

The Death Leap

The Tale of a Deadly Gamble in the Wild

By H. Mortimer Batten

FIREFLANK, the fox cub, sat under the silent stars in the big white world and listened. He had come far and fast, and he was hungry, yet upon him rested the fear of the unknown, for this country was new to him.

Eight days ago Fireflank had left the green fields and pine woods of his native land, had left his father and mother, and sisters and brothers to seek fortune on his own. He had turned his steps northwards towards the blue hills—loping, loping, mile after mile, sneaking under cover where and when the dawn found him. He had eaten little during this late Autumn migration, for he was afraid—horribly afraid of the fox-hounds that had chased his sister and him—that had finally pulled his sister down though he did not know it, within sight of their nursery home. So Fireflank, alone, homeless, had fled into the heart of the mountains, where this peaceful winter evening found him, and here, among the loose rocks of the Garolgame Wood, he had already half decided to make his home.

He sat under the silent stars, I say, at his den mouth, his big ears acock, daring himself to sneak down into the valley towards that white-walled homestead across the river. An hour ago he had heard the honking of geese and the cackling of poultry from away over there, but he had also heard the shouting of a man and the barking of a dog. Fireflank was very young, or he would have waited till after midnight, but now his hunger led him on, and down towards the noisy river he stole, sneaking in and among the hazels till he reached the bank. The thunder of heavy waters filled the air, the trees at the river edge were all bearded and caked with frozen spray, but leaping from rock to rock, where a false step might have meant disaster, Fireflank gained the other side. The idea of having the river between the region of his nightly raids and the place he already called his home appealed to his native instincts, though he did not just know why.

There was a light in the farm window, but also there was wafted on the still air a delicious whiff of poultry. Fireflank kept his eyes upon the light. It seemed to draw him. From far out, in the centre of the field, he saw the farmer and his family seated over their supper; the fox cub snarled a silent snarl, then making a detour he got to the back of the farm buildings whence came the scent of the fowl, and sneaked in under the orchard gate. All was white and silent, and there—O delight!—sat five plump roosters, huddled together on the branch of a plum tree not twelve feet from the ground.

Fireflank drifted under the branch and looked up with shining golden eyes. The fowls moved uneasily, and their movements seemed to excite him. He yapped twice, two sharp metallic "yaps," and the foolish roosters, instead of sitting tight, began to edge out towards the end of the already overstrained branch. "Yap-yap!" said Fireflank louder now, for in his excitement he had forgotten the farmer and his dog—"Yap-yap-yap!"

One of the roosters fluttered, began to lose its balance, and then, fluttering weakly, slowly subsided backwards till it swung head down, in the most absurd manner imaginable, still hanging on frantically by its feet. Fireflank fairly yelled with glee, making desperate little jumps, though he knew it was only a matter of time ere the rooster fell to meet him.

At that instant the farmer rose from his supper. "Whist-ye!" he muttered, threatening to cuff one of his boys, then he held up his hand in a gesture for silence. All of them listened. The dog, basking before the peat fire, pricked his ears, and assumed an attitude of interest. "Yap-yap! Yap-yap-yap!"

"Yonder's a fox" said the farmer in an excited whisper. He snatched his gun from under a rafter in the oak ceiling, his dog was at his side, and as he opened the door he whispered—"Fix him, Nell!"

Nell shot silently forth, for she knew as well as anyone what was amiss. The word "fox" was associated in her mind

with many a breathless chase in the spring of the year when she and her master slept out on the hills to guard the newly born lambs, and Nell knew the ways of mountain foxes. So she stole silently out, swift as an arrow, intending to take the thief by surprise.

"Yap—Yap!" yelled Fireflank, and at that moment the branch on which the fowls sat gave an ominous creak and broke. Down came a veritable avalanche of chickens, each so dead with terror that it fell like a stone, and Fireflank found himself the centre of a hail-storm of descending riches. They landed in his face and on his neck, on his back, and like a little cyclone he whirled this way and that, sending up a cloud of powdery snow, and dealing death at every snap.

Over the boundary wall appeared a shadow, and had not Fireflank been too busily occupied he would have seen a vision of bristling hair and naked fangs bearing pell-mell upon him. As it was, he did not see Nell till she actually collided with him, rolling him over and over amidst a maelstrom of chickens, cutting his shoulder with her fangs. But Nell overshot and was too slow in turning. In an instant Fireflank was up, darting like a streak of light for the gate through which he had come. He wriggled under it, and Nell, at his very heels, collided heavily with the bars, for the space was too small for her to follow. She lost two priceless seconds in attempting it, then lost two more in scrambling over the wall. Away went Fireflank, floating easily over the snow, keeping to the shadow of the wall and heading back towards the river, while the farmer strove in vain with his rusty muzzle loader to get a line on the drifting shadow.

The sheep dog was very fast, and at the very river margin, as Fireflank was about to cross she turned him—O fruitless triumph!—forcing him to run down stream. Fireflank knew he could throw her off among the loose rocks of Garolgame Wood, so cross the river he must at all hazards.

His chance came and he took it. At the very brink of the fall, where the entire waters of that wonderful river topple over a cliff fifty feet in depth, there is a single, pointed boulder protruding above the angry flood, and tonight the surface of that boulder was sparkling with ice, affording scarcely sufficient foothold for a fly. It was a tremendous leap for a young fox, but for Fireflank it was neck or nothing. He floated out across the angry flood, seemed scarcely to pat the crown of the boulder with his dainty paws, then floated on, and up—up into the shadows of the friendly Garolgame.

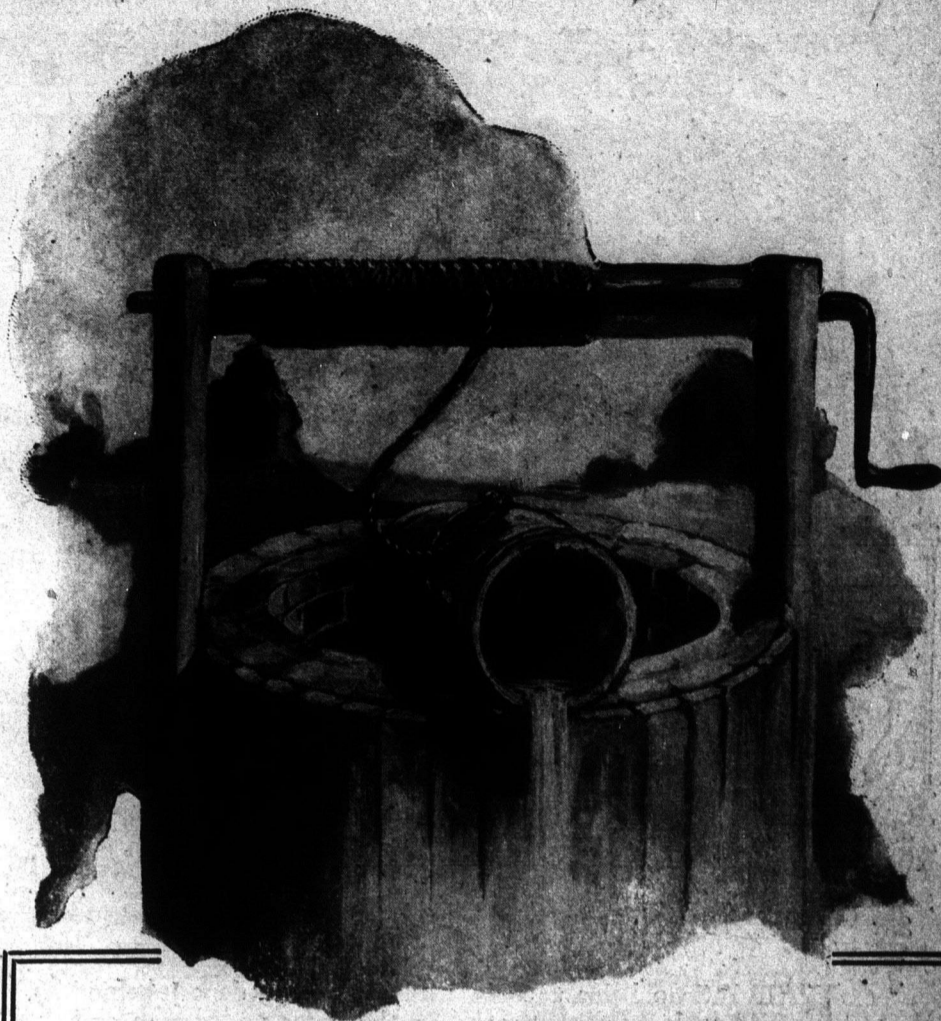
Nell also leapt, but the boulder was pointed and coated with ice, as I say. Immediately below was the waterfall, and below that still was a whirlpool, into which whole trees sometimes vanished to come up as splintered driftwood.

High up in the wood, at the mouth of a crevice among the rocks, all draped and festooned with masses of moss and weird growths of ferns, Fireflank sat with lolling tongue and listened. His pursuer was gone. Some minutes later the fox cub stole down to the water's edge and looked. She was not there! He chased his tail a round or two, crossed the river higher up, stole into the orchard and picked up the plumpest of his kill, while two fields away he could hear the farmer calling—calling for his dog.

It was late that night when the man returned, silent and heavy hearted. Something at the mistle door attracted his attention—it was Nell's food bowl, filled with dirt scratched up from under the snow and scattered broadcast. The man knew the sign as that of a fox's uttermost contempt, and as he swore heavily under his breath there sounded from two fields away Fireflank's "Yap—Yap of mockery.

Sweepingly triumphant though his first raid had been, Fireflank had sense enough not to visit the farm a second time. It was too near his home in Garol-

Continued on Page 12



The High Cost of Water

This is one reason why Quaker Oats will often cut breakfast cost ninety per cent.

Quaker Oats is only 7 per cent water. It yields 1810 calories of food per pound. Many costly foods are largely water. Note this table.

Percentage of water			
In Quaker Oats	7 p.c.	In hen's eggs	65 p.c.
In round steak	60 p.c.	In oysters	88 p.c.
In veal cutlets	63 p.c.	In tomatoes	94 p.c.
In fish	66 p.c.	In potatoes	62 p.c.

The cost of your breakfast

Here is what a breakfast serving costs in some necessary foods at this writing:

Cost per serving	
Dish of Quaker Oats	1c
Serving of meat	8c
Serving of fish	8c
Lamb chop	12c
Two eggs	8c

In cost er serving these other good foods run from 8 to 12 times Quaker Oats.

In cost per serving these other energy measure of food value—they will average nine times Quaker Oats.

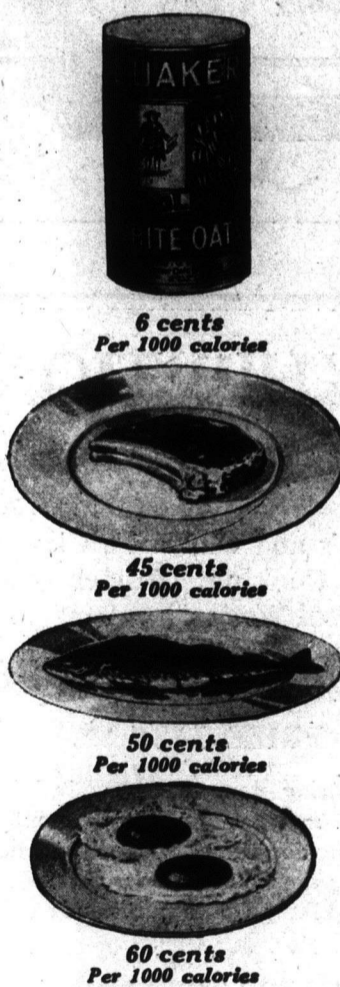
* * *

Quaker Oats is the greatest food that you can serve at breakfast. It is nearly the ideal food—almost a complete food.

Young folks need it as food for growth—older folks for vim-food.

Yet it costs only one cent per dish.

Serve the costlier foods at other meals. Start the day on this one-cent dish of the greatest food that grows.



Quaker Oats

World-famed for its flavor

Quaker Oats dominate because of the flavor. They are flaked from queen grains only—just the rich, plump, flavory oats. We get but ten pounds from a bushel. You get this extra flavor without extra price when you ask for Quaker Oats.

Packed in Sealed Round Packages with Removable Cover

3402