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The Royal Bank of Canada

Aylmer Branch - W. E. Hanley, Manager

A Gentleman of Courage

(Continued from Page Nine)

her. Nowhere in the north was there any longer a wall of blackness. The world was red, with lurid flashings that came and went like mighty explosions. Westward, beyond the beaver pond, he could see the leaping flames in the thick spruce and cedar timberlands where ten thousand barrels of pitch and resinous oils were turning sleeping forests into boiling cauldrons of fire. The smell of this oil and pitch was heavy in her nostrils, and she could hear the moaning, distant roar of the conflagration as one hears the roar of great furnaces when the fuel doors are opened. But it was the wind that brought quick fear to her heart. It was beginning to blow strongly from the north and west, and carried with it a heat that was stifling. And with this heat and wind came also a thickening cloud of ash particles, until at last, afraid of their increasing sting, she stopped to take off her skirt and fasten it about her hair and face.

Halfway to the pond, with still another mile to go, she saw the flames leaping over the last ridge, and her heart seemed suddenly to give way in a sobbing cry of agony and despair. She was too late. Between that ridge and Peter's father was less than a mile of spruce and cedar and balsam forest, with pitch-sodden jack-pines interspersed so thickly that no power less than God could hold back the speed of the holocaust. With the wind that was behind them the flames would be at the cabin before she could

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ed a quarter of the distance to Peter's father.

For a few moments she sank down helpless and without strength, sobbing for breath as she stared at the merciless red death which had beaten her—and Carter. And in these moments her agony was greater than when Aleck had told her about Peter, for now she was picturing a man, creeping out on his hands and knees to face that sea of flame—a man, sick and helpless, cowering about her head and dying by inches with their names on his lips.

She staggered to her feet and went on, and in her dazed mind lived a prayer that Donald McRae might be given strength to drag himself to the shore of the lake. If that strength had not already come to him, it was now too late, for as she toiled over a high and crazy point in the cliff the wind blew hot in her face, and where the beaver pond should be was a red hell of flames.

The trail descended as she forced herself on—descended from the rampart ledge to the smooth, sandy level of the beach, and suddenly she was conscious of the crashing of bodies in the thickets and the frenzied sound of living things. A great moose swept so near her that she sprang from his path—a monstrous beast with flaming eyes and snorting nostrils closely followed by a darker, rounder object that she knew was a bear, racing for the safety of the water. She came to the sandy open where the trail swung straight ridgeward toward the beaver pond, and stopped, knowing she could go no farther unless she defied the death from which all other living creatures were flying.

Pitiously Mona cried out—to Peter, to Simon, to Donald McRae, and then to God, and at last she fell down with her face buried in her skirt, ready to welcome death itself in this hour when not only her world but all that she loved in it were doomed to destruction.

It was a sound close to her that uncovered her face, a sound that came strangely above the moaning roar of

heat-wind and flame, and staring through the gloom and against the red glare of the burning forests, she saw a grotesque shadow—something that was not mouse nor deer nor any four-footed thing she had ever seen in the wilderness; and rising up before it she saw that it was a man bent under a huge, limp burden which he carried. She cried out, and a choking voice answered her—a strange, terrible, unhuman sort of voice, yet the sound of it nearly split her heart, and when the figure deposited its burden in the white sand and stood up she saw that it was Peter. She stumbled toward him. His arms caught her, and she could hear him sobbing under the strain of his fight, and his heart was beating so hard that each throb of it sent a tremor through his body. In his weakness her own strength returned, and in a moment her hands had left his face and she was at the side of the man who lay upon the sand.

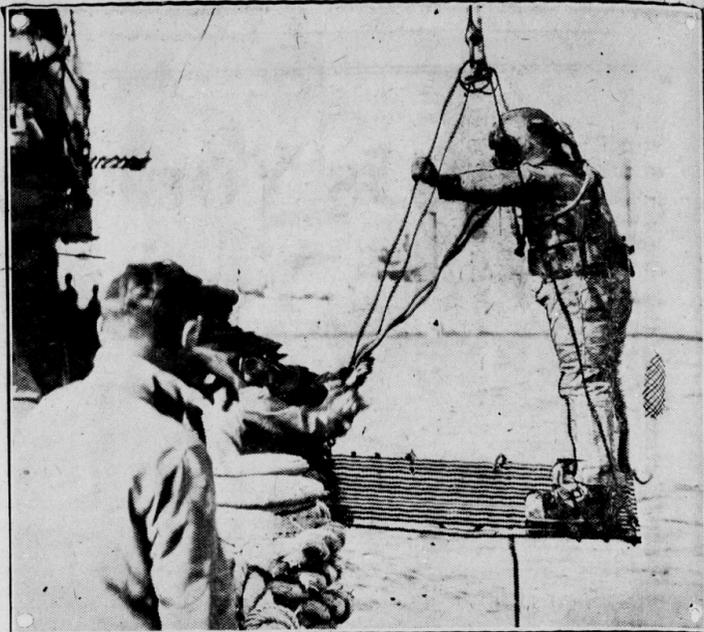
It was Donald McRae. Now a great light was flaming in the sky over their heads, and she saw that his face and hands were black, and his eyes were closed, though he was breathing. She tore the skirt from about her head and ran to soak it in water, but when she returned Peter was kneeling beside his father, and held back the dripping cloth.

"Not water," he said. "We must get—something else. He is burned."

She put her arms about Peter, and his face rested for a moment on her shoulder. In that moment he told her that Aleck had tricked him, and had left him on the island. With the aid of a piece of dry driftwood he had managed to swim ashore, but too late to reach the cabin ahead of the flames. He found his father half-way to the lake, fighting his way on hands and knees in the van of the fire. His face and hands were badly burned, but that was all. Another minute and he would have been too late. His voice choked and Mona's hand stroked his face gently, and she kissed his hot forehead.

Then they carried Donald McRae under the shelter of the cliff, where they were free from smoke and heat, with the water rippling in and out among the stones at their feet. And here Mona told Peter of Aleck's coming to the point, though she kept to herself what happened there, and that Simon McQuarrie had gone to the island in a sailboat and would surely come straight to the beach when he found Peter gone. And as they made Donald easier, and waited in the coolness of the cliff for the fire-storm to burn itself out, she told him also of Carter and that no time must be lost in getting away to a place of greater safety.

Peter knew what that meant as he bent over his father. In scarcely more than a whisper he told Mona. He, too, must go. It would not be for long—maybe a week, a month, or a little longer. It was not for himself. He was not afraid of either Aleck or the law, because he had done at the pool just what he would do again if it were before the eyes of the world. But his father needed him, and never would his heart be the same, now would she ever look again at him with a bit of the pride and love which made him so strong, if he failed to do what was right in this hour. Without him his father was lost. He hoped Simon would come with the boat, for in that boat they would escape into the wilderness farther west.



ABANDON S-51 SALVAGE FOR WINTER—Due to the fact that the lives of the divers were imperilled through the freezing of the air lines, the work of raising the sunken U. S. submarine from 129 fathoms off Block Island has been postponed to the spring. Photo shows the final descent into the icy waters being made.

Mona made no answer to these things, for it was hard enough for her to breathe with the thickness that was in her throat. But her hand stroked Peter's, and her cheek lay against his, and above the grief in her breast rose a great pride in this man who loved her. And a thought came to her of Sir Nigel, the chivalrous young knight who looked so much like this Peter of hers with his sensitive boyish face, and of how Mary so bravely sent him away to the great wars in which through long years he rose to undying fame; and she subdued her heart, as Sir Nigel's sweetheart must have conquered her own and at last told Peter it was the thing to do—and that God and she would love him for it. And even as she would love him for it. And even as she did this there was creeping over her an unutterable foreboding, and death seemed to pierce her heart when she heard Simon McQuarrie's boat grounding on the sand. But she smiled, and kissed Peter—and then Simon stood before them. And in another five minutes he was gone again—this time to the settlement for the supplies and medicines which would go with Peter and his father.

For an hour they were alone, and Donald McRae tried to keep back the moans of pain that came to his lips. But he could not open his eyes, and Mona fanned him gently with a piece of her wet skirt, and told him Simon was hurrying with ointments which would make him comfortable. Peter even laughed and spoke of the sudden on-sweep of the fire as if it were an exciting adventure, and it was good that Donald could not see their tense and grief-filled faces in the gloom. The fire roared through the last of the evergreens and burned itself out against the bare stone knolls and ledges

of the lake shore. And then came again the sound of Simon's boat on the sand.

"Carter has returned to the settlement and was preparing to come this way in a boat when I slipped out through the inlet," Simon whispered to Mona.

With Peter she went to the boat, leaving Simon alone for a few minutes with his old friend. And it was Simon who came at the end of the brief interval bearing the burden of Peter's father in his arms. Very tenderly he laid him on the blankets in the boat.

"God be with you, Donald," he

whispered, a broken note in his voice. "God be with you—always."

The stricken man raised a burred hand to the other's face.

"They have always been with me, Simon," he whispered back. "God—and Helen. And now that you have made such a fine man of Peter I hope I may go to them—soon."

(To Be Continued Next Week)

WARNING

Do not touch anything Electrical while in a bath-tub.

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Start of the two-day's air race around Great Britain for the King's Cup. A machine carrying newspaper reporters and photographers, crashed shortly afterwards, but no one was killed.



The 2nd battalion, Gordon Highlanders, complete their route march from Fort George to Aberdeen and return. The march extended over 25 days. General Braithwaite is shown taking the salute.