

THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE:

Or, The Tragedy of the Wild.

CHAPTER XI.—(Cont'd)

Nick stirred at last. He rose and took his rifle. His cartridge-belt was still about his waist. Again he passed out into the night. In the shadow of the porch he stood again and gazed upon the moonlit scene. Down the hill was the darkness of the forest, which gave to the outlook the appearance of an unfathomable pit. Above rose its sides, and beyond and about, shimmering in the cold moonlight. Above the forest line the eternal snows glistened like burnished steel, for the yellow rays of the rising moon had given place to the silvery gleam of its maturity. The diamond-studded sky had nothing of darkness in it; a grey light, the sheen of the star myriads too minute to be visible to the naked eye, shone down upon the earth, and the still air had the sharp snap of the spring frost in it. Nick was oblivious to all but the forest cries and the crowd of stealing forms moving from the woodland shelter, and circling upward, ever nearer and nearer towards the feast which lay spread out within sight of their cruel eyes.

Nearer they drew, lean, scraggy, but with large beaks. And as they came they often paused to send their dismal song out upon the air. Then there was a scuffle, a wicked clipping of keen fangs. Instantly the crowd packed about a fallen comrade. Then later they would scatter, and continue their advance in a sort of rude skirmishing order. The man's rifle was at his shoulder; a tongue of flame leapt from its muzzle, and its report rang out biting. The foremost wolf fell to the earth, and the ravenous horde behind leapt to the banquet.

Again and again the rifle spoke its sharp-voiced command, and death followed hard upon its word. At every shot a wolf went down, and the madness rose in the brain behind the eyes looking out from the porch. Nick's craving for slaughter increased. He emptied his belt and obtained a fresh supply of ammunition, and continued to wage his fendish warfare. And all the time wolves poured out from the woods, until it seemed as if the whole race had gathered in one vast army to assail the little stronghold set high upon the hillside. It was as though Ralph's death had been the signal for the gathering of the forest creatures to avenge him.

And fierce ad long the carnage continued. The fearsome pastime was one to thrill the most hardened with horror. The still night air was filled with a nauseating reek, whilst the echoes gave back the death-cries, mingling with the deep-toned bayings of ferocious joy. But never for one instant did the man relax his watchfulness. Never once did his rifle cease its biting greeting to the relentless scavengers of the forest. Short and sharp its words leapt forth, and every word meant death.

The moon passed its meridian and sank lower and lower towards the western peaks; and as it lost power the stars shone more brilliantly and the northern lights hovered in the sky, dancing their fantastic measure slowly, solemnly. The tint of dawn stole gradually into the eastern horizon. The man was still at his post, his unsleeping eyes ever watchful. Longer intervals now elapsed between his deadly shots. The wolves recognized the coming of daylight, and became more chary of leaving their natural shelter. Besides, the banquet was nearly over, and every guest was gorged to the limit.

Dawn grew apace. The silver of the eastern sky changed to gold; deeper and deeper, till the yellow merged into a rosyate sheet, which shone down upon the cloud mists and tinged them with the hue of blood. Light was over the darkling forests, and, as it brightened, the voice of the forest legions died away in the distance, and the battle-ground was deserted of all but the author of the fearful carnage.

Nick waited in his shelter until the last cry had passed. Then he reluctantly turned back into the hut. He sought no rest. His fevered brain was in a tumult. Now he came fresh from his awful conflict with the world of beasts; and stood beside his brother's corpse. He stood there for long, while his mind struggled to obtain something of its lost balance. There came to him a hazy recollection of all that had gone before. It was as though he stood viewing the past from some incalculable distance, though it was for ever lessening, though quite came within the grip of his brain.

And as he stood thus the wo-

man leapt into the foreground of his mental picture. It was the tangible feature he needed upon which he could link the chain of recollection. Now everything became more clear. Now the meaning of his brother's dead body returned to him once more. He remembered all that had happened. His love for Aim-sa arose paramount out of the shadowed recesses of his deranged mind, and merged into that other passion which had gripped him the night long.

Nor was there pity, nor penitence in his mood. Remorse had passed from him. Now there was no one to stand between him and his love. He was glad that Ralph was dead. And, suddenly, as he stood looking down upon the still form, a harsh laugh broke from him and echoed through the stillness of the room.

He moved away and replenished the stove, and then, returning, he wrapped his brother in the blankets on which he lay. Then he moved him, and left the floor bare where the treasure had been buried. Suddenly he brushed his tangled hair aside from his forehead, and a sigh, which was almost a gasp, escaped him. His lips moved, and he muttered audibly.

"Ay, she'll come to me agin, I guess, same as she's done before. Yes, an' it's all hers, 'cause it's all mine now. By Gar! there's a deal there—a mighty deal. An' it's ours. Hers an' mine."

Again he passed a hand across his forehead, and his action was uncertain, as of a man who finds it difficult to think, and having thought fails to obtain reassurance. He passed out of the hut, and presently returned with a shovel and pick.

Now the hut resounded with the dull thud of the pick as it was driven deep into the hard-trodden earth. There was a feverish haste and unnecessary energy in the manner of his work. At first what he intended was not quite clear. He seemed to be digging at random. Then he laid his pick aside and plied the shovel, and gradually his purpose became plain. A long, narrow trench was cleared, and its outline was that of a grave. Again the pick was set to work, and again the shovel cleared the debris. The ground was hard with the years of tramping it had endured, and it took a long time to dig to a sufficient depth. But at last the grave was completed.

Nick seized the body in its blanket shroud and flung it into the hole. There was neither pause nor hesitancy in anything he did, only his eyes peered furtively about. As the first part of the burial was accomplished a panic seized upon him and he shovelled the soil back as though his life depended on his speed. He packed the dry clay down with his feet; nor did he rest till the grave was filled to the top.

Then he paused and wiped the sweat from his brow. The tension of his nerves was slightly relaxed. He went outside the hut to drink in a deep breath of the purer mountain air before he proceeded further. And while he stood leaning against the doorway, he listened as though expecting the sound of some one approaching. He scanned the outlook carefully, but there was no sign of living creature about. The wolves had gone as surely as if their visit had been a ghostly hallucination which daylight had dispelled.

And now he returned to his labors with his spirit more easy and his brain less fevered. He thought of Aim-sa, and that which he meant to bestow upon her.

Near by where he had buried his brother's body was the spot where the treasure had been placed for safety. Here he began to dig. The work was quite easy. The soil was light and loose, and gave beneath the sharp edge of the shovel. He cleared several shovelfuls out, and then stooped to rake for the chest with his fingers. He knew that it had been buried only a few inches below the surface. He raked long and laboriously, but wherever he tried it, the earth gave beneath the pressure of his strong fingers, nor yielded up any indication of the chest. He rose and resorted once more to the shovel, and a look of disquiet stole into his face. He opened a wider surface, thinking he had missed the spot. He dug deeper, but no chest appeared, and his look changed to one of absolute fear.

Again he raked, but without result. Again he dug, but now deeper and deeper. Still there was no chest, and as he widened the hole he found himself working upon the hard soil which had never before been disturbed. An awful fear gripped him. He sought out the

spot where the soil was easy. He knew that this was where he had buried the chest. His actions became hurried, and more and more forceful. He dug furiously, scattering the earth wildly in his alarm and all the time conviction was forcing itself upon him, and he muttered as he strove.

But all his efforts were in vain, and, after an hour's fruitless search, he flung down the shovel with a bitter cry. Then he stood gazing blankly before him with eyes that seemed to scorch in his head. His face twitched, and his hands clenched and unclenched at his sides. Then his lips parted, and out upon the air he gasped his realization.

"It's gone!"

The veins of his temples beat visibly. In his ears was a sound as of rushing waters. He saw nothing. He scarcely knew where he was, only he was conscious of something in his head which was strained to the verge of breaking. When, at last, movement came to him, every nerve in his body seemed to draw up with a jolt, and a cry, that was like the roar of some maddened bull, burst from his quivering lips. And he rushed headlong from the hut.

Out into the glittering daylight he went, heedless of his course, heedless of that which was about him. He rushed down the hill and plunged into the woods. On he went, without pause, without hesitation, blindly, madly. On, on, running, stumbling, slipping upon the sodden earth, tripping over upstanding roots and rotting stumps.

His mind was a blank. He saw, but comprehended not; he felt, but the sense had no meaning. He heard with clarion-like distinctness, but that which he heard sang upon his ear-drums and penetrated no further. His way was the way of the blindfold, his staring eyes beheld nothing real; he saw the name of Aim-sa blazing in letters of fire before him, and a hazy picture of her lovely face. All recollection of his loss had suddenly passed from him, utterly blotted out of his thought as though he had never known it. He knew not that he had ever had a brother, whose death had been the work of his own hand. The hut behind him might never have existed, the forest about him might have been the open prairie, the sodden ground a carpet of fine texture, the snow-covered clearings dusty plains; he knew nothing, nothing. He moved, ran, walked; he was a living organism without a governing power of mind.

Noon came. The silent forest looked down upon his frenzied race. The trees nodded gently in the breeze, whispering solemnly to each other in their pitying tones. Owls watched him with staring, unmeaning eyes; deer fled as he came rushing into the calm of their sylvan retreats. A grizzly stood erect as he passed, meditating a forceful protest at the strange disturbance, but remained staring in amazement as the wild human figure went on without so much as deigning a glance in the direction of its royal presence.

(To be continued.)

YOUNG BUT WISE.

In a school in a Western Ontario town—a little girl who has not taken pluckily to the mysteries of addition. "One'n one?" asked the teacher, while putting the class through the easiest of the addition tables. The little girl referred to was the only person in the class who couldn't give the answer. "Two'n one?" asked the teacher. The little girl smiled confidently, put up her hand and when noticed by the teacher, said, "Shoe polish."—From Toronto Canadian Courier.

Neighbor—"How did that naughty little boy of yours get hurt?" Ditto—"That good little boy of yours hit him on the head with a brick."

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quickly stops coughs, cures colds, heals the throat and lungs. . . . 25 cents.

PURIFIED HIS BLOOD

Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills Healed Mr. Wilson's Sores

When the sewers of the body—bowels, kidneys and skin ducts—get clogged up, the blood quickly becomes impure and frequently sores break out over the body. The way to heal them, as Mr. Richard Wilson, who lives near London, Ont., found, is to purify the blood. He writes:

"For some time I had been in a low, depressed condition. My appetite left me and I soon began to suffer from indigestion. Quite a number of small sores and blotches formed all over my skin. I tried medicine for the blood and used many kinds of ointments, but without satisfactory results. What was wanted was a thorough cleansing of the blood, and I looked about in vain for some medicine that would accomplish this.

"At last Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills were brought to my notice, and they are one of the most wonderful medicines I have ever known. My blood was purified in a very short time, sores healed up, my indigestion vanished. They always have a place in my home and are looked upon as the family remedy."

Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills cleanse the system thoroughly. Sold by all dealers at 25c a box.

SMOKING SIGN OF WEAKNESS

Advice to Students Who Use Tobacco and Alcohol.

Advice to college boys is ladled out in plentiful quantities in the current number of American Medicine.

"Attention has often been called," observes the editor, "to the fact that students who smoke, do not, as a rule, attain a high scholastic rank. Smoking is undoubtedly, among other things, a luxury, and those who are single-minded enough to bend all their energies upon their studies will forego that distraction as well as theatre going and other relaxations less harmful, and thus inevitably surpass the young men who find other things in college life besides lectures and books.

"Smoking is a symptom rather than a cause of the contemplative so-called lazy habit of mind. It is, however, an ugly habit in youth; a huge pipe hanging from the lips of a young man in the street looks weak, absurd and out of place. Drinking, too, is more than unnecessary in a boy. Tobacco belongs with alcohol, to middle age, with its beginning of impairment of the nervous system, at which period the milder narcotics have their value in conserving energy and preventing waste. Even if there were no direct soothing influence, these agents, by compelling their indulgence a certain amount of rest from concentrated work, relax the strain upon brain and body that might otherwise lead to a quicker breakdown. A young man, however, indulging in alcohol and tobacco, is unconsciously confessing to a premature degeneration, and the college ideal should be such as to frown down absolutely any immature weakness of the sort."

HEROIC WORK SAVES DIVER.

But His Mates Stick Manfully to Their Posts.

Imprisoned in a diving suit at the bottom of San Francisco Bay, his air supply shut off and the shipmates upon whom his life depended struggling for their own lives in the water, ninety feet above his head, J. C. Hicks, a navy quartermaster, faced death in an awful form.

He had been laying water pipe along the bottom of the bay. Suddenly his supply of air stopped. Weighted down with metal soled shoes and belted with leaden plates it was impossible for him to reach the surface without aid from above.

He soon began to undergo the preliminary agonies of asphyxiation.

The pump that supplied the air to the diver was installed on a flat bottomed boat. Two bluejackets, one at each handle, manned the pump and maintained a steady supply of air to the man below. Each man was attending to his duty when a ferry steamer passed close to the boat, capsizing it and throwing the occupants into the water. The bluejackets then gave a demonstration of their devotion to duty and resourcefulness.

They dived until they found the capsized boat, they hoisted away, and soon had Hicks at the surface. It was a work then of only a few seconds to twist off his brass helmet.

For a few minutes the quartermaster seemed dead, but the fresh air soon revived him. By the time the launch that was sent to the rescue from the training station at Yerba Buena arrived Hicks was almost himself again.

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quickly stops coughs, cures colds, heals the throat and lungs. . . . 25 cents.

THE PLAGUE PROBLEM.

British Government Has Not Awakened to a Serious Duty.

The British Government have not yet awakened to the necessity of treating the presence of the plague bacillus in certain areas of Eastern England as a problem associated with serious potentialities.

The menace has not yet burst in upon them as a disastrous actuality, and so they sit and do nothing. Two experts are at work in the eastern counties searching for infected rats—a curious illustration of the art of applying the minimum of means to the attainment of a serious end.

We used to think, in the autumn of 1896, that the Government of Bombay were slow in recognizing the dimensions of the danger which had come among us.

But they were vigilant, energetic, and resourceful in comparison with the Government in England, who have had proofs, in two outbreaks, of the fact that the evil is already in their midst, and warnings that it may take on larger proportions.—Times of India.

Man (to dentist)—"I won't pay nothin' extra for gas. Jest pull her out, if it does hurt." Dentist—"You are plucky, sir. Let me see the tooth." Man—"Oh, 'tain't me that's got the toothache; it's my son. He'll be here in a minute."

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