

A Bearer of Tidings

(Norman Duncan, in Youth's Companion.)

"When I was a lad hardship and sudden peril were not unknown to me, for I was wilderness-born and wilderness-bred. My father, the factor at Fort Red Wing, had not fallen into the habit of coddling me. So when the lost Hudson Bay Geological Expedition made Fort Red Wing in the spring—every man exhausted, indeed, but each maintaining a reassuring grip on life, except the young professor, who had broken his leg a month back, and had set it with his own hands—it was the most natural thing in the world that my father should command me to take the news to Little Lake, whence it might be carried, from post to post, all the way to the department at Ottawa.

cut in the bush. It was long, but not long enough. I reached for it, but my hand came three feet short of grasping it. John grunted and crept nearer. Still it was beyond me, and he dared to venture no further. He withdrew the pole; then he crept back and unfastened his belt. Working deliberately but swiftly, he bound the belt to the end of the pole, and came out again. He cast the belt within reach, as a fisherman casts a line. I caught it, clutched it, and was hauled from my predicament by main strength. "John," I said, as we drew near to the half-way cabin, "I know your blood, and it's all very well to be careful not to say too much; but there's such a thing as saying too little. Why didn't you tell me where you were going when you started for that pole?" "Huh!" said John, as if his faithfulness to me in every fortune were quite beyond suspicion. "Yes, I know," I insisted, "but a word or two would have saved me a deal of uneasiness." "Huh!" said he. We passed that night at the cabin, where a roaring fire warmed me and dried my clothes. My packet of letters was safe and dry, so I slept in peace, and we were both as chirpy as sparrows when we set out the next morning. It was a clear, still day, with the sun falling warmly upon us. Our way now led through the bush for mile after mile—little hills and stony ground and swamp-land. By noon we were wet to the knees, but this circumstance was then too insignificant for remark, although later it gave me the narrowest chance for life that ever came within my experience. We made Swift Rapids late in the afternoon, when the sun was low and a frosty wind was freezing the pools by the way. The post at Little Lake lay not more than three miles beyond the foot of the rapids, and when the swish and roar of water first fell upon our ears we hallooed most joyfully, for it seemed to us that we had come within seaching distance of our destination. "No," said John, when we stood on the shore of the river. "I think we can," said I. "No," he repeated.

"Look out!" said he. "Oh, it's all right," I said, confidently. I turned my back to the rock and moved out, stepping sideways. It was not difficult until I came to a point where the cliff is overhanging—it may be a space of twenty feet or less; then I had to stop, and the awkward position made my situation precarious in the extreme, for the rock seemed all the while bent on thrusting me off. The river was roaring past. Below me the water was breaking over a great rock, whence it shot, swift and strong, against a boulder which rose above it. I could hear the hiss and swish and thunder of it; and had I been less confident in my foothold, I might then and there have been hopelessly unnerved. There was no mercy in those seething rapids. "A fall would be the end of me," I thought; "but I shall not fall." Fall I did, however, and that suddenly, just after I had rounded the point and was hidden from John's sight. The cold of the late afternoon had frozen my boots stiff; they had been soaked in the swamp-lands, and the water was now all turned to ice. My soles were slippery and my feet were awkwardly managed. I slipped. My feet shot from under me. A flash of terror went through me. Then I found myself lying on my hip, on the edge of the shelf with my legs dangling over the rapids, my shoulder pressing the cliff, my hands flat on the ice, and my arms sustaining nearly the whole weight of my body. At that instant I heard a thud and a splash, as of something striking the water, and turning my eyes, I perceived that a section of the snow ledge had fallen from the cliff. It was not large, but it was between John and me, and the space effectively shut him off from my assistance. My problem was to get to my feet again. But how? The first effort persuaded me that it was impossible. My shoulder was against the cliff. When I attempted to raise myself to a seat on the ledge I succeeded only in pressing my shoulder more firmly against the rock. Wriggle as I would, the wall behind kept me where I was. I could not gain an inch. I needed no more, for that would have relieved my arms by

but to commit myself to the river and make as gallant a fight for life as I could. So at last I called John, that he might carry our tidings to their destination and return to Fort Red Wing with news of a sadly different kind. "Ho!" said John. He was staring round the point of rock; and there he stood, unable to get nearer. "Ice under," said he, indicating a point under me. "More ice. Let down." "What?" I cried. "Where?" "More ice. Down there," said he. "Like this. Let down." Then I understood him. Another ledge, such as that upon which I hung, had been formed in the same way, and was adhering to the rock beneath. No doubt there was a pool on the lower side of the point, and just below me, and the current would be no obstacle to the formation of ice. I had looked down from above and the upper ledge had hidden the lower from me; but John, standing by the gap in the upper, could see it plainly. So I had but to let myself down until my feet rested on the new ledge, and this I did, with extreme caution and the expenditure of the last ounce of strength in my arms. Then a glance assured me that the way was clear to the shelving cliff beyond. "You go," said John. "I go round." "All right," said I. "And, say! I wish I'd called you before." "Ho!" said he, as he vanished. When John reached the Little Lake post late that night, the tidings of the safe return of the Hudson Bay Geological Expedition were the way south by another messenger, and the company's physician was moving over the trail toward Fort Red Wing, making haste to the aid of the young professor, whom, indeed, he soon brought back to health. The passage by the ledge of ice had resulted in a gain of three hours, but whether or not it saved the professor's life I do not know. I do not think it did. It nearly cost me mine, but I had no thought of that when I essayed it, so my experience reflects no credit upon me whatever. I take fewer rash and reckless chances now on land and water, and I am not so overreliant upon my own



ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE BASKET BALL TEAM, '04-'05.

The rapids were clear of ice, which had broken from the quiet water above the verge of the descent, and now lay heaped up from shore to shore, where the current subsided at the foot. The water was most turbulent—swirling, shooting, foaming over the boulders. It went rushing between two high cliffs, foaming to the very feet of them, where not an inch of bank was showing. At first glance it was no thoroughfare; but the only alternative was to go round the mountain, as my father had said, and I had no fancy to lengthen my journey by four hours, so I searched the shore carefully for a passage. The face of the cliff was such that we could make our way one hundred yards down-stream. It was just beyond that point that the difficulty lay. The rock jutted into the river, and rose sheer from it, neither foothold nor handhold was offered. But beyond, as I knew, it would be easy enough to clamber along the cliff, which was shelving and broken, and so, at last, come to the train again. "There's the trouble, John," said I, pointing to the jutting rock. "If we can get round that, we can go the rest of the way without any difficulty." "No go," said John. "Come." He jerked his head towards the bush, but I was not to be easily persuaded. "We'll go down and look at that place," I replied. "There may be a way." There was a way, a clear, easy way, requiring no more than a bit of nerve to pass over it, and I congratulated myself upon persisting to its discovery. The path was by a stout ledge of ice, adhering to the cliff and projecting out from it for about eighteen inches. The river had fallen. This ledge had been formed when it was at its height, and when the water had subsided the ice had been left sticking to the rock. The ledge was like the rim of ice that adheres to a tub when a bucketful of freezing water has been taken out. I clambered down to it, sounded it, and found it solid. Moreover, it seemed to lead all the way round, broadening and narrowing as it went, but wide enough in every part. I was sure-footed and unafraid, so at once I determined to essay the passage. "I am going to try it!" I called to John, who was clinging to the cliff some yards behind and above me. "Don't follow until I call you."

throwing more of my weight upon my hips. I was in the position of a boy trying to draw himself to a seat on a window-sill, with the difference that my heels were of no help to me, for they were dangling in space. My arms were fast tiring out. The inch I needed for relief was past gained, and it seemed to me then that in a moment my arms would fail me, and I should slip off into the river. "Better go now," I thought, "before my arms are worn out altogether. I'll need them for swimming." But a glance down the river assured me that my chance in the rapids would be of the smallest. Not only was the water swift and turbulent, but it ran against the barrier of ice at the foot of the rapids, and it was evident that it would suck me under, once it got me there. Nor was there any hope in John's presence. I had told him to stay, where he was until I called, and I was sure, in that spot would he stay. I might call now. But to what purpose? He could do nothing to help me. He would come to the gap in the ledge, and from there peep sympathetically at me. Indeed, he might reach a pole to me, as he had done on the day before, but my hands were fully occupied, and I could not grasp it. So I put John out of my mind, for even in the experience of the previous day I had not yet learned my lesson, and determined to follow the only course which lay open to me, desperate though it was. "I'll turn on my stomach," I thought, "and try to get to my knees on the ledge." I accomplished the turn, but in the act I so nearly lost my hold that I lost my head, and there was a gasping lapse of time before I recovered my calm. In this change I gained nothing. When I tried to get to my knees I butted my head against the overhanging rock, nor could I lift my foot to the ice and roll over on my side, for the ledge was far too narrow for that. I had altered my position, but I had accomplished no change in my situation. It was impossible for me to rest more of my weight upon my breast than my hips had borne. My weakening arms still had to sustain it, and the river was going its swirling way below me, just as it had gone in the beginning. I had not helped myself at all. There was nothing, for it, I thought,

resources. I have learned that a friend's help is of value. A LANDLORD WHO WANTS BIG FAMILIES If President Roosevelt were in the knightly business, it is a pretty safe guess that about the first person to get into favor would be John Monaghan, of the Bronx, New York. Mr. Monaghan is a man after the President's own heart. He has three apartment houses, and refuses to rent to tenants who are without children. He is building two more houses for families with children and he hopes to have eighteen apartment buildings where children will be at a premium. This is what the remarkable landlord, who is a clerk in the second district court, says of his unusual course: "Families with children are good tenants from a business standpoint. They are not fussy and they are not always asking for improvements. Another thing: Families with children stay a long time—they are not always moving. "I have found that you simply have to cater to one class or the other. You cannot successfully mix the childless and the big families. "I prefer to cater to the children. They need homes and it is a crime against society the way apartment houses shut down on them. "The question of rent has nothing to do with the children. I am not offering any premiums for big families or any of that funny business. This is a serious matter. "I have given my agent instructions to rent apartments only to families with children. I don't care how many they have." A Pill for Generous Eaters.—There are many persons of healthy appetite and poor digestion who, after a hearty meal, are subject to much suffering. The food of which they have partaken lies like lead in their stomachs. Headache, depression, a smothering feeling follow. One so afflicted is unfit for business or work of any kind. In this condition Parlee's Vegetable Pills will bring relief. They will assist the assimilation of the aliment, and used according to direction will restore healthy digestion.

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