

THE FOREST RANGER

By S. Calais

He was stationed at the Dancing Portage, and was also instructed to patrol the circumambient bush. He didn't patrol it, but as there was nobody within a radius of thirty miles, it didn't matter much. He loafed in his tent, lying on his blankets with his pipe in his mouth, or else he fished for big-mouthed bass, with an automatic air, in the pools below the Dancing Rapids. I have been at the Dancing Rapids once, and the impression they made on me has never faded. As I stood by them, watching the ceaseless chaos of the chutes, with the noise of many waters in my ears, I seemed to be the only person in the world. I don't think, however, that was the feeling Napoleon Proulx had. He rather liked the vicinage of the rapids. In his remote isolation, their noise and activity seemed to reassure him. It was comfortable to wake up at night and hear the rapids roaring away near his tent, and not become conscious of the alive silence of the midnight bush, with its sub-audible noises of twigs cracking, animals moving, trees stirring, which the voice of the rapids drowned. Even during the long spaces of the day, while the sunlight poured itself down in silent floods, the rapids sounded familiar and home-like.

When he left their neighborhood, it was not long before he experienced an undercurrent of uneasiness. On an expedition to some distant part of his limits, to post a fire-bill or investigate unlocated signs of smoke, the low wooded shores of the lakes assumed for him an alien, forbidding, even formidable aspect. Once or twice, when he allowed his thoughts to wander, he came to himself with a start, lest he was losing his way. He had once lost his way in the bush, by allowing his thoughts to wander, and the memory made him panicky.

He very often vainly speculated how near he was to anybody, or how far it was exactly to the end of the steel.

Though he would have been the last to admit it, even to himself, Napoleon Proulx began to entertain a vague unformulated desire to see someone. It showed itself in the increasing frequency with which he imagined for a moment he saw the flash of a paddle or the form of a canoe at the other end of Lost Trail Lake. The canoe usually proved to be a floating log or rampike, or else a rock.

He had deceived himself so often that when he raised his eyes from frying his "cochon" one morning, and saw paddles flashing horizontal a couple of miles down the lake, he rubbed the smoke out of his eyes with his sleeve before he made sure. He did not rise from his half-kneeling, half-squatting posture, however, but went on poking the bits of frizzling bacon in the frying-pan about with his knife. Occasionally he stopped, and looked down the lake over his shoulder, but except for that the appearance of the canoe did not put him about at all.

When the newcomers landed on the portage, Napoleon Proulx was kneeling by the fire baking some squaw-cakes in the frying-pan, and trying with his arms to shield his eyes from the smoke of the fire.

He saw that the strangers were ordinary English bushwhackers, making a forced journey. They were both muscular, bearded men, wearing shapeless felt hats, and attired in the conventional grey shirt, suspended trousers, and oil-tan moccasins. They stepped out of their tar-seamed birch-bark stiffly and heavily, as if cramped after a long paddle, and began immediately to get their dunnage ready for packing over the portage.

"Good morning," said one of them to Napoleon Proulx.

"B' jou, b' jou," said Napoleon, quickly, from beside his frying pan.

One of the men put the canoe on his head, took a shining axe and a couple of blackened pails in one hand, and started along the portage-trail. The other lingered, adjusting his pack to his back and the tump-strap to his forehead.

"You come Lightning Lake?" asked Napoleon.

"No, we come up by Loon Lake," said the man, looking up, his neck contorted and rigid under his pack.

"You go Fort Rupert?" asked Napoleon, again, with a backward motion of the head.

"No, we go the other route," said the man, beginning to move off. He pronounced "route" as if it were "rout." "Looks like it might rain," he added, stiff-neckedly cocking an eye on the weather.

The next moment he was gone, and Napoleon could see his white pack bobbing in and out among the trees, like an animal with irresponsible motions.



ANTANALOGY

By L. Owen

When the dawn's broke with her low young beam,

And furzy shadows from the grove
Across the frost-laid stubble stream,
With my endless shade I like to rove.

When Hesper sets his evening lamp
And carmined burns the hectic west,
When earth suspires all chill and damp,
With a fainting pulse I sink to rest.

The dawn brought hope, and a heart full o'er
Rushed out to meet the streaming noon;
By eve a slow tide lapped the shore,
Where moaned the gale along the dune;

And as the sunset melted in the sky
My pale life soothed its soul to die.
And as the sun stole round the spherul world
My soul its sails on other seas unfurled.



An incapacitated Med. was recently taking another Med. home with him for the night. As they neared the house the following colloquy might have been heard:

"Shay, I hope Buller like'sh you."

"Who'sh Buller?"

"Buller 'sh our dog."