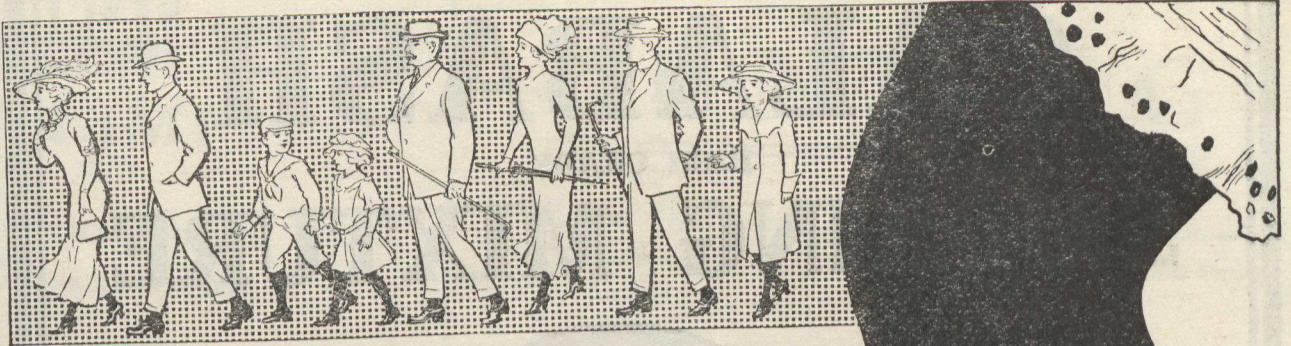
As a matter of fact, that finger happened to rest on the very point where, at that very time, John Strong's camp was pitched. Whether some occult influence was at work or whether his generalship was the motive force, it was hard to say; but the line had swung southward with admirable speed and precision.

Thirsty was commanded to the chief's tent, and the two had a long conference that lasted well into the night. As he rose to go, Strong said: "We'll leave it that way. We must strike Red Harbour on the nineteenth; that leaves you only twenty-five miles to run in eleven days. I will push ahead, and look up harbour soundings and yard room, and will meet you there, and you can have a day on your plans and profiles."

And so it was that, on the night of the nineteenth, Strong, his work done, stepped on the footboard of a light engine that fled roaring southward along the main line of the Trans-Pacific.

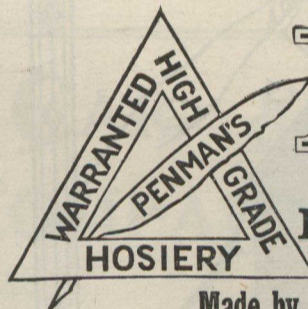
Steadily the streaming miles slid by, and the blurred country opened up as he penetrated into civilization. Even as he sped, the clicking instruments flashed the tale of his coming—for Jenkins had secured right of way for Engine 999 Special, and the last message was addressed to him, and read: "Meet you your office, ten a.m., twenty-first." And, as fate would have it, late the next night he pulled into the Montreal station, with a roll of plans under his arm, at the very moment when Strickland and his daughter were alighting from the New York express.

It was a little before ten the next morning that Strickland entered Jenkins' office. Alderson and Prentice arrived a few minutes later. The



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