

The House of Cariboo

AND OTHER

Tales from Arcadia,

BY

A. PAUL GARDINER.

*Author of "Vacation Incidents," "The Fifth
Avenue Social Trust," etc.*

Illustrated by Robert A. Graef.

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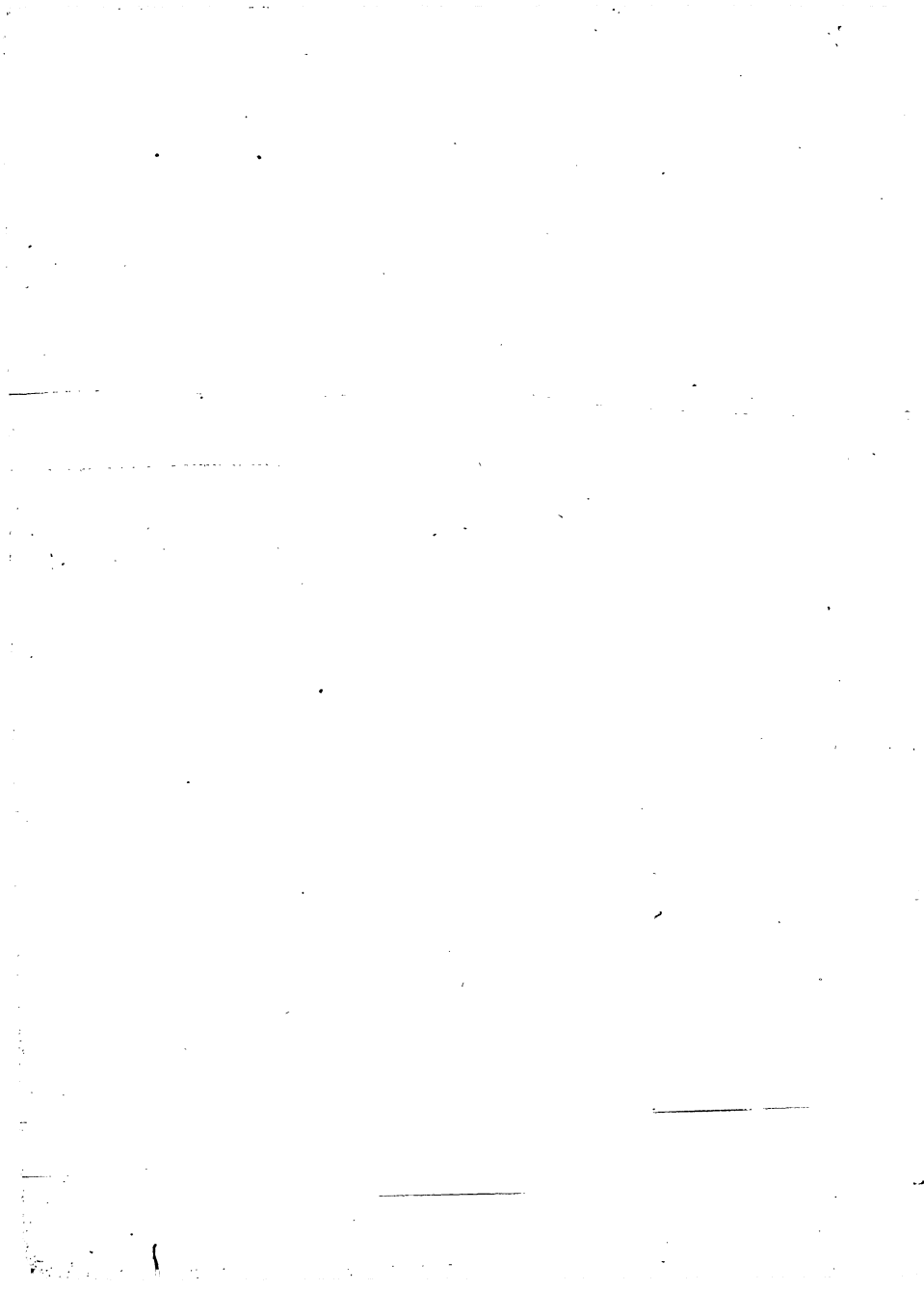
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The Archipelago.

As the eagle stirs up her nest upon the crags and forces her young over the confines of the inadequate abode, it is then that they spread their wings and soar away to freedom and independence. So is it with the great river of rivers, the St. Lawrence. Born among the Northwest Lakes, and sheltered there for a time, resenting intrusion, it steals away unnoticed from the watershed expanse. Threading its course through the marshes and lowlands, it gathers momentum as it speeds onward, till, the volume growing too great for

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its confining banks, its waters rebel, and breaking from control, spread forth into the boisterous storm-tossed Erie. Here they are disrupted and buffeted about, driven by the winds and carried onward by a terrible undertow. Now drawn through a narrow, deep channel, swiftly they pass the cities on the shore. Too quickly they are speeding to heed or be disturbed longer by the warring of the elements. Down to the very brink of the awful precipice ahead they charge with ever-increasing speed, then over the Niagara, pouring far beneath into the seething, boiling caldrons.

After surging still onward through jagged, walled raceways, then emerging into a lake of whirling eddies, till finally fought out to exhaustion, the once rampant waters of the tumultuous Erie flow peacefully into the haven of the Lake of Ontario. Here at rest, landlocked by the grape-bearing vineyards of the Niagara and the peach groves of the Canadian Paradise of the West, the St. Lawrence is again reinforced, and again its voyage onward to the sea is begun, this time marked by the dig-

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nity of a well-organized body. The blue waters, through their separate channels, glide majestically down their course, passing the islands in their midst with a happy smile and ripples of sunlight laughter. Touching at the wharfs of the numerous cottagers and lapping the white shining sides of the pleasure craft among the Thousand Islands, onward heedlessly flows the beautiful river increasing in strength.

Once more before reaching the haven of the Archipelago, the water channels of the great river are bidden to struggle with one another, to fight for supremacy and swiftness, and demonstrate to the other creatures of nature the mighty forces hidden at other times beneath the tranquil surface of her smiling face. The rapids of the Sioux are now left behind and we come to that part of the majestic river included in these sketches, which territorial lines have placed within the borders of our friendly Canadian ally, the Lake St. Francis. Beginning immediately after the subsiding of the waters from their turbulent passage through the rapids of the Sioux, the

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river spreads out till its confining banks are in places ten miles apart. There in this wide expanse stretching across toward the blue irregular mountain line of the Adirondacks, far to the southward, then eastward till the vision meets the water line, lie the islands grouped for beauty by nature's gardener, called by the writer the Arcadian Archipelago.

The very atmosphere of this enchanted region compels the thoughts of peace and freedom. A restful idleness pervades the life of its people; and while they fish and row about through the islands of the group, picnicing with their friends of the Cameron or McDonald Clan from the "Gore," little do they care for the tending of the farm, the harvesting of the crops, or the speeding of time. The only "walking delegate" whose ruling they recognize, is the rising or setting sun. Upon the interval of time, for them there are no restrictions.

Free from the cares of business, ignorant of the affairs of political intriguing, and shielded by happiness from all social strife, these primi-

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tive inhabitants of the Archipelago live on as does the flowering plant-life of the district. They bask in the sun of the Spring and Summer seasons, only to hide away again for months from the Winter's snows and the icy winds of December and March. As life among the people of Glengarry and the settlers at the "Front" over on the mainland, goes happily on, unchanged by the passing social fads of the century, so also upon the St. Francis Islands nature still retains her original tenants and social customs. The Indians from the tribe of St. Regis at the reservation on the mainland guard with a jealous care their coveted hunting grounds from possession by the white men; and neither thus far has the woodsman's axe nor the painted cottage of the "first settler" succeeded in gaining an entrée into the sacred confines of the St. Francis Archipelago.



Along The Front the north bank of the river skirting the Arcadian Archipelago is high and terraced up from the water's edge to the roadway, which follows the indentations of the shore line westward to the county seat of Glengarry. Over this road the country folk from the interior townships make their weekly pilgrimages to market the products of their farms. Facing this road also, and looking out upon the broad river, dotted with wooded islands, are the farm-houses, the small church, and the dilapidated remains of what was once a prosperous boat landing called The Front. In the palmy days of river freighting this little weather-beaten hamlet had some excuse for a hope of life, but now that river navigation all over the world has been paralleled with the modern steel-winged carriers, time and neg-

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lect have stamped their impress upon the deserted buildings and docks, which at one time in the long ago had shown fair signs of a prolonged life.

From Castle Island, as we look across the boat channel and over the intervening strips of rush banks to the mainland, the remains of the business part of The Front present a deserted and uninviting appearance.

First we see the dilapidated dock; then a disheveled freight building; near by in a small bay, is a broken-down boat house, sadly twisted by the "ice shoves" in the Spring of the year. Next we can see the old brown, weather-discolored tavern with an extension reaching out toward the east. A dance hall it was, and below, the beaux of old Gleggarry stabled their horses, while they danced overhead to the music of the bagpipes until dawn of day. Sad, as he views the scene, must be the thoughts of one of these gallants returning to his native home. In the palmy days of The Front he had proudly escorted the farmer's comely lassie through the corridors of the tavern and up the broad stairs

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to the dance hall, pleased with his choice of a partner and happy in the simplicity of his surroundings. To-day, the name on the sign-board over the entrance is no longer readable. The plank steps, once strong and unbending, have rotted away at the ends and the centre, until now, for the use of the laborer's family who occupy the old shell as their living apartments, broken pieces of plank for steps are held up by stones placed one upon the other. The dance hall in the extension presents the sorriest appearance to the visitor approaching from the water's side. A woodyard with jagged, uncut logs and little heaps of chips picked up here and there from the chopper's axe, fills the yard and what was once the stabling-shed for the chafing steeds of the Glengarry lads. The gable end of the hall is all awry; the archways beneath and the supporting posts have leaned over, tired as it were, of the long, weary wait against the time when they will be no longer asked to support their useless burden. Doves, unmolested, fly in and out through the broken panes of the windows, and strut and coo along

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the weather-checked vane of the roof. Where once the droning of the bagpipes re-echoed through the full length of the building, it is now the buzzing of the bumble-bee and the tenor singing wasps that we hear as they swarm around their hive-nests suspended from the rafters. Gone forever from the old tavern are the good times of yore, and like the business prosperity at the landing, they have followed the noisy rivermen down the stream to return again no more to The Front.

To describe the surviving enterprises at The Front—there are, first, the government post-office; then the buckboard stage-line plying between The Front and the station to the railway two miles inland; and, lastly, the boat builder's plant in the bay. It would seem that the traveling public were charitably inclined toward the ancient buckskin mare and the driver of the mail coach, for daily the old nag is hitched to the buckboard; the canvas mail-sack is rolled up and tucked into the pocket of the driver's linen-dusterlike coat, and without ever a passenger to tax the strength of the old mare or the

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comfort of the driver, they jog along together to the station, then back. The return pouch is extracted from the folds of the accommodating coat, handed over to the official postmaster, and the business event of the day at The Front is closed.

Down by the water's edge, with one corner of its base, as if from a misstep, dipping down into the stream, is the plant of the boat builder. Across at Castle Island each season his couple of boats, the result of his Winter's employment, are disposed of; then after recalking the two which he had sold the previous season, and had re-purchased at second-hand prices, he awaits through the long Summer days, the arrival of trade.

Each day as I looked across at The Front, my field glasses refused to change the sameness of the scene or setting by even discovering a venturesome pedestrian sauntering down the dusty road, or a child running an errand for an industrious housewife to the post-office or general store. Curiosity had about decided me to make a visit of investi-

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gation, but before an opportunity to act came, I was told a caller wished to see me.

"I am from The Front, aye, sir, just yonder acrost, and three farms up from the post-office is where I live. Jimmie MacPherson—James T. MacPherson is my right name, but they call me Jimmie around here. Of course, I mean," he added apologetically, "they do over at the cheese factory and the wheelwright shop. You city folks here on the island, from New York, don't know me, so I'm telling you my full name, but you can call me Jimmie, too, if you like that better."

"All right, Jimmie," said I, "that sounds more like getting on together. Have a seat here on the veranda, or we will go down on the dock, just as you say." I thought the presence of ladies near by might interfere with the free discussion of the subject about which Jimmie had thought it necessary to call.

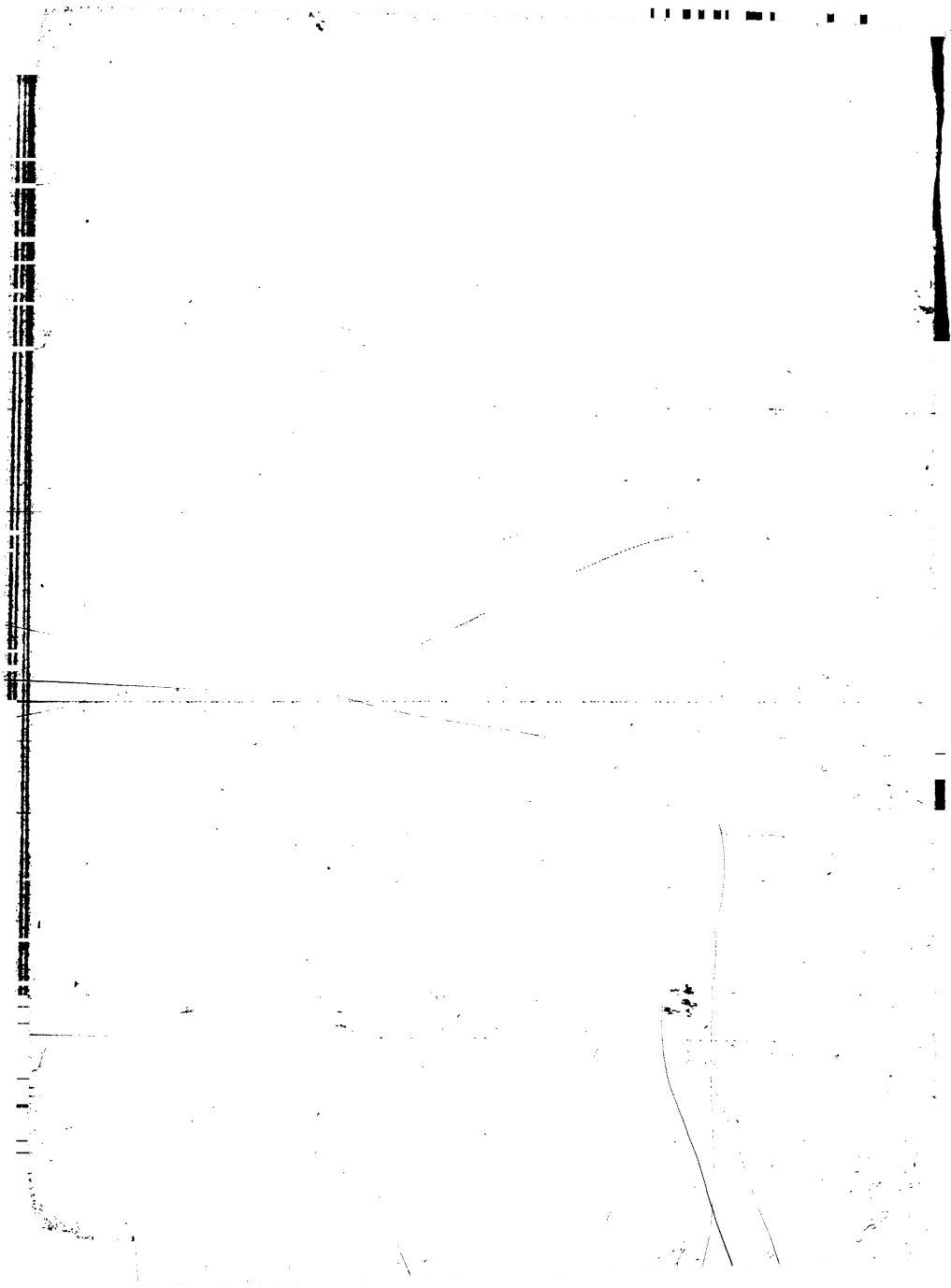
"On the veranda," replied Jimmie, and a mischievous twinkle was in his eyes, as he shaded them from the glare of the morning sun with the rough fingers of his right hand. "You will see by my complexion," he con-

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tinued in a humorous strain, "that I am not used to being out in the sun. The field corn grows so fast along The Front that we are constantly in the shade while out promenading." Then he turned his shining countenance on me to confirm what he had said. An honest face it was, covered with an unkempt, fiery red beard. His skin was burned and blistered in spots extending from the shade mark on the forehead made by his greasy felt hat till lost in perspective in the dense undergrowth of the lower chin and neck.

I had run across Jimmie one day while prospecting for water lilies, at the mouth of a small creek which emptied its waters by a circuitous route into one of the channels of the large river, to be found over in the region of Hoag Island and the Dead Channel. Jimmie on that morning was cocked up in the stern seat of his flat-bottomed punt. Two wooden pins acting as oar locks, stuck into the sides of the boat and recently whittled to a whiteness of the wood, were the only relief in color to that of the boat and crew. Jimmie was the captain and the crew consisted of the spaniel





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dog, whose brown coat corresponded so closely to the coloring of the metal and stock of the beautiful modern shot gun, and the entire costume of Jimmie and his river craft, that as he lay alongside of a reed-bank filled with dried cat-tail I had nearly run him down before making the discovery.

"Good morning, stranger," said Jimmie, in a calm, well-inflected voice. A smile seemed to be playing all about his face. Bristling in the sun was his red kinky beard, shining his face as though rubbed to a polish, the shabby felt hat reaching out modestly to the line in the middle of his forehead. He was perched on the seat, crowded back into the stern of the boat, and the water spaniel, proud and important, moved with ease between the rowing seat and the perch upon which his master sat making observations. Looking more closely at my discovery before making any reply to his salutation, I saw on his feet a pair of "contract-made" shoes, rivets and buckles prominently in sight, which had from long usage taken on a shape resembling an elephant's foot in miniature, all instep and few

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toes; a pair of blue jeans, a negligee shirt, a leather strap making upward and diagonally across the chest for a wire nail on the band of the trousers at the back, and a four-in-hand tie of undefinable pattern, the quilting of which had suffered a sad displacement and was clinging in shreds to the original band encircling his neck, which had been tenderly preserved by the spinach-fringe of unfading brightness.

"Hello," said I, in return of salute. "Shooting out of season?"

At that instant I was not conscious of the significance of my remark, which had popped out spontaneously with my first sight of Jimmie and his crew.

"No," he replied. "I heard up along The Front that there were some good dory holes in this channel, so I thought I would come up in here and see if I could find the fish weeds. Then I would know for myself."

"Oh, I see!" said I. "Good scheme, isn't it?" Then we each laughed a little and seemed to understand each other better after that. My boat had drifted up alongside, and curiosity led me to ask permission to examine

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the modern gun of beautiful finish and workmanship, a striking contrast to the attire, at least, of the owner.

"A good gun, stranger," remarked Jimmie.

"Yes, and an expensive one, I should think, any way. What use have you for such a gun?" I said, as I returned it to him.

"Well, you see," began Jimmie, "a gun is like some other things. When you need one, you need it pretty bad, and then you can't have too good a one, and that's why I have one like this." For an instant I imagined I was out in the Pan Handle country of Texas and that the advice of my friend would be good to follow. But, no! Here I was in a boat in Arcadia on the peaceful Lake St. Francis. Then looking again quickly toward the boat and crew at my left, I was met by a broad grin from its occupant.

"Jimmie," I said, "you're the sort I always want to know. Come over to Castle Island tomorrow and we will talk it over."

Since meeting Jimmie down in the rush banks, I had heard more about him from the guides on the Island, and I knew his call this

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morning would prove both interesting and entertaining.

Jimmie, they told me, had at one time directed the political affairs of the County Glengarry. That is, he had been employed as secretary by the representative in Parliament from his district. This gentleman could neither read nor write nor compose a speech to be delivered before his constituents. With him Jimmie spent several months at the Canadian Capital, where in his capacity as secretary, he had been writing speeches for his chief which were supposed to be delivered before the representatives in Parliament, but which instead, his wily employer had directed should be sent home for publication in the county newspaper for the edification of the voters who had made him their representative. Jimmie had schooled his charge "The Member" in the civilities and court etiquette necessary to be employed toward his brother "members." He had also trained him, the while exercising great tact and patience, how to make use of the most approved mannerisms and figures of speech while addressing the speaker of

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the house. The extent of the oratorical effort, Jimmie insisted with his pupil, must not exceed the few phrases necessary for the seconding of a motion put by a colleague, or a perfunctory motion to adjourn.

Then with the "spread-eagle" speeches he had prepared for the press agents of the counties which he and his employer were representing, affairs at the Capital, Jimmie had congratulated himself, were going on swimmingly.

One night, however, as the Quixotic member came to Jimmie's room for final directions as to his movements in Parliament for the next day's session, he found his instructor boisterously delivering before an imaginary audience, one of his pet political speeches. Paying no attention to his caller, Jimmie proceeded with the speech—the needed appropriations which he demanded from the government to benefit the industries situated in the great manufacturing town, The Front, which he had the honor to represent, and the extensive dredging operations which were necessary to widen the channel to ac-

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commodate the lake and river craft, constantly increasing their volume of business, which could be proven by the congested condition of the docks, to be seen any day in the boating season at The Front, etc.

Poor 'Jimmie! The strain on his mental faculties had been too great. "Crazy," the doctors were cruel enough to say. So they took him back to The Front, gentle of manner, but the enlarged idea he had created in his brain of the condition of the business affairs at The Front never parted company with him.

"I have come over this morning," began Jimmie, after we had seated ourselves by the woodbine, "to extend to you a welcome and the courtesies of the people of The Front. I have been instructed by the members of the Board of Trade to offer you and your friends the free use of the docks of the port opposite here. The use of the Assembly Hall attached to the Hustings has been unanimously granted by the members of the Town Council, and also arrangements have been consummated whereby passes can be se-

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cured to visit the extensive boat-building plant situated directly opposite on the mainland. I am also authorized to say that between the hours of ten and twelve, morning, the cheese manufacturing industry, during week days, and the church at Glen Water, Sundays, will be open to visitors from the Island. Now, my friend," continued Jimmie, rising and placing his hand upon the back of the chair for good oratorical effect, "come over to The Front. You are welcome, we are not too busy a people to miss seeing you when you do come. In fact, I can assure you that you will feel well repaid for the effort. Why, stop and think, my dear sir," he went on, his eyes snapping with excitement and his features twitching with nervousness, "progress and prosperity are within our grasp. The grandest water-way of the whole world passes our very door. Manufactories are already at work in our midst, and the eye of Capital is upon us. Great, I say, yes, wonderful are the inducements we offer for visitors coming among us. Again I say, come over to The Front. You will not find yourself alone. Leading capi-

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talists from all over the world have been to see us. The truth is you can't tell whom you may meet while you are over there."

"Thank you, Jimmie, thank you. Good morning," I said. "You can expect me." Then bowing and hesitating as though he had received an unexpected check from the Speaker of the House of Parliament, he seemed to wish to say more, but with a rare courtesy of manner, he bowed himself out of my presence, then joining his brown spaniel dog, who awaited his master on the shore, they got into their boat and rowed back to The Front.



The House of Cariboo.

CHAPTER I.

The Camerons at the Front.

On a rise of ground at "The Front" called the "Nole" stands the Cariboo House, conspicuously alone.

There, fronting the river channel which separates Castle Island from the mainland, its tinned mansard roof and the golden ball on the summit of the flag-staff blazing in the morning's sun, the marble castle of the Archipelago shares with the mighty St. Lawrence, the admiration of the tourists.

Then as the guests at the Island gather upon the quay at sunset, the tall marble col-

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umns and overhanging gables of the House of Cariboo, frown down upon the waters of the placid river, casting shadows of ugly proportions that reach across to the very pier upon which the spectators are standing, and as they linger, fascinated by the glories of nature, they look again, and behold! outlined against the gold and copper edged clouds strewn over the horizon, they see projecting itself heavenward, the green-latticed observatory, and from its vane reaching up into the clouds is the gilded sphere on the flag-pole still blazing from the setting sun, while all else on earth below has grown dark and silent.

Years have passed since the older inhabitants of Glengarry paused and looked in bewilderment as they traveled the roadway on The Front past the House of Cariboo. Even now, after listening to the preceding generation tell and retell stories of Aladdin interest of the House of Cariboo, the children of the countryside pass hurriedly on their way to the district school, never once turning to gaze at the mansion, brought as if from fairyland

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and put down in the midst of their unpretentious rural surroundings, till at a safe distance, when they loiter and, looking backward, unconsciously relieve their disturbed little minds by breaking off the heads of the bobbing daisies, till urged further along on their way by the passing of time.

There are in Glengarry County, as you might reasonably suppose, many families whose direct ancestors, if you cared to trace them, would lead you at once to the lochs, lowlands or mountain passes of the Scottish Isle. The Clans of the McDonalds, the Camerons and the MacPhersons, have each sent a goodly representation to sustain in the new land of the Canadas the glory of their families in the Scottish hills of their fathers.

There were in the beginning, at The Front in Glengarry, one Andy Cameron, and his two brothers, called "Andy's Dan," and "Laughing Donald Cameron." Many another family of Camerons lived in Glengarry, but there was no mistaking these three brothers. Dan, who made his home with Andy Cameron and his wife, never left the premises

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of the little farm on the "Nole" unless Andy and his wife went along too, and this becoming the understood thing among the neighbors at The Front and the storekeepers at the county town of Glengarry, Dan Cameron came to be known as Andy's Dan. The distinction was understood, his pedigree was recorded in the minds of the people of the neighborhood, and he was forever out of danger of being confused with the other Dan Camerons of his neighborhood. Simple Dan, kind-hearted Dan, and most of all Andy's Dan.

Laughing Donald had taken up a small farm from the government when he and his timid, frail wife first came to Glengarry, and poor Donald never seemed to be any more successful in getting clear from the taxes levied each year upon him than he was in clearing the few acres he possessed of the tree stumps, that were the bane of his life during seed-time and harvesting.

A few years of land holding by Laughing Donald in Glengarry had been an added expense to Andy, who loaned from his own little

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store of savings each year to keep his brother from the long-reaching clutch of the county tax gatherer; but always laughingly indifferent when he knew his crop yield was miserably poor, Donald became known to the country people, and at the village where he and his sickly wife went to trade their dried apples and carpet-rags for groceries, as Laughing Donald Cameron. He laughed if he was greeted kindly, and he also laughed with the same apparent degree of happiness if a hard-hearted merchant told him his produce was not worth the buying. So Laughing Donald filled a niche, whose personality was all his own, and neither was he ever confounded with others of his name in the County Glengarry.

Tilling the ground on his small farm on The Front seemed very hard work to Donald Cameron. His gentle wife, since their coming to the new land of the Canadas, had pined for the associations of her Scottish hills; her health had failed with the broken spirit till she was now pronounced an invalid. For her, the delicacies of life could not be pro-

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vided, and sickness and misfortune speedily came to their humble home. Soon two of the children of Laughing Donald were buried in the churchyard at The Front and the illness of his wife continued.

Andy Cameron had noted with increasing solicitude the inroads being made by sickness and death into the home of his brother. Unpaid bills were accumulating and the hand of misfortune was close upon the head of the luckless Donald. Andy had seen his lawyer friend up at the county village, then consulting his wife Barbara, a mortgage was first made on his own farm at the "Nole," and Donald's obligations were paid in full. But then the doctor's bill came next to Donald, for weeks and months of medical attendance upon his invalid wife, and, still laughing in his childish way, he brought it, as if amused at the impossible amount, and handed it to Andy.

"Go back home, Donald," was Andy's reply. "Take good care of your poor wife. The doctor must be paid." And then Andy made another trip up to the village. At the law-

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yer's he arranged for the money and then for the mortgage which was this time to be placed upon Donald's little farm.

That night, as Andy journeyed homeward from the town, he recalled how he and his wife and Dan, his simple-minded brother, had struggled to clear their little farm of debt; how they had stumped the land and builded barns and stables, and fenced in the meadows for their cattle; how happy they had been when they had paid off the last of the tax debt; and how proudly he walked up the church aisle upon a Sunday, and sat in the end of the pew at the head of his little family and afterwards greeted his neighbors around the church door, as they stood gossiping after service. But now to think what he had been compelled to do. Donald was his brother, though, and was not poor Donald in trouble? And his invalid wife—Andy well knew that if a few of the luxuries of life and the tender care which her timid, shrinking nature cried out for, could only be given to her in ever so slight a degree, she would no longer be a suffering invalid.

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"Two years," Andy remarked to himself, "was the time set before the lawyer could foreclose on his own homestead, and the same time was set for his brother, Laughing Donald." Andy recalled as he rode slowly homeward, that the storekeeper hesitated as he gave him the pound of tea to be charged as before, and when he had asked for a dollar's worth of brown sugar, he had only been given half that amount. It was to be charged also.

"Who were they that dared to think a Cameron would not pay a just bill! Was not he a Cameron, the eldest of his brothers, and from the proudest clan of all the Highland Tartans?"

Andy felt as he had never felt before. The latent pride of his forefathers was stirred within him. Should they take the farm from his brother Donald? Should they take his farm and that of his wife and the home of his simple-minded brother Dan? "No, never!" determined Andy, "not while I live to protect the innocent." the cry went up from his very soul. There was money to be had, wealth to be gotten, for life must be preserved. To

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the gold fields of California, to the mountain passes of the Rockies, or the far British Columbias, he would go, and before the expiration of the mortgages he would return, and in the eyes of his neighbors in Glengarry and among the storekeepers of the town, the name of Andy's Dan, Laughing Donald or Andy Cameron would stand good for a great deal more than the pound of tea or the paltry dollar's worth of sugar they had refused him this very night upon which he had made his resolve.

A day or two following the last trip Andy had made to the county town in the interest of procuring more money, he thought it next important that he consult his loyal but none too assertive spouse concerning the execution of the resolve he had settled upon, through which he hoped to clear the good name of Cameron in the county from the insults which had been offered him, even so slightly, by the storekeepers in the town.

Barbara Cameron, the faithful wife to whom Andy went for encouragement when he found that the burdens heaped upon him by the un-

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fortunate members of his family were greater than the resources of the combined farms could support, listened with a heart full of sympathy while her husband unfolded the plan by which he hoped to retrieve their waning fortunes. Quietly, at first, he began to tell of the circumstances which compelled him to place a mortgage upon their own little farm and homestead. Then, arising in his excitement, he proceeded to relate to her the cruel indignities heaped upon his unfortunate brother by the avaricious tax gatherer, who seemed to take a special delight in hunting him to earth; and how, to satisfy his demands, and to meet the bills of the doctors and druggists, he had last of all been compelled to mortgage Donald's home. For, he explained, as he sadly looked from the window over in its direction, he could not remain a passive onlooker while the cruel hand of fate still pursued the family of the helpless Donald, and a low fever slowly burned out the wick of life in the feeble frame of his gentle wife.

Finally, with a rising inflection in his voice

The Camerons at the Front.

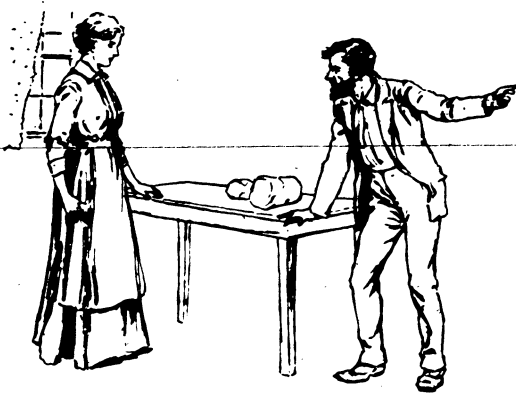
and a righteous indignation of manner, Andy explained to his wife the nature of the insults which he had had offered to him in the town, and that he, as a Cameron, and the head of their little colony must resent the wrongs, and maintain the dignity and pride of his forefathers. He would leave her for perhaps two years, he said—he was going to the gold fields of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. There in the Cariboo Hills, in the Canons of the Rockies and in the shifting river beds of the melting glaciers, he would dig for gold. He would hunt the shining flecks of dust, the gold colored nuggets, seeking the wealth by which he hoped to retrieve his darkening fortunes.

“We will sell our cows, Barbara.” His voice was lowered almost to a whisper. “You and Dan shall have the money. The team of roans we must part with, too, Barbara. Laughing Donald and his frail wife, you will be kind to—and poor Dan, tell him always, Barbara, that Andy is coming back soon—coming soon.”

With confiding faith, though she did not quite understand, Barbara felt that if her hus-

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band said all this, it must be right for her to believe it. Andy had brushed away with the back of his hand the tears upon his weather-beaten cheeks awaiting her reply. She in her characteristic way, made only this comment: "When will you start, Andy, think ye?"



CHAPTER II.

Barbara and Dan at Home.

After wishing Godspeed to her venturesome husband, Barbara, with Andy's Dan, was returning to their little homestead. Barbara sat upright in the wagon, now and then glancing backward over her shoulder toward the railroad station they had just left behind. This act she quickly excused by an attempt to arrange the shawl which she held tightly clasped about her. No tears were in her eyes when she bade farewell to her husband. Believing it to be her wifely duty to sustain him in the extraordinary undertaking he was engaging in, she had strengthened her courage to meet the final parting. From the neighbors' gossip she had come to understand that the chances were many that

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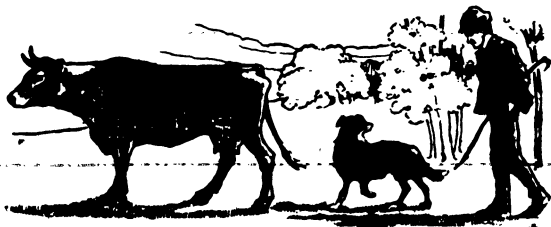
he might never return to her alive, and she had said to him: "Do not stay to starve in the mountains. Come away home, mun; there is nae place better than Glengarry to dee in." And he promised her to return.

Andy's Dan, faithful in his simple devotion to his brother, had understood only in a vague sort of way the cause for his leaving home and the reasons which made it necessary to sell the stock of the farm, which for years he had loved as his only companions. They were gone, taken from him, and so was his brother and protector. For weeks after Andy's departure he would be seen each evening at sunset, leaning over the pair of horse bars at the back of the house, gazing absently toward the western horizon. In that silence, too sacred to be disturbed, the expression upon his soulful face answered all questions of the curious.

Time wore slowly along at the farm on the "Nole." Barbara each day went industriously about her housework, and just as if her husband had been home and the care of the dairy was still necessary, she washed and rubbed to a polish the milk pans, and stood them on edge

Barbara and Dan at Home.

upon the bench at the side of the woodshed, to glisten in the sun. At evening time, Andy's Dan would regularly take from its hiding-place on the sill under the slanting roof of the milkshed the crooked staff, and whistling for his faithful collie dog, go down the lane to the pasture, calling to the imaginary herd of cattle feeding upon the sloping hills, then sadly return with the one lone cow reserved by Andy for the faithful watchers left at home. The Summer advanced, and he mowed the grass and weeds from the dooryards and dug down to the roots of the pesky burdocks growing about the fences which inclosed the unused farmyards. Then as Autumn approached, poor Andy's Dan silently awaited the return of his beloved brother to commence again at harvest time the duties of the husbandman.



CHAPTER III.

On the Way to the Gold Fields.

A year passed and no word came to the anxious hearts in the home Cameron left behind when he went to hunt for gold in the far western wilds of the British Columbias.

Taking from the small store of money received from the sale of the farm stock, just enough to pay his passage to the terminus of the railroad, still a few hundred miles distant from the mountain ranges across which he was to make his way, he soon found himself thrown upon his resources face to face with the difficulties of the undertaking. Arriving at the mountain pass of Ashcroft from Winnipeg, whence he and several other venturesome companions bent upon the same mission had come by wagon train over the prairies of Northwestern Canada, his meagre supply of money nearly gone, it looked as if he was about to

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experience a defeat from the very first set of difficulties which arose to beset his way in reaching the gold fields.

At Ashcroft, the most arduous and dangerous mountain climbing of the entire trail presents itself. A supply of food for days must be carried along, and pack mules and guides at an enormous wage are an absolute necessity. Among the party of gold seekers which included Cameron, was a young man of apparent culture and refinement, also from one of the Eastern provinces. His reason for being found as a member of such a daring and reckless band of prospectors, may have been simply for the love of adventure, perhaps the healing of a broken heart, or for the committing of a youthful indiscretion considered by his family a sufficient reason for sending him to the undiscovered gold fields of the far West. Thrown together during the tedious voyage of the pack train across the plains, a natural inclination, a bond of sympathy, had brought this young, inexperienced adventurer and Andy Cameron, the tender hearted but determined emigrant farmer, into a congenial acquaintance, and later

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into forming a partnership. The personal capital of the new concern when inventoried showed these assets: that put up by the latter, courage, strength, determination and honesty, against that of his companion, money, mules, provisions, supplies, and himself as a volunteer prospector. With this understanding, the somewhat remarkable partnership was formed, and after the mules were packed, the climb over the mountains began.

Following the leadership of the guides, the small company made their way slowly over the mountain trails and around the edges of the precipices, avoiding only by careful footing a plunge to certain death below. Sore of foot and wearied from climbing, the two prospectors arrived at Quesnell Forks, the first station in the long tramp to the Cassiar district of the Cariboo Mountains. Joining here a wagon train, they pushed on again through the Chilco-ten country. Passing Horse Fly, a village of a vascillating population, they then proceeded up Soda Creek till the aid of the caravan came abruptly to an end. Travel by that method being no longer possible, Cameron and his

On the Way to the Gold Fields.

companion shouldered their rough mining kit and taking with them what provisions they could carry, struck off into the mountains for a hundred miles more, down through ravines and along Slate Creek bottoms, always heading for the Cariboo. Buoyed up by the secret motive which had driven each to endure such hardships in their hunt for the golden reward they hoped to find in quantities when they should reach the land filled with Aladdin riches, they struggled fearlessly onward. At the head of Soda Creek they had labeled their surplus supplies and stored them with a friendly native, promising to pay for the shelter should they ever return that way again.



CHAPTER IV.

Into the Cariboo Mountains.

Four days distant from this camp, Cameron and his companion unloosed their mining kit for the first time. Nowhere had they found any evidences that human beings had ever before penetrated into this region. They climbed the steep mountain sides only to descend again through the darkest ravines. Unaccustomed to the points of the compass, they were obliged to watch their course by the sun. Each with his secret burning within his heart, they encountered bravely the difficulties of their task. Many times on this hazardous journey they were almost overcome by fatigue, and often saved from instant death over the side of some unseen precipice by only the margin

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of a step. Finally, as they emerged from the forest-clad mountains upon a slight plateau, they reached the first slate bottoms, which gave the well-nigh disheartened prospectors new courage, and the first view of the uninterrupted rays of the sun that they had encountered since their hunt through the wilderness. Here on this promontory, which sloped gently down westward to what seemed to be a dried-up water course, Andy and his companion built their miners' cabin. Water they had discovered trickling down the face of a steep rock at one side of the site they had chosen for their home. And game they knew in the mountains was plentiful, for at their approach the flight of the wild fowl had shaken the overhanging branches of the evergreens and strange-looking animals scudded beneath the underbrush and sprang into hiding behind the rocks and boulders.

Here at the close of the day, standing before the door of their rudely-constructed hut, the two hopeful miners, already fast friends, silently watched the setting of the sun. Neither had told of the friends left at home; Andy had

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kept sacred within his heart the need, the incentive, which drove him forward facing the desperate chances of death by starvation or sickness, to discover the hidden treasures of this almost impenetrable region, and his companion was equally reticent as to his own counsels of the past. Willing to lead in the trail where almost certain death seemed ahead, he had proved himself many times in their short acquaintance a man of reckless daring. The look each encountered in the other's eyes upon this eve, as they watched the sun go down behind the opposite hills, plainly said: "My secret is a sacred one; ask me nothing."

On the morrow they were to begin their task of digging for the yellow nuggets, in the search for which thousands of others had gone into the same ranges, many to join the bandit gangs of roving miners, never again to return to their loved ones, others to sicken and die with the malignant fevers of camp life, and a few—a very few—to realize their dreams, and return again to their homes, bearing with them the shining golden nuggets, at the sight of which a new army of inspired prospectors would soon

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be started upon its way to repeat the same acts in the great drama entitled "The Hunt for Gold."

* * * * *

And here we leave for the present, Andy and his youthful partner to dig for the elusive golden specks which had drawn them onward with a terrible fascination for thousands of miles. They are now securely hidden away in the mountain fastnesses where never a human voice nor the tread of man had yet fallen.



CHAPTER V.

At the Four Corners.

In the Arcadian neighborhood of our story, as is true of all rural sections, there are at the four corners of the road the indispensable blacksmith's shop, the general store, the wheelright's place and the creamery or the cheese factory. As places of business they always flourish, not because of the enterprise or business tact of the proprietors, but because, for the most part, of the natural demand created by the wear and tear of implements used in pursuit of the absolute necessities for the maintenance of life by the populace of the district.

First, at the four corners of the road at The Front, and a short distance from the Cameron

At the Four Corners.

farms, is Davy Simpson's blacksmith shop. Adjoining this is the wheelwright's place. The front of this building when new had been partly painted a dull red color, and then left, as though the workman had become disgusted with the color effect, and had abandoned the task as an artist might a shapeless daub on a half-finished canvas. The general store, with its lean-to porch, up to which the farmers' wagons drive and unload their produce to exchange for merchandise, occupies at the four corners a conspicuous frontage on the main road.

Another industry of even greater moment to the community at The Front is the cheese factory, which stands just past the corners and fronting the road, jagged up on the side of a steep embankment, and resting unsteadily upon crazy-looking standards. At the foot of the incline, winding in its very uncertain course, is a small stream. Into this the whey, escaping from the cheese vats, filters down the abutment spiles, reeking in the Summer sun, to be gathered finally into the stream, whose waters push quietly along beneath the overhanging weeds.

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then crossing the roadway extending along its course, passes in the rear of the farms of the adjoining township, The Gore.

Unpretentious and surely uninviting is the cheese factory at The Front, but in local history, in the stories of the feuds waged between the clans of the farmers at The Front and those at The Gore, it plays a vitally important part, for through the lands of the latter flow the waters of the whey-tainted creek, endangering the products of their dairies by polluting the source of the cattle's water supply.

At the close of each Summer's day, regularly assembled in front of the door to Davy Simpson's blacksmith shop, the official gossips of the neighborhood.

Easy is the task to picture in one's mind this group of characters. Seated around the doorway of the smithy, and perched upon the cinder heap, an accumulation of years from Davy's forge, they discussed the affairs of their neighborhood. There in his accustomed place was William Fraser, the country carpenter, a bent-over, round-shouldered little man with a fringe of red whiskers extending from ear to

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ear and a mustache chopped off even with the mouth as if done by a carpenter's adze; a pair of blue eyes peered out at you from overhanging eyebrows, and when in motion he glided along with a walk of meekness. A long service among the families in Glengarry, while building for them a new barn or stable, had taught him that an agreeable opinion to whatever were their politics or views would greatly facilitate his comfort and pleasure. He listened intently to all that was told him of the family troubles of his employers, and with equal interest retailed for their entertainment the latest gossip of their neighbors. It was because of this accomplishment that William Fraser, the carpenter, could always be relied upon to add a few words of interest to any subject up for discussion at the shop.

Another familiar figure was Angus Ferguson, he who had bought the McDonald place, next to the cheese factory, a well-meaning and very respectable man, whose wife insisted that he be back at the house each night at eight o'clock, and she never hesitated, when he failed to obey, to go out into the middle of the road

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fronting their house, and, with her arms akimbo, call to him to "come away home." Angus was tall, slender and awkward. His features were kindly and the mutton-chop cut to his whiskers and his high, bald forehead gave him more the look of a clergyman than of a Glengarry farmer. Angus Ferguson was at all times a listener only in the councils before the blacksmith's. If he had opinions, he never expressed them, and when his time would arrive to go, without a good-night wish to his companions he slid down from the plank placed upon the coal barrels, which was his particular seat, and, crushing his straw hat down upon his head, started up the road, his long, awkward arms and legs as he retreated through the darkness making a pantomime figure in the gathering shadows.

Old Bill Blakely was the unique figure in these nightly councils of the gossips. He came originally from no one knew where; was not of any particular descent; knew no religious creed and respected no forms of social etiquette. His remarks at the discussions held before the blacksmith's shop were always emphatic and

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punctuated with copious expectorations from tobacco, followed by a line of adjectives admitting of no uncertain meaning. Old Bill lived at quite a distance from the meeting place of the gossip club and was always late in putting in an appearance. He was never counted upon, though, as one of the "regulars," and only came when he thought there might be a chance of picking a row with some visitor happening along from The Gore. He would walk deliberately into the councils of the assembled habitués at the shop, and, totally ignoring the courtesy due from a late arrival, would proceed to act in direct violation of the club's established rules. Looking down upon the group of loungers, his blue eyes twinkling and his tobacco-moistened lips quivering with a cynical smile, he would steady himself by placing his legs at a wide angle apart, the yellow-stained goatee of his chin bobbing an accompaniment to the twitching of his tightly-compressed mouth.

"Well," he would begin, "hae ye lied all there is to tell about your neighbors, William Fraser? And you, Angus," motioning with

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his head toward down the road, "had better gang your way home, fer I'm goin' to lick the first red-head that comes over from The Gore, the night."

Then Bill would let go a string of oaths that invariably brought the frowning face of Davy Simpson from out of the darkness of the shop to greet the newcomer. Dave at such times had nothing more to say than, "Bill, that's you, I see,"—but all was in the way he said it. The two men appeared to understand each other very well, at least they did since the time Dave ducked the incorrigible Bill head-first into the puncheon of water by the side of the forge, just to show, as he said, that there was no ill-feeling between them.

Bill's hair was as white as that of any patriarch the county could boast; as an excuse for a cap he wore a faded brown affair, whose shapeless peak was as often pointed sidewise and backward as it was straight ahead. Always blinking with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, his lips moistened with the tobacco he was so fond of chewing, and quivering as though he were about to address a remark to

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you, his hands pushed down deep into his pockets, his square shoulders and well-rounded body supported by a stocky pair of legs,—imagine all this, and you will see Bill Blakely.

For many Summers the feud of the creek existing between the men of the two towns required the personal attention and made frequent claims upon the fistic powers of Blakely. All the trouble had been caused by the whey-tainted waters of the creek, which menaced the dairies of the men at The Gore. Chuckling with great glee, old Bill would listen to his neighbors repeat the story current over at The Gore, how upon a certain dark night he (Blakely) had pulled the plug from the whey-tank at the cheese factory on The Front and allowed its soured contents to course slowly down through the stream. In the controversies with his enemies following the perpetration of these midnight escapades at the four corners Bill Blakely had heretofore by his convincing arguments successfully combatted their charge. After one of these discussions with him the men from The Gore returned to their clansmen bearing to them, besides a pair

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of discolored optics, the best wishes of the men at The Front.

But of late the tables seemed to be turning. A new condition of affairs had developed, and the arguments which hitherto had stood Blake-ly in critical times successfully failed now to give him the same degree of satisfaction over his foes from The Gore.



CHAPTER VI.

Donald Visits the Gossip Club.

Up to this time the absence of Andy Cameron from The Front formed only a topic of minor discussion before the smithy's. It was on one of the evenings which marked the end of the outdoor sessions of the gossip club when Laughing Donald presented himself shyly at the outskirts of the group. Weeks had elapsed since he had appeared there before. Until of late, each night of the weary months and years of waiting for the return of the absent brother, he had haunted the blacksmith's shop, where the group of news-gatherers met to exchange notes. At first they welcomed him as a valuable addition to their circle. William Fraser, the carpenter, found in him an

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attentive listener to the "small talk" he gathered from the country side. The remarks Donald overheard upon his early visits at the four corners concerning his family he carried to his invalid wife, and then to Barbara and Dan up at the Nole.

Upon this night he came slowly down the hill along the road which partially hid the blacksmith's shop from view. The group around the smithy's door was surprised at his coming. The timid nature of the man showed itself in each hesitating step, while in his large, fawn-like eyes was an appealing look, as if he were a pet animal wishing to be taken by his master from the tormenting pranks of a gang of youthful bandits. In his nervous excitement Donald always laughed—not loudly, but in showing his perfect, white teeth, he gurgled softly the sound which was responsible for the distinguishing feature of his name in Glengarry, Laughing Donald.

"Well! if here ain't Laughing Donald," exclaimed Fraser, the carpenter, in an insinuating whisper, and a hush fell upon the group. "I wonder if he would like to know," he con-

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tinued, in an undertone, "that Nick Perkins, the tax collector, says all the Camerons on The Front will be working the 'county farm' in six months' time?" At that moment a large, curly head, crowned by the remnants of a straw hat, was protruded through the jamb of the half-opened door of the shop.

"Well, now, you just be the first to tell that to Donald," drawled out Davy, the blacksmith, looking straight at the cringing little carpenter, "and I'll crimp your red whiskers with the hot tongs of my forge." Here was a friend to Donald and the missing Andy, till now unannounced. No end of gossiping by the tattler of the neighborhood had failed to prejudice the mind of the honest smith.

Angus Ferguson had already humped off from his seat upon the coal puncheon, and with his awkward strides was making rapidly toward the scared Donald, extending his hand in such an enthusiastic welcome that the poor fellow nearly mistook the demonstration for one of unfriendliness. "How de doo, Donald! I am a-goin' to tell you I am a-comin' over to-morrow to help ye draw in that grain over

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yonder by the woods. It's been there now nigh onto two weeks in the sun."

"Is it dry, Angus, think ye?" inquired Donald, brightening at the show of friendship. Then an awkward silence followed.

"Got a new horse, Donald," blurted out Angus.

"Aye," returned Donald, the broad grin covering his face.

"Want to see him?" urged Angus. Then they both started down the road like the two overgrown country lads that they were. This spontaneous act of kindness by Ferguson was prompted by his heart's sympathy, which had been penned up for weeks, rebelling constantly against the insinuating remarks repeated by the carpenter.

Fraser nursed his displeasure alone. Angus Ferguson, the silent, had outwitted him. Davy Simpson had exposed his deceitfulness, and in a short time his supposed strength as a member of the gossip club had crumbled in a humiliating climax.

At that moment, as he was regretfully acknowledging to himself the failure he had

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made in gaining the confidence and respect of his associates, his attention was drawn to a familiar vehicle which had approached silently in the gathering darkness, and now stood in the roadway before the blacksmith's shop. "Good-evening, William Fraser," began Nicholas Perkins (for it was the polite tax gatherer, who lived near The Gore), and Fraser walked out with his meekest walk to the side of the wagon. Perkins patronized the shop over at The Gore, and like all the rest from his town, halting before Davy's place, kept upon neutral ground, remaining in the middle of the road.

"Fraser, I am told," continued Perkins, as he hitched himself along to the end of the wagon seat and leaned out over the wheel, to strike a confidential attitude, "that there is no news from Cameron."

"Well, that's about true, Mr. Perkins; no news, and they say that the mortgage time is about up, too." A little more encouragement, and the carpenter's sympathies were at once enlisted with the newcomer.

"Well, it's very bad, isn't it, Fraser? They

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have been left to go to the poorhouse. We didn't think that of Cameron over at The Gore, but, then, the expense will fall on your town, on The Front; of course," said Perkins, turning to get the full effect of his wise remark upon Fraser.

The two deceitful maligners were unconscious of the presence of a figure which had come stealthily upon them in the darkness, and standing in the shadow of the vehicle, was now listening to the conversation.

"Well, you ought to know, Mr. Perkins," replied the carpenter in a patronizing tone. "You will probably have the say in what will have to be done,"—but before he could finish his remark, he had leaped into the air, precipitated upon the toe of a heavy boot.

"Oh, he *will* have the say about whom they take to the county farm, will he!" and Bill Blakely danced in a howling rage around the wagon of his hated foe. "You hypocrite! You prowling tax-gatherer! You hunter of the weak and homeless!" he yelled, and half climbing into the wagon, he shook his fist in the face of the surprised tax collector, shouting





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right into his ear, "Not while Bill Blakely lives and Andy Cameron is away from The Front will you ever hitch your ring-boned and spavined outfit to a post before the home of a Cameron on The Front! Now, Nick Perkins, if you have got anything to say to me personally, just come down here in the road and I'll talk to you." Bill was rolling up his gingham shirt sleeves and again dancing around bear fashion, while the discomfiture of the astonished Perkins was being hugely enjoyed by the group, now enlarged by the return of Angus Ferguson and Laughing Donald. Davy Simpson stood in the door of his shop watching the proceedings over the rims of his spectacles.

"Oh, you ain't a-comin' down, be you! Well, I didn't expect you," retorted Bill. "Your kind fight the women only. You're sneaking around now to see if they ain't a-gettin' hungry, some on 'em over here. But we'll fool you, Perkins. Laughing Donald is a better man dead than anything you can produce alive in your hull county at The Gore. And Andy Cameron won't let the wind blow a whiff of ye

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to the lee side of his place when he comes back, neither. And that won't be long from now," and old Bill threw his quid of tobacco after the retreating wheels of the vehicle as Perkins drove away amid the jeering laughter of the group.

As soon as the tax gatherer was out of hearing distance, Bill turned to Donald, and in a tone serious for him, said, "Donald, I am a-speakin' fer you. The Camerons are from The Front. Your brother Andy is a good man; he is a friend of mine. He will be back soon, for that I am telling ye. William Fraser, the carpenter, he's been telling ye what *'they say.'* Tell yer wife, Donald, when ye go home, what I say, what Davy says, and what Angus' wife says for him to say, and don't you worry about the mortgage." Then Bill went over to the shop door, and they thought he was going to confide something to Davy, but he hesitated, finally bit off an enormous quid of tobacco and sauntered slowly down the road homeward.

Donald climbed the little hill by the shop, going away happier than he had been in

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months. Angus Ferguson still stood in the road watching him; then, looking behind him and catching sight of the carpenter closing the door to the wheelwright shop, he turned his face to the open meadow/at the opposite side of the road, and slamming his straw hat down upon his head, struck into his rapid circular gait down the road, past the cheese factory toward his home.

The quietness outside seemed unusual. Davy looked out of his shop door, scanned the cinder heap, glanced at the puncheon seat, then at the wagon parts: nothing was moving, nothing was doing, all was darkness. The club had gone. He closed the door, put the bar across the staple, inserted the padlock, turned the key, then climbed the hillside to the back door of his house; his day's labors were done.

CHAPTER VII.

In the Mining Camp.

Time has sped all too swiftly at the little mining camp in the Cariboo Valley. There is now only a month left of the two years set by Andy Cameron for his return to his family, and all indications thus far point to a tragic ending for the ambitions and loves of the unfortunate Glengarry farmer.

All this while the two persistent miners had worked with an unlessened zeal at their unproductive diggings. Each night, by turn, one took from the sluices the ore while the other climbed the hill overlooking the scene of their daily toils and cooked before the cabin door the simple evening meal. Many times since their coming into this mountain-locked valley had

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the prospectors shifted the site of their gold diggings, but to the little cabin, which stood at the foot of the steep rock looking down into the gulch, they clung, held fast by many endearing associations. Edmond LeClare,—for that was the name of Cameron's associate—had made a few excursions up the valley to another camp of prospectors, who had come into the hills farther to the north, soon after he and Cameron had settled upon their claim, now safely marked from intruders by the evidence of their active operations. With these new friends LeClare arranged that for an exchange in gold dust he was to obtain from them the needed supplies of bacon and flour to replenish from time to time the cuisine department of their household.

Each night before the door of their cabin the miners discussed the possibilities of their undertaking. Perhaps it was that they builded their hopes upon the returns from a certain new lead they had struck in the mountain's side. The deposits of gold taken from the sluices that day, if they should continue to be found, would surely bring to them the wealth

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each sought so diligently. But alas, upon exploiting to the finish each newly discovered vein of ore, the hopes of the unlucky miners tumbled as did the castles builded by them with the toy blocks of their childhood.

Not a word of complaint was uttered by Andy in the presence of his companion. His disappointment over the failure to obtain the coveted wealth with which he had hoped to redeem his home and the happiness of his wife and family was hidden within the recesses of his own breast, though to the watchful eyes of the sympathetic Edmond the wretched straits into which his friend had been thrust by the yet unprofitable workings of their gold diggings were as easy to read as though they had been in print upon the pages of an open book. While Andy toiled to live and preserve his happiness, LeClare worked and courted hardships and discouragements to deaden the misery of his soul. He had hidden his secret well, but with Andy, as the end of the time of their compact approached, the heart-breaking lack of success, the fading hope of his cherished dream of wealth, the thought of having only

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a bitter tale of failure to bear back to his faithful wife, Barbara,—each one of these emotions had stamped their relentless impress upon his honest, bronzed face, and while not a word had passed between the two prospectors on the subject ever uppermost in the thoughts of each, yet for Edmond LeClare, the unhappy plight of his companion was now the daily inspiration which drove him on in renewed efforts.

A few days more, thought Cameron, and he should tell his friend all. Then they must divide the paltry store of gold dust between them, and sadly at their parting and with a broken heart he would retrace his steps as best he could to his home at The Front, and there tell of his disappointment.

Thus Cameron argued as he sat upon the wood block before the cabin stirring the fire, cooking the evening meal. He had thrown upon the coals some dry branches, and through the gray smoke which enveloped him he saw the figure of his companion coming toward him up the hill. "He is early," thought Andy, and he looked again, stepping aside out of the blinding smoke. Edmond had paused down

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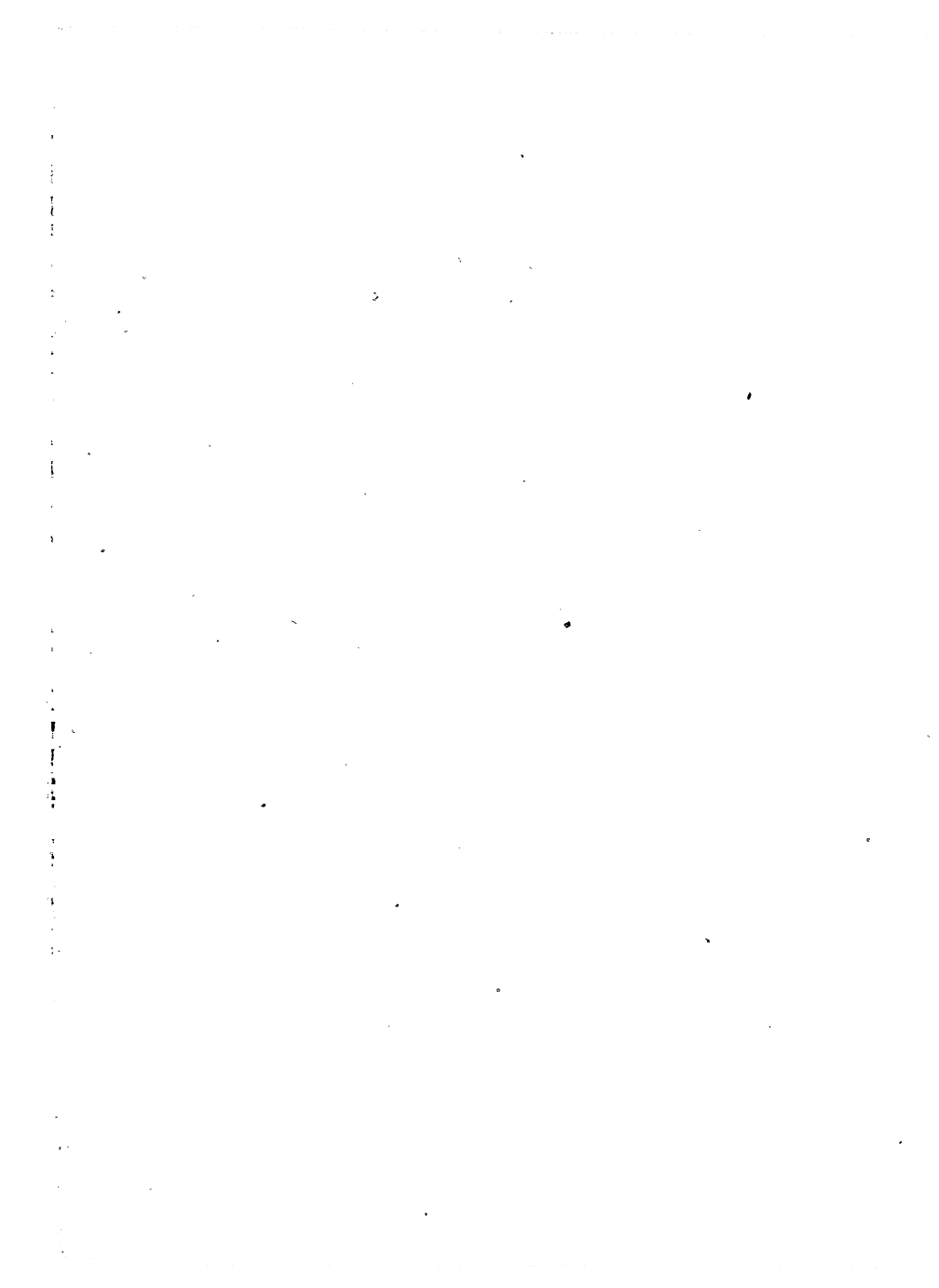
the hill a few rods from the cabin, his right hand behind him, his head thrown back and eyes wide open, glaring with excitement.

"Speak, Edmond!" gasped Cameron. "Speak to me, boy. My God, speak! What have you behind your back? It's gold! gold!—I know it!" Rushing together, the two companions sobbed in each other's arms.

"Look, Andy!" cried LeClare, through his tears of joy. "There are two of them," and he held up nuggets of gold larger than their combined fists, "and there are plenty more of them in the same spot where these came from."

Poor Andy sobbed in his happiness upon the shoulder of his mining partner, and then, clutching him by the arm as though awakening from a dream, he half sobbed, half cried: "He won't get them now, Edmond: he won't get them now! Laughing Donald stays on where he is, and his invalid wife will have a servant to wait on her. And Barbara—my wife, Edmond, my wife, do you hear?—she shall have a new silk dress, a new straw bonnet, Edmond, with red posies in it, and a new yarn carpet to put in the parlor, my boy. And you





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shall come and live at The Nole. You and Dan can go fishing, rain or shine, and I will get my lawyer friend from the village to come out and see us; I'll hire a carriage for him, too, Edmond. And Nick Perkins, the tax collector——" Then, at the mention of that name, Cameron slowly regained his composure, and a stern, cold look passed over his features. "What day of the month did you say it was, Edmond?" He had lowered his voice almost to a whisper. Then, as LeClare answered, he continued: "The time will soon be up. To-morrow, Edmond, to-morrow we must start for home—to-morrow we must go."

LeClare half carried his companion, who was exhausted by the excitement over the discovery, to the seat by the cabin door. The sun had now gone down behind the mountain opposite, and in the autumn glow of this golden sunset, alone with their Maker, they offered a silent prayer over their evening meal.

The miners sat facing each other at their scant repast. Their menu, at all times limited, had now become stale and unappetizing. The salted meats and hard, dried breadstuffs, to

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which was added the badly mixed coffee, would no longer suffice.

"We are rich, Andy," laughed LeClare. "We haven't much to boast about on top of the table, but there's a hundred thousand beneath it, old fellow, and in the morning I will show you a crevice in the rocks down there on the side hill where there's twice as much more as we have here waiting for you to take it out."

Cameron was at once happy and sad. Now that the great wealth in gold had been found, his thoughts of home were strangely affecting him. "Two years," he murmured over and over again to himself. "Could his wife, Barbara, have kept their little colony together during his absence? Had Nick Perkins, the money lender, harassed his brother Donald or annoyed Barbara for the payment of interest money, or could any of his beloved have died?" A shudder at this thought shook his frame. Looking across the table he encountered the kind, inquiring smile on the face of his companion. "You are coming with me, my boy, Edmond, this is no place for you;" but he saw the smile on the handsome, youthful face before

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him fade into an expression of sorrow. "Cheer up," he continued. "I have no fine words for telling you what it's in my heart to say, but, though you never have told me why you came out here, I know you could never have done wrong to anybody, and to Barbara's home and mine you are welcome as long as you can find it comfortable." Tears were in the eyes of the two strong men, but the darkness had hidden the signs of their emotions.

"Why, Andy, my old friend, I have never told you, have I?" suddenly exclaimed LeClare.

"No, I guess you never did." replied Andy.



CHAPTER VIII.

LeClare's Story: The Initialed Tree.

"It's only a boy and girl story, but, all the same, that's why I've been a gold digger. At our first meeting on the plains I said I was from the Eastern provinces. That was all right for the time. The truth happens to be, though, that our native homes are separated only by the fifteen miles of intervening water channels of the Archipelago. When you look to the southward from your farm on The Front, across the great expanse of water, dotted here and there with wooded islands, and then extend the view to the sloping sides of the irregular mountain range which meets the eye, you may perhaps see there, reposing sleepily upon the banks of the winding Salmon, a small

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American village. Four miles down the river, after traversing for the full distance the cranberry marshes of Arcadia, its waters are gathered into one of the nearest channels of the St. Lawrence. The approach is so unpretentious that the coming of its added volume is only recognized by the idler drifting in his canoe along the shores of the Archipelago from the blue and gray color line made by the mingling of the waters. For it is just here at this line that the now docile mountain cataracts of the Adirondacks are greeted by the turquoise-blue waters flowing seaward from the Great Lakes.

"In Darrington, this village on the Salmon, lived Lucy Maynard. Two miles to the eastward, upon one of the fertile farms in the valley of the St. Lawrence, was my home. There I was taught the law of the Ten Commandments, living in the midst of sunshine and happiness and blest with the love of a devoted father and mother. This is only a childish romance, Andy, and perhaps you don't care to hear it."

"Go on, Edmond," came the reply. "You

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know my story. Now tell me yours."

"At the age of seventeen I had been considered by my parents a graduate from the district school, and at the beginning of the Autumn term I was entered in the intermediate grade of the high school up in the village of Darrington. This was an auspicious event in my hitherto uneventful career. Living always upon the farm, my playmates and acquaintances were of the neighboring farm children. Tramping the same way to the district school-house, we had pelted the croaking frogs in the ditches by the roadside, and fired stones at the rows of swallows swinging upon the telegraph wires, and in the season we picked the daisies from the nearby fields, handing them roughly, almost rudely, to the girl of our choice amongst the strolling group of school children; while in the Autumn, in the groves by the roadside, we hurled sticks high into the chestnut trees, then scrambled upon our hands and knees at a lucky throw we had made, each to pocket his catch. Simple and healthful were our sports. Barefooted we stubbed our toes in the game of 'tag' and at ball games in 'Three Old Cats,'

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where 'over the fence is out.' We were each a star player of the national game. Happy children of the country, Andy, primitive in thought, with gentle rural manners, acquired in the religious homes of a Scotch Presbyterian settlement. Once a week upon the Sunday, since childhood, I attended with my father and mother the church at Darrington, and there wistfully, shyly, I looked across the high backs of the family pews at the children of the villagers. In my childish mind their lot in life was greatly to be envied and admired, compared with mine. Their 'store' clothes and their pert, familiar manner placed them in my estimation so far above my station in the social scale that my deference toward them amounted to something like worship.

"In one of the family seats, across and several pews advanced from ours, moving restlessly about between her father and mother, was a handsome, large-eyed child, forever looking backward, and, of course I fancied, often glancing in my direction. She was Lucy Maynard. For years, and until I entered the village high school, we had seen each other upon

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Sundays, across the backs of the seats, never a word from either, nor a smile of recognition, Lucy's large, brown eyes looking toward me as she knelt on her knees upon the seat; then, as I returned her wistful gaze, she would sink slowly down upon her mother's shoulder, burying her face from view. I saw her grow to be a young lady, a village lady; she saw me an awkward country boy. In childhood I dared to return her glances. As a boy of seventeen, when I found myself that autumn in the village high school, in the same class with the girl always before me in my youthful day dreams, I had not the courage even to look in the direction of the seat which she occupied.

"Everything seemed strange to me. Andy. I knew nothing in common with the village boys. They played ball differently: they called their game of 'hide and seek' by another name, and they didn't even throw stones at a mark as we had done in the country. Some of the boys tolerated my backwardness and others turned up their noses at my awkward attempts at being agreeable. But one silent champion I felt I always had during those first weeks of my in-

LeClare's Story: The Initialed Tree.

roduction into that school. Standing near in the hallways, with others girls in our class, at recess, Lucy Maynard, with that soulful look from those large, brown eyes, reproved the boy whose rude remark was aimed at the defenseless, or the one slowest at repartee in the gossip under discussion.

"A few weeks of the Autumn term had passed, and the class in mathematics had been requested to remain after the grades had been dismissed, to receive further instruction from the professor. A board walk extends the full length of the campus from the school-house, ending in a turnstile at the street. The class dismissed, I hurried out of the building. Rustling behind me in a quick step came a young lady. I knew instinctively it was Lucy.

"Don't you think it is about time you had something to say to me, Mr. LeClare?" she said, as she came beside me. "I won't think you are a bit nice if you go on like this." I felt my face turning red, and I forgot everything I had learned a thousand times before to say to her. Then I begged her pardon for nearly stepping upon her, and I felt that I was about to col-

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lapse. The turnstile came to my assistance, and, as Lucy lived in an opposite direction from that in which I had to go, we parted. I had regained enough of my scattered senses, though, to thank her for having spoken to me.

The Winter term of school had come and gone, and the Summer closing was at hand. The other boys in my class had soon overlooked my misfortune, as they considered it, of having lived in the country, and I was proud of the devotion of Lucy, whose name was now paired off with mine, as were the other boys and girls paired off in our same class. To celebrate the close of the school, the class proposed a basket party to be held upon the bank of the St. Lawrence, each male member of the party offering to row his share of the ladies in his separate boat down the winding Salmon, a five miles' jaunt. With Lucy at the helm, my craft sped down stream propelled by a youthful spirit of pride and enthusiasm.

"Dinner under the trees on Tyno's Point was quickly over, and the young admirers soon found some interesting object to engage their attention in pairs. Lucy and I, always quieter

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when alone, had realized that very shortly we would not see each other as often, and that perhaps in the next year we should be sent away to different colleges.

"And thus it came about that as we knelt carving our initials, one above the other, on the trunk of a basswood tree, we queried: 'Shall we always grow up together in life as our names will always remain together on this tree?' Lucy said: 'I will cut one stroke in the frame to inclose our names which says we will,' and she cut a strip in the bark over the initials. Then she looked into my eyes with that soul-pleading look, and I at once cut a line down one side. Lucy immediately cut the mark for the opposite side, and three sides of the frame were then formed. It was my turn, and I hesitated, for I knew what it meant to both of us. I thought it too early for an engagement. Lucy sank slowly down by the side of the tree, as she used to do from the back of the seat in church upon her mother's shoulder, and waited for me to say something. I was wrong. Andy. I said we'd better wait before we made the other stroke to complete the frame. There

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was an awkward silence; Lucy toyed with the penknife she held in her hand, but looked no more at the initials cut into the bark of the tree.



CHAPTER IX.

LeClare's Story: The Christmas Tree.

The next Autumn she went away to the State Normal School, and at vacation time a strange young man visited her at her home in Darrington. Then, at the end of the Spring term, when she returned, one of the boys in my class of the year before wrote me to the city where I had gone to acquire a business training, that Lucy was engaged, and was to be married in the fall. How many times I cannot tell you during my first year in the city I had composed the letter to Lucy which I never sent. At night, seated at the small stand I used as a writing table, in the hall room,

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top floor, back, I went over for the thousandth time the thought uppermost in my mind. Should I write to her and say, 'Wait for me, Lucy. I am working hard for the position in business which will give me the right to claim you from the comfortable home of your parents. You are my constant inspiration. For you I toil the whole day with ceaseless energy. For you, to claim as my prize at the end, I have sacrificed the associations of home, accepted the challenge thrown down before me by the ambitious who, like myself, are striving to gain that same position which would give to them the opportunity to say, "I have won the race, I have reached the goal first, now I am entitled to the prize." For you, Lucy, one day I hope to return, and then to the music of the old church organ, which we both have known from childhood, to walk arm in arm from the scene of our innocent love-making to brave together life's voyage.'

"But no, Andy, I never sent this letter. Was it pride, I wonder,—were my acts of silence dictated by an over-cautious mind, or were the subtle workings of my heart's emotions stayed

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by the reports which had reached me that Lucy, my loved one, my ideal, could so doubt my integrity, could so disregard the sacred ties of our friendship, hallowed by the memories of sweet, childish innocence, as to accept the attentions of another? I could not return at the Christmas holiday and see another at the side of my beloved. At the summer vacation I still clung to my work, mastering the details of the business with such an alarming rapidity that the management would soon be forced to place me in control of more important affairs. My incentive now for greater efforts had changed from that which first had inspired me. Now I worked to accomplish great successes, that, indirectly, Lucy might come to hear my name mentioned, that she might be proud to say, if only in her own heart, that she had once known me, and as boy and girl we had been sweet-hearts.

"True enough, Andy, she was married that Autumn. My invitation to their wedding came, and with it a short note saying to try and come if possible, and if not, she wished me all success in business, and that my share of happiness

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might be as great as she had heard my career was proving successful. Love with pride was contending in my heart. I should not attend the wedding, I finally decided. She had heard about my success. Did she not know I had done all this for her sake? Why, then, could she not have waited a short two years?

"Then love would steal quietly to the door of my troubled heart and say, 'You never told her of your resolves. You have never explained the reason why you wished to postpone the carving of the line which would have fully inclosed the initials in the bark upon the bass-wood tree at Tyno's Point. You have asked her to guess too much. You have been unreasonable.'

"But pride would return, and, roughly pushing love out of the door, proclaim in a loud, harsh voice, 'She took up with another while I have been true to her, and I am through. I have no care. One day she shall hear, she shall know of my prominence, of my success.' Then pride was joined by selfishness within the chambers of my heart. The door closed, and there they held control for a whole year.

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"Lucy and her husband were now living in Darrington, at the home of her parents. Mother wrote me that the Sunday school to which I had belonged all the years I had spent at home would celebrate the eve of Christmas with the unloading of a Christmas tree, and wouldn't I come home for that and gladden the hearts of my father and mother, now growing old so fast without me? That evening, the same day upon which I had received the letter, love came tapping again at the door of my heart. This time I opened to welcome the timid caller. 'We are going home together,' it said, 'to mother and to father, to Lucy and her husband. We will bring the good words of cheer. This Christmas shall see a reunion at the old home. It will seem good to be there, and to meet Lucy with her husband at the church, and to see them happy in their love for each other will put my soul at rest, and give me another chance to meet happiness should the fates favor me.'

"A three years' absence from the old place had made changes, and most of all in myself. The change of dress from country to city, the

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mannerisms acquired by constant mingling with strangers, had given me the air which in the country is interpreted as being akin to presumptuousness. My school friends approached me with an uneasiness of manner, while the conversation with the older members of families was limited to a few questions concerning my arrival and departure. The ladies of the committee in charge of the entertainment flitted about the Christmas tree, which was placed in front of the pulpit at the head of the main aisle and at the end of the edifice opposite the entrance. I had not yet removed my great coat, and, hat in hand, was strolling with mother up the aisle to the family pew. We were very early, and but a few had taken their seats. Some one of the group of ladies surrounding the tree had called the attention of her co-workers to the approaching stranger. At the instant one of their number darted down the aisle. A cry of joy had escaped her lips, and in a frenzy of hysteria she fell into my arms. It was Lucy Maynard. Tenderly I placed her in the very pew from where I had so often stolen the childish glances at the same brown,

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curly head and beautiful eyes of my Lucy, who now lay in a dead faint upon the cushions.

"'You must care for her, mother,' I said, as I turned hastily to leave. 'I am going away; and, now that you know my secret, you must always pray that my happiness may some time be returned.'



CHAPTER X.

Adieu to the Mining Camp.

“Soon after I gave up my position in the city. The money which I had accumulated I determined to spend in trying to forget, to stamp out of my life the truth of the love which existed between Lucy and me. She was married—I was a gentleman. It was too late. God might right the wrong which had been done, but in the meantime two souls were to suffer apart. For another two years I kept away from home, my dear old parents never urging me to return. I was successful in my business ventures. Then sad news again came to me. A fatal illness had attacked my father. I reached his bedside in time to hear him say,

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'Edmond, I would have done the same were I in your place.' We buried him in a plot by the church, in the shadow of the steeple at the bidding of whose bell he had so many years come to meeting, and now from the old belfry tower it tolled the last sad notes for the departed.

"Lucy and her husband had been traveling for her health, under the advice of the old village doctor. A change of scene, he told her husband, would do her good. A month I spent at the old homestead. Mother had taken my hand in hers one evening, as we sat under the porch, I in the same chair where, at the same time of the evening, father read the weekly paper, and many a time, with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead, and in his shirt sleeves, had engaged in a heated discussion with mother over some editorial comment favorable to his views on one of his pet subjects. 'Stay with me, Edmond,' she said. 'It won't be long now. For nearly sixty years we have never been separated for more than a day—your father from me. It—won't—be—long.' I felt her grasp of my hand loosen, and she sank

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back into her chair. Her left hand lay limp in the folds of her dress, an ashy whiteness had suffused her face, a sweet, heavenly smile rested over her features. Then I knew she had joined my father. Side by side their bodies rest in the shadow of the village church, while their spirits have joined the angels and are looking down at us now.

"No one at the homestead nor in the village of Darrington knows of my whereabouts, and to them I am as though I had joined my father and mother. Now, Andy, you know my story. If you think I should return with you to your home, I will—but on one condition—that my secret, my identity, be sacred between us."

Andy promised. They arose to seek their couch of cedar boughs, but a strange gray light was creeping through the valley. "Look, Andy," cried LeClare. "It's morning!"

LeClare at once piloted his partner down to the cave-like opening in the cliff. There he drew from a ledge in the shelving rocks at his side, the loose earth and small stones he had placed there the night before, covering from

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sight the rich deposits which were now plainly to be seen fastened to the solid rock in great pockets of nearly pure gold. Cameron was stunned at the sight. Wealth of such magnitude he could not comprehend. Two days they worked to take from the ledge their treasure. Then, having made ready, they bid adieu to the scenes of their recent struggles and hastened on their way. They chose the same direction through the mountains as that by which they had reached the Cariboo Valley, heading, of course, for the house of the native at the head of Soda Creek with whom they had left a part of their belongings upon entering the ranges nearly two years previous.

Cameron had explained to his friend the necessity that haste govern their every act in their exit from the mountainous district, that even at great inconvenience to themselves they must hurry with all possible speed, first to overtake the wagon trains going down through the valley on the western side of the range to the passes at Ashcroft: then, after crossing the Rockies to the eastern slope, to join the pack train, this to carry them farther homeward, till

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at Winnipeg they would reach the railway.
Then upon fleeing steeds of winged steel they
would soon reach home.

CHAPTER XI.

Nick Perkins the Money Lender.

There is in every rural community one individual who in himself represents an institution hated alike by the rich and poor, a necessary evil, so to speak, and one for whom the law has had to define the limits to which he may carry his questionable practices. The going and coming of such a man in the community in which he lives is tolerated by one class of residents who are familiar with his tactics, because of the fear that some day they may be compelled to ask assistance from him.

There is yet another class of the same populace by whom he is called a great and good man; it is because of the power and influence the possession of wealth has put in his hand,

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which he uses for his own selfish advancement. Although these same people may at the very time be paying him usury rates upon a valuation not half the true worth of security, should they ask for a further advance, this suave citizen, parading under the guise of a public benefactor, refuses them, and continues subtly after the blight is upon them to weave his drag net closer about the unwary victims, strangling them at last; then with a well-feigned show of reluctance, he gathers in their property, which he has obtained at one-half its correct value.

Nicholas Perkins was the worthy exponent of this system in the Arcadian district of which we are writing, and it was from him, through his friend, the lawyer, that Cameron secured the loans of money for which both his farm and that of his brother were pledged.

Perkins lived over at The Gore, and through his office, as Government tax collector for the county, he was afforded an excellent opportunity to know of the business affairs of the people within his jurisdiction. As a farmer at The Gore he was known to be prosperous. As a money lender, there were many, both in his

Nick Perkins the Money Lender.

own town and through the county, who had occasion to know of his shrewd bargaining, and as a Government agent for the collection of the land-holders' dues, his promptness and diligence were unquestioned. He drove about the county in an open-back light wagon, drawn by a bob-tailed, cream-colored nag. Behind the seat a rope halter was traced diagonally across from side to side, fastening to the iron braces which gave it support. A slightly corpulent man was Perkins, and while jogging along the country roads his favorite position was on the edge of the seat, one hand grasping the reins at which he tugged at frequent intervals, and the other holding the iron braces surmounting the seat's back. He wore a faded brown derby hat, and a few scattered reddish side-whiskers adorned his face. There was no mustache which should have been there to hide the stinging, straight lips, and an insinuating smile from which the children invariably shrank played at the corners of his mouth.

A social call from Nick Perkins was not taken as a pleasant surprise in any of the homes throughout the county, and least of all in those

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of the families at the rival town to his own, The Front. Perkins had a very bad way about him, the neighbors said, because of the circumstance that when a note he held—or it might be a mortgage upon a farm—was overdue, they were sure to see the cream-colored, bob-tailed nag and its owner driving slowly past, taking note of the condition of the land and out-buildings. They said he counted the fence-rails so that he would be sure they were all there when he got possession. Close with his family and servants, a gift for 'charity's sake would have been considered a huge joke with him. A diversion in which he seemed most to delight was that of keeping alive the dissensions existing between the farmers of his own village and those whose lands met the river at The Front. He was not a participator in any of their Saturday night brawls,—not he,—and but for the suave, insinuating remarks he dropped artfully in the hearing of certain ones at the two towns, their feuds would long before have died out for lack of fuel.

The rebuff administered to Perkins by Bill Blakely before the smithy had smouldered in

Nick Perkins the Money Lender.

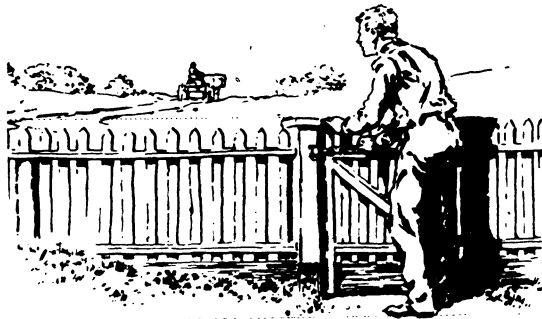
his mind, not dying out, but fanned by more recent reverses to his plans till it had now blazed upward, determining to consume for his personal satisfaction and the discomfiture of The Front, the Camerons' homesteads. With the head of the family away, and no news of him in nearly two years, Laughing Donald unable at any time to contend against him for his rights, and the stock and dairy sold from the farms, he had figured, despite the fact that Barbara, the wife of Andy Cameron, had paid the interest money promptly, that there could be very little money left, and in a month more he himself would be in possession. Thus he argued, but he reckoned alone and without a friend of the absent Cameron, who lived a short distance from the smithy, and to whose words of caution the self-important Perkins had given no hearing.

Almost daily now since the beginning of the month which marked the end of the two years of the mortgage and the absence of Cameron, Nick Perkins and his horse and buggy, known to every school child in the country, drove along The Front. Turning upon the edge of

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his seat, his disengaged arm extended along the brace surmounting its back, he would deliberately look about him with that insolent proprietary air so common among men of his class. Barbara Cameron witnessed this scene for about a week. Laughing Donald, in his innocent way, had come over from his place and inquired of her if she had any business with Nick Perkins, because, he said, he drove past so often, he thought he might have some "dealin's with her."

The next day Andy's Dan, simple-minded, but scenting trouble when he saw Perkins drive past, hurried down to the gate at the road, and



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closed and latched it securely. Inside of the house at the kitchen table sat the silent figure of Barbara. Spread out before her was a map of the British Columbias, showing the ranges of the Rocky Mountains. Two years before, her husband had studied the same map, and hundreds of times within the last few weeks she had pointed out to herself the mountain passes through which he said he would journey in going to the gold fields. For the thousandth time the thought came to her, Was he dead? If he were alive and had found the hidden treasures he would have returned to her before now. The cruel rumors which had reached her from the neighbors that her husband had deserted her, she never allowed a place in her troubled mind. If dead, she argued, then she could not live there and see the poverty which must come to their families. She would be happier to live anywhere else. Yes, happier to know for a certainty that he was dead.

Then the thought had come into her mind in a more definite form.—Why not go to him? Perhaps, too, Andy were sick. A new thought this. A strange light was now in the eyes of

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Barbara. Sickness she herself had ever known, but the possibility of her husband's robust constitution succumbing to disease she had never imagined. Again she said over in her mind, "He may have been on the way home. He may be lying with a fever in one of those camps in the mountain passes he told me about, which is here on the map."

In her excitement she arose and paced the floor: her features, set and always stern, were now drawn hard. Looking from the window down to the road, there she saw Nick Perkins passing, and looking, as she was able to tell her husband later, as though he owned the farm already. She stopped in the middle of the floor. With a quick movement she untied the strings to her gingham apron, hung it on the peg by the kitchen stove, told Dan to watch the biscuits baking in the oven, then retired to her room. Soon she reappeared. Dan saw she had put on her Sunday bonnet and her best frock. She held a tightly-rolled bundle under her arm. Glancing quickly at the clock, as though her time was short, she hurriedly told Dan to care for their one cow, and when he

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needed more biscuits, to go down to Laughing Donald's. Then, casting another hasty glance around the rooms of the house, she went out at the back door and down the road which led to the station.

Dan did not watch her going. He knew where she had gone.



CHAPTER XII.

Barbara in the Chilcoten Valley.

The Autumn rains had now set in, and all the way up through the Chilcoten Valley from Quesnel, the wagon train groaned and pitched from side to side. The wheels rolled in mud up to the very hubs, and the horses lagged in their traces, wearied by the excessive burden they were urged to drag. Sandwiched in with the baggage, providing for their comfort as best they could, were the several passengers. Upon the front seat with the driver sat the only woman passenger of the company. A figure tall and spare, a face thin and drawn, lines that were deep cut, marked the features

Barbara in the Chilcoten Valley.

of a determined character. Her manners were not engaging, and her fellow travelers soon understood that she preferred to be left alone, not to talk. But they had observed through the tedious journey up from Quesnel to the terminus at the head of Soda Creek, that she had at intervals questioned the driver, each time making him confirm his answer by repeating it a second time.

"Yes," said he, "I am sure that I brought your husband up this valley. It must be nigh two years ago this Fall, and if I ain't mistaken, him and another man left some truck over at Dan Magee's place, across the bridge at the head of the trail. If ye want, mum, I'll take ye over thar soon as I put the horses up." They had now reached the end of the wagon route and the passengers had dismounted in front of the building which served as a lodging house, but Barbara sat awaiting the return of the driver, who by his positive answers to her questionings, had kindled the dying flame of hope in her heart, and already through her weak frame new life coursed with a quickened throb. Up to this time, over the trails by

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which she had come no definite information could she obtain that her husband had passed that way. No encouragement had she received to inspire within her that fortitude which would aid her to withstand all fatigue, knowing that at the end of the journey she should meet her beloved; and now she sat transfixed, afraid to discover the truth of the report, fearing there might be a sudden ending of the hopes she had allowed to spring up in her heart, that soon she should see her husband, and the longing of her soul to be at his side would be satisfied.

She was presently rejoined by the driver of the van, which was left standing at the side of the hotel, the team of four horses having been detached for stabling. Together they went toward the home of Magee. The dim lights were beginning to show through the gathering darkness from the cabins of the scattered settlement. A thin mist was rising from the dampness, and but for the feeble rays which filtered through nothing would have been visible to mark the exact location of the house. To one of those lights, coming as if from out the side

Barbara in the Chilcoten Valley.

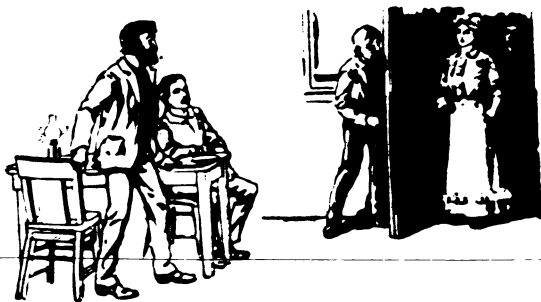
of the hill. Barbara and her guide came.

"This is the place, mum. Dan Magee is a friend of mine, so you needn't be afraid to tell him what you have come about." The door opened cautiously in answer to the knock. "It's all right, Dan," said the driver of the stage wagon. "Here's somebody wants to see you." The door opened wide. Barbara and her friend advanced into the light.

Seated around a table at the side of the room opposite the door were two men, one young, bronzed, but handsome, the other older and weather beaten, his beard untrimmed and hair unkempt. They looked toward the door as the strange visitor of the night entered, then quickly, as if from a sudden impulse, the older man stood up. His hand shook, as it rested upon the table, and his eyes stood out as if they would leap from their sockets. The tall figure of this silent woman had advanced to the middle of the room, her eyes fastened upon the man standing by the table. Slowly her two arms were raised, and stepping quickly forward, in a dreadful whisper she ejaculated, "Surely, Andy, it is ye!" Cameron also had recognized

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his wife, but he caught her in his arms only to lay her tenderly upon the couch, for she had swooned away.



CHAPTER XIII.

The Mortgage Comes Due.

On the first of October—at least so they said back at The Gore—Nick Perkins was to take over as his own the Cameron farms at The Front.

Since the flight of Barbara early in September Perkins had patrolled the roadway almost daily, surveying from his wagon, as was his custom, the home of Laughing Donald. Then continuing his round of inspection, he would ride along past the farm at The Nole. There at the closed gate, mute but defiant, guarding the house like a faithful dumb animal in the absence of his master, Perkins found Andy's Dan each time that he passed.

The cool evenings of the approaching Au-

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tumn had broken up the meetings of the Gossip Club before the smithy, but the depression weighing upon the sympathizers of their luckless neighbors at The Front was like the ominous quiet preceding a storm which leaves disaster and despair in its wake.

Angus Ferguson had frequently lent a helping hand in the putting away of the Winter's supply up at Laughing Donald's, and of late the silence existing between Davy the blacksmith and Bill Blakely, and their intense thoughtfulness whenever they met at the shop, was proof positive to the observer that they understood that the responsibility of averting the approaching trouble to their neighbor—which was also an indignity aimed at the clans at The Front—devolved wholly upon them. As the days passed the confident look on the face of Perkins so asserted itself that at length while passing the shop he stared into the blackness of the open door with the insinuating smile of the hypocrite. Davy watched him from the grimy window nearest the forge, and by one of his severe quieting looks he persuaded Bill Blakely to let him drive on unmo-

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tested. After Perkins and his cream-colored nag had disappeared up the roadway along The Front, Bill walked uneasily around the shop, kicking about the floor the loose horse-shoes and fire tongs lying at the foot of the anvil. Davy glanced at his friend over the steel rims of his spectacles, awaiting an expression on the subject each had silently argued for weeks, as he rounded the while on the anvil's arm the curve of a shoe to fit the farm horse lazily resting in the corner. During the last minute before leaving Davy, the frowning wrinkles in the face and forehead of Old Bill had disappeared, and encountering the smith as he carried in the tongs, grasping by the red hot toe cork the shoe to fit to the mare in the corner, his lips were copiously moistened from the weed to which he was a pronounced slave. His goatee was moving rapidly up and down, and Davy halted, for he knew a decision had been reached.

"To-morrow is the last day, Davy," said Bill. "I'll be on my way to the town in the morning. If there's no news from Andy Cameron it won't take you long to tell it to me when

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I'm passing." Then he looked Davy straight in the eye, winked his own blue eyes a few times, drew out from his trousers pocket the plug of chewing tobacco, and was gone in an instant. Davy made no remark to the neighbor who was the onlooker at this little episode, the termination of a month of silent conferences held between these two men, sturdy types of rural loyalty.

"I thought Bill would do it," mused the smith to himself. "He's got the heart, and a whole lot of other things that the people round here don't know much about. But Bill knows I know it, and that's why he's been a-hanging around here a-wantin' of me to say something. But I knowed he'd say it all right," and in his pleasure Davy hammered the nail-clinches with double energy into the hoofs of the docile mare.

Next morning, before the rays of the Autumn sun had changed the whiteness of the hoar frost, shining like a coat of silver upon the shingled roofs of the buildings, and covering with a mantel of gray the green shrubbery and grass by the roadside, the smith unlocked the door to his place, and stepped within its

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darkness. At the same early hour, coming along by the cheese factory, down the side hill and through the hollow, then over the plank bridge which crossed the whey-tainted creek, the innocent cause of so much contention, now past the store at the four corners, steadily there sounded in the early morning quiet the echoing thump, thump, thump of the tread of Old Bill's cowhide boots on the hard roadbed. Davy recognized the step as it came nearer. Now it was past the wheelwright's place—he could see his old friend in the roadway.

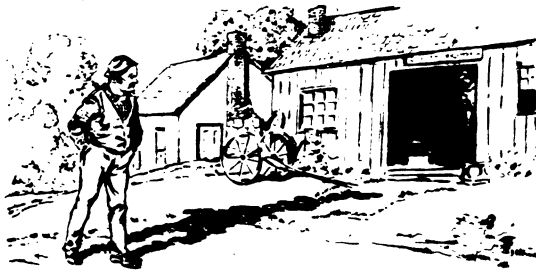
"He's not a-goin' to stop," thought Davy, but when nearly up to the rise of ground just to the west of the shop, Bill half turned, and with his hands deep into his trousers pockets, the peak of his faded cloth cap pushed to one side, he stood half listening, half looking for a sign from Davy. Anticipating the man, the smith had in his characteristic way upon critical moments thrust his head around the side of the open door, and with a nod motioned Bill onward. There was no word from Cameron.

Later in the day, driving along the road which turned at the four corners into that

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which passed the smithy, was the familiar sight of Nick Perkins and his bob-tailed horse. He sat as usual upon the edge of the seat, his disengaged arm grasping the brace which formed its back. He had put on his Sunday coat, and as he passed the door of the shop Davy could see from his window by the forge the insolent smile of triumph which Perkins cast in his direction.

“When he meets Bill Blakely up there at the lawyer’s,” thought Davy, “perhaps he’ll change that smile.”



CHAPTER XIV.

Blakely Consults Cameron's Lawyer.

In rooms upon the second floor of a business block, whose windows looked down on the main thoroughfare of the country town, were the offices of Cameron's lawyer friend. The ground floor of this building was occupied by firms in various lines of business, and for the accommodation of the occupants overhead there was on the outside of the building a stairway leading up from the street. Standing upon the landing at the head of this stairway, outlined in shadow by the morning sun against the whitewashed bricks of the wall, was the picturesque figure of Bill Blakely, awaiting the lawyer's arrival.

"Ah, good morning, Bill!" said the latter as

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he reached the landing, curiously eyeing his early caller.

"Mornin', Donald Ban," returned Bill, as he followed him through the door. Donald Ban was curious as to the nature of the business which prompted this unexpected call from Bill. Often, to the discomfort of Blakely, this same lawyer had opposed his counsel in the settlement in court of the encounters he had figured in while disposing of the men who came over from The Gore to argue the cause for the tainted condition of the creek. Donald Ban had many times convinced the judge and jury that Blakely had been the offender and must pay the costs, at least, of the litigation. The lawyer had been impressed with the candid, matter-of-fact way in which Bill had accepted these verdicts. His manner upon each occasion seemed to indicate,—“Well, if the judge and jury say so, I'm willing to pay the fees of a lawyer smart enough to make them say so. Besides, I have had my fun out of it, too.” Then he paid up without an objection.

“Sit down, Bill,” said the lawyer in an encouraging tone, for down in his heart he liked

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the man. Bill had removed his peaked cloth cap, showing an intelligent head, covered with a heavy crop of unkempt, straight, white hair. Donald Ban moved about the room making comments on general topics, calculated to put his visitor at ease, but still he was at a loss to account for the appearance of Bill at his office. Suddenly Bill blurted out this question: "You are a friend of Andy Cameron, ain't you, Donald Ban?"

"Yes," replied the lawyer. "He is a client, and a friend of mine, also."

"Well, so am I a friend of Cameron, and you can write that in the papers, too, when you make them out," and Bill turned in his chair facing the lawyer, who had now seated himself at the opposite side of the office table. "Nick Perkins from The Gore,—you know him, too. I suppose, don't ye?"

"Yes, I know him," answered the other, still waiting for his clue to the situation. Bill during his last question had reached down into the lining of his vest and had taken therefrom an oblong package, inclosed in a wrapping which showed the signs of much handling and

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... tied about with a soiled string. He laid it on the table before him, then continued: "Donald Ban, you are a good lawyer, and for that reason I never wanted you on my side. Mine was always the wrong side, and I was a-feared that you would make the jury say it was the right side, when I knew all the time it wasn't. This is the time, though, Donald Ban, that I am here to see you the first thing." Bill had risen and was leaning forward, his two hands resting upon the table. "In these papers," he continued, "these papers that Nick Perkins holds against Andy Cameron, do they mention 'on or before,' or only mention that it is 'on' the certain day they are due?" The lawyer, noting the intense earnestness and excitement of Blakely, answered at once that the form of the mortgage held by Perkins against the Cameron properties read that "on or before the first day of October of that year, they were due and payable, and——"

"That's enough, Donald Ban—all I wanted to know. It is now one day before, and you write it down in the papers and tell Andy when he comes back that a friend of his—you

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needn't mind putting it down there as who it was—put up the cash and beat the hypocrite Perkins out at his own game. Count out what you want from that package, Donald Ban, and give the rest to me. Perkins will be along pretty soon now, and when he comes I want you to have it all ready for him to sign off his claim against the Camerons on 'The Front.' The lawyer, taken so completely by surprise, was at a loss to know what to say. "Cameron will be back soon, mark what I am telling you," Bill continued, "and if he has made nothing, I will be a safer man for him to owe money to than Nick Perkins."

CHAPTER XV.

Cameron's Resolve.

It was the end of September. The wind blew violently, the faint light of the pale moon, hidden every other instant by the masses of dark clouds that were sweeping across the sky, whitened the faces of the two silent watchers in the chamber of the sick. Under the same hospitable roof where Barbara had fallen exhausted at the feet of her husband, she now lay prostrated by a raging fever. Standing near the foot of the couch, alert for a sign of returning consciousness, Cameron watched by turns with his friend the passing of the life of his devoted wife, which now hung in the balance by only a slight thread. In her rational moments during the days when the burning fever

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would be lowest. Barbara had told the story of the persecution of the Cameron family by Nick Perkins, the insinuating gossip set afloat by Fraser, the carpenter, the defense in their behalf made by Bill Blakely and the kindnesses offered them by Angus Ferguson and Davy Simpson, the blacksmith. LeClare had divined the truth long before his friend Cameron, that the relentless fever raging in the brain and body of the proud, determined woman must soon burn her life's taper to the end.

All the available medical skill and the tenderest nursing would not arrest the progress of the fever, and Cameron, too, at last despaired of the life of his beloved. The doctors had told him that the end was nearing, and now he sat by the side of the couch, never for a moment removing his gaze from the face of the sick one. As the hour of midnight approached, the eyes of the patient opened slowly, and the look of intelligence brought a ray of joy to his heart. Feebly she murmured as he bent over her to catch every precious syllable.

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"I am going now, Andy," she whispered. "Say good-bye to Dan for me. I loved you too much to hear them say you had deserted me, and that's why I came to find you. You won't blame me, will you?" and he answered her by smoothing her feverish brow. "Make me only this promise, Andy," she continued with great difficulty, for her strength was quickly going, "that you take me back with you. And if Nick Perkins has taken our home from us, then go direct to the graveyard by the little church."

Then the soft love light in her eyes faded out as she sank quietly away into the pillows, her lips slightly parted and the long eyelashes drooping from the half-closed lids. The proud spirit had taken its flight. It was in the twilight of that mysterious country called Death, and for a moment, as Cameron stood by the side of the cot, the veil seemed to part from before the throne of Glory, and beckoning to him to follow, he saw the spirit of his loved one borne safely hence by the angels of peace. A great sob shook his frame, and as he stood up, gazing at the lifeless form of his devoted wife, he exclaimed in indignant agony: "Mur-

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dered! Their infernal gossip has done this, and here, in the presence of the angel of death, I vow that I shall live to avenge this innocent soul."

* * * * *

Together they journeyed homeward. Le Clare was greatly concerned over the change which had taken place in his friend. The transformation so suddenly accomplished in the man reminded him of the instances told of how, from a terrible fright at the sudden approach of danger, reason had been restored to the unbalanced mind. In the case of Cameron, however, where before he had been content to follow, acquiescing without objection or comment to the conditions which surrounded him, awaiting always a suggestion from his partner to act out the inclination which had arisen in his own mind, he had now suddenly assumed the rôle of leader, and so naturally, it appeared, that no indecision was manifest because of his recent acquirement of the office. That primitive charm of manner, that honest, simple style of the Glengarry farmer, which had so won the confidence of LeClare when traversing the

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same route in going to the gold fields, had now upon their return trip given place to personal traits of even greater significance. The new development of character in his friend showed LeClare at every turn the master mind awakening. Grief had rudely torn away the mask from the uncharitable, had laid bare the deceit of the untrue and the wickedness of the hypocrite. The death of his wife, Barbara, had removed the object of his unselfish love, and to LeClare it was very evident that the future had in store for those who figured in the events consequent to Cameron's leaving The Front, a destiny more or less happy, according as they should be judged upon the return of the prospector to his home.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Return of the Gold Diggers.

They were now nearing the station at a mile back from The Front. Cameron had acquainted LeClare with the simple funeral arrangements he wished carried out as soon after their arrival as possible. One precaution he insisted must be taken, and that was, to allow no indication to appear of their possession of wealth. The significance of this request LeClare well understood. At the call of the station stop for The Front, the two men alighted, and hurrying forward, superintended the removal of the copper-lined casket beneath whose sealed cover was the body of the courageous woman that so lately had gone in search of the husband who now would live to do for those in kind who had done for the departed.

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Cameron stood by the side of the rough box upon the platform, as the noise from the fast disappearing express train grew faint and died away in the distance. For a moment he was lost in thought. Knowing him to be in the company of Cameron, the keeper of the small depot approached LeClare, and with a jerk of his head toward a farm wagon and driver cautiously nearing, as if fearing to obtrude, he said in a hushed voice,—

“It’s Andy’s Dan. He’s been a-waitin’ fer ‘im.”

Twice a week and sometimes oftener during the October month, so Cameron was afterward told by the neighbors, Andy’s Dan was seen regularly to drive back to the railroad station, and there remaining at a respectful distance, watch for a passenger who might alight from the through train from the West. Then seeing no familiar face to reward his coming, he would turn away and drive back to the farm at The Nole to come again another day.

Startled from his reverie by the remark of the station master, Cameron turned to see the conveyance drawn up by the platform at his

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side. Andy's Dan alighted from the vehicle and clasped the outstretched hand of his be-reaved brother in silence. Still without exchanging a word, they walked over to the side of the long box. Then, as if suddenly remembering, Dan looked into his brother's face, a sad smile playing upon his features.

"We can take her home, Andy," he said. "Bill Blakely told me to tell ye that when you come."

In the centre of the burying-ground, set back from the roadway and raising its spire heavenward above the tombstones at either side, the church at The Front reposes among the graves. One by one these monuments had been reared, till now they marked a place where a loved one had been taken to rest from each of the families at The Front.

A mound of freshly dug earth, thrown up upon the sod in one corner of the inclosure, told of a newly made grave. A cold November rain had been falling, accompanied by a chilling wind, which came in fitful gusts. The over ripe, deadened stalks of the golden-rod beat

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against the board fence, rapping at intervals like the weather strips upon a deserted house. The drops of water fell aslant from the eaves of the church roof, and a horse, meagrely covered, shivered beneath the shed at the rear.

Bill Blakely had placed in a convenient corner of the shed the pick and shovel he had been using, then backing his horse from under cover, he drove over to the farm at The Nole. Information had spread among the neighbors that Cameron had returned to The Front bringing with him the remains of his wife. No further news were they able to gather, but to Davy Simpson, Angus Ferguson, Bill Blakely and a few others, Cameron had sent a special message, saying that as friends to himself and the departed he wished them to be present at the funeral to take place from The Nole the following afternoon.

Meanwhile Cameron had also dispatched his friend LeClare with Dan as his driver, bearing a note to his lawyer friend up at the county village. To them the import of the note appeared to be nothing more than a request for his friend to attend upon the following day,

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but later, at the farm, as he saw the lawyer place upon the coffin in the front room a beautiful wreath of the purest white lilies, LeClare knew that Andy's orders had been telegraphed to the city. The best undertaker the county afforded was in charge of the details, with instructions to slight nothing in the arrangements and the assurance that his bill of expenses would be promptly met.

Cameron greeted his friends by a cordial grasp of the hand. A new dignity of manner impressed itself upon his old neighbors. His bearing at this time was that of a man of a great reserve force, softened through the medium of sorrow. Kindly he thanked the few friends who had come to him, and together upon the arrival of the clergyman they assembled in the front room to fulfill the last request of the departed—that, surrounded by her friends and family, her pastor should offer a prayer, and then in the graveyard by the small church near her home they should lay her at rest.

CHAPTER XVII.

Cameron Outlines His Policy.

The Winter drew on apace. At Laughing Donald's carpenters and workmen had been busily employed within and without the house for weeks. Soon the premises took on a finished look, and the workmen departed as mysteriously as they had come. In the new home, the wife of Laughing Donald presided, directing her servants with that natural grace and dignity which is the certain indication of a lady born. Andy Cameron since his return had not spent a night at his house at The Nole, and now LeClare and Dan also joined the family at Laughing Donald's.

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Soon after the return of Cameron, Bill Blakely and he drove to the county town and to Donald Ban's, the lawyer's. Together they climbed the stairway to the office each had sought before. Bill leading the way.

"Morning to ye, Donald Ban," said Bill, in a voice unusually soft for him. The lawyer asked his callers to be seated. "You know, don't ye," continued Bill, as he clutched his cloth cap, "that I said he'd be back soon,"—nodding toward Cameron, who had seated himself comfortably by the table, apparently having no uneasiness about the outcome of the consultation.

"Yes, Bill," answered Donald Ban. "You have the right stuff in you to make any man proud to be called your friend, and you not only outwitted your old acquaintance, Nick Perkins from The Gore, causing him the most bitter disappointment of his unenviable career, but you performed a service which, at the time, you did for a poor but honest neighbor. We have all understood your motives thoroughly, and in acting for Mr. Cameron, when I return to you the amount of money which you ad-

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vanced to save for him his home and good name, I can truthfully say that with it you have the gratitude of the wealthiest and most distinguished citizen of the County Glen-garry."

Blakely looked from one to the other, not knowing whether he had heard or understood aright. Cameron smiled assuringly as he slapped his old fighting friend upon the shoulder. "Bill," he said, "we will be very busy this Winter and all next Summer, you and I. We will let the waters of the creek flow on to The Gore unmolested. We will let Fraser, the carpenter, go on with his tattling about the neighbors. We will keep them all guessing, Bill. My friend LeClare and I want to see you very soon at Laughing Donald's—and, by the way, Bill, don't mention the remark you heard Donald Ban make about some friend of yours having a little spare money."

Bill looked at Andy with the old mischievous twinkle in his eye, his goatee began to move up and down, and he was in his old time mood again. "Well, Andy," he replied, "they say these lawyers often tell more than the truth,

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but anyhow, when you and your friend run a little short, you know where Bill Blakely lives," and he went out of the door, telling Cameron he could find him at the grocery when he was ready to return.

Cameron and his friend were left to themselves for the first time since their home-coming. His visit to the lawyer was for a twofold purpose: the first, the fulfill the legal requirements necessary in discharging his money obligations to Blakely; that disposed of, he proceeded to lay before the lawyer the plans he intended at once to put into execution.

"Donald Ban, with your approval and under your suggestion, and also urged by necessity, I made the venture against overwhelming odds which fate has seen fit to reward by giving me the possession of a great wealth in gold. You also know that in the obtaining of one coveted means by which I am enabled to relieve the suffering and discomfort of others, I have sacrificed the companionship of her through whom the blessing to accrue from this new-found wealth would have been dispensed; and now that my life has been clouded by sorrow, and

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I shall no longer enjoy the home where together we strove in an atmosphere hallowed by an unselfish love to help carry the burdens of our fellow beings, this same injustice of things—the uncharitableness, the unkindness from those of whom we expect comfort while in reverses, only to be by them the most neglected—has aroused within me emotions that have been the means of bringing before you to-day a different Andy Cameron from the one who before was acting merely by the suggestion of others. My purpose in the future at The Front and in Glengarry will be to see justice charitably dispensed: the weak shall be made strong, and from him at The Gore, who has grown powerful by his artful practices against the unfortunates in our community, I will take and return to them whom he has so oppressively wronged.”

Donald Ban was astonished at the change in the man before him, but he was quick to recognize the genius of a quickly developing brain.

“I presume, Cameron, you have made reference to Nick Perkins, who has been more or less successful in bringing a great deal of un-

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happiness into the families residing in your neighborhood."

"Remarkably true you have guessed, Donald Ban, and as my legal adviser, you are entitled to my confidence in so far as it pertains to the expenditures I have in contemplation at my homestead on The Nole and among some of my neighbors at The Front. Roughly speaking, you have deposited for me in the several banks down in the city three hundred thousand dollars. As nearly as LeClare and myself can figure, that amount represents our individual worth. Donald Ban," continued Cameron, thoughtfully tapping the leathern topped desk at which they sat, "Nick Perkins has extracted from the people of our town at The Front in the neighborhood of thirty thousand dollars. That amount he shall pay back to these same farmers during the present Winter and the coming Summer. With fifty thousand dollars I can erect a mansion upon the site of my farmhouse at The Nole. Upon its completion Nick Perkins will buy this palace. He shall buy it, Donald Ban!"—Cameron banged the table with his clenched fist—"and eighty thou-

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sand dollars will be my price. At that time thirty thousand of the amount will already be in the pockets of the people whom he has harassed for years, and the actual cost of the house you will deposit for me again in the bank from which we will draw for expenses during construction. This much you are to know from me, and I am aware my confidence in you leaves it a secret between us. I will bid you good morning, and thank you, Donald Ban. My home is with Laughing Donald."



CHAPTER XVIII.

The Ice Raft.

The beginning of Winter found Cameron and LeClare comfortably settled in the refitted home of Laughing Donald; and under the gentle yet queenly direction of his wife the members of the new household lived amidst surroundings of comfort and domestic happiness.

In one end of the house a small room with windows looking out upon the great river had been furnished as an office for business. In this room many conferences with strangers to The Front had been held of late, and here LeClare and the architect from the city carefully examined the plans from which would be builded the House of Cariboo. To his friend Cameron had given in charge that part of his

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project which required the experience of one who was familiar with the accompaniments of homes built for beauty of architecture, displaying a refinement of taste; but for himself, as he explained, he wished to reserve the privilege of dispensing among his neighbors the expenditures for materials which could be supplied from their farms while building the mansion as proposed.

In this same little room during the Winter days Cameron and LeClare often visited together. They talked of their plans for the future, of the task before them in the Spring-time, but never of the camp in the Cariboo, nor their returning, which so sadly had been ended. At one of these conferences, on a stormy day of early Winter, as LeClare, seated before the fire in the grate, was reading from a selection of new books he had bought while upon one of his recent trips to the city, he was suddenly interrupted by his friend, who till then had been idly standing, one hand upon the window pane, the other fumbling the watch chain at his vest.

"I have just thought, Edmond," he began,

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"as I have looked out upon this icebound expanse, this great river which for months of the year is the busy highway of so much traffic, that now it is bound, like ourselves, to await the pleasure of the season, inactive, only waiting. Perhaps you may think my deductions commonplace, Edmond; but hear me through. Since the beginning of Glengarry's history there have been, to my knowledge at least, no innovations to disturb the serenity of the established customs of our people, and these customs are few to relate. In the Summer we labor a little and house our crops, that in the Winter we may comfortably live to consume them. The following year, and the years to come, the same highly exciting programme is certain to be followed. For the coming Summer we have provided the diversion of the building of our mansion, but for the lonesome days of our snowbound season we have not provided. Why not advertise our Summer engagement at The Nole, and interest our friends in advance?"

Soon after the conversation held in the library at Laughing Donald's a team hitched

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to a farmer's sled was slowly passing in the roadway. The driver, carefully selecting an opening between the deep snowdrifts piled high on the river embankment, turned his horses abruptly to the left and drove them down the incline and out upon the frozen river. Quickly he dumped the load of cobblestones in a heap upon the snow and ice. Thus returning at intervals of an hour each day, Bill Blakely was engaged throughout the week, till irregular lines of stone heaps covering a considerable area of the river fronting Cameron's house stood as monuments to his labors.

Since Cameron and LeClare had taken up their residence with Laughing Donald speculation over their reported doings was at fever heat in the neighborhood. Fraser, the carpenter, was frequently called on by his friends from The Gore, but his own lack of information concerning Cameron's future plans aroused to a greater curiosity the contingent from the adjoining town, of which Nick Perkins was the acknowledged leader. Still smarting from the humiliating blow over his failure to secure the Cameron homestead,

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Perkins nursed his wrath in silence. A resolve had already formed in his evil mind to pursue even to the finish the destinies of the Camerons at The Front, and already his machinations could be seen at work in the questions he directed at those he met as he drove along the snow-heaped roads. —

It was on a Saturday, and Perkins was on his way to the county town, when he met Bill Blakely coming up into the roadway, after having deposited a load of stones upon the ice. Filled with wonderment at what he saw, he inquired of Bill in his blandest tones what he was drawing the stones for.

"Well, Perkins," replied Bill, "to be truthful with you, it's for a dollar a load I am doing it principally, but another good reason is that Cameron has asked me to do it. If you think you'd like the job, go ask Cameron. They say his credit is good. Even you ought to know that, Mr. Perkins," and Bill passed on without saying good-day to him. Perkins bit his lip and made no reply, but drove on to the village.

Other farmers from the neighborhood soon

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began hauling to the dumping grounds on the river facing the farm at The Nole. Angus Ferguson had hauled to Cameron's ice raft, as he called it, the old stone wall which had for so long disfigured the view in front of his house. Stopping each evening at the little office at Laughing Donald's, he received, like the rest, a dollar a load for the number of trips he had made during the day.

The work of the farmers whom Cameron had seen fit to employ, and who seemed to vie one with another in quickly disposing of the useless materials collected about their farm-yards and disfiguring their homes, progressed so rapidly that ere long whole acres of the frozen river front resembled a congested lumber yard. The fabulous prices paid to them by Cameron for the worthless accumulations of their farm-yards, which he had placed upon the ice to be carried away with the floods in the Spring, caused a storm of comment, the echo of which came over from The Gore in volumes of inquiries.

"Where did Cameron get his money?" they queried. "And why can't we get a share of it

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while it lasts?" For Nick Perkins was heard to remark that "a fool from his money was soon parted."

While the commotion among those engaged in hauling at The Front was still in progress, Bill Blakely and Cameron were paying their respects to certain residents of The Gore. To many of these gentlemen favored by a call Bill was attached by tender recollections of former fistic encounters at the four corners. His welcome, of course, was not always the most cordial, but when Cameron announced very quietly that Mr. Blakely wished to buy a few thousand of their best cedar fence posts at a price which could not be disputed, they soon became more communicative. "Deliver the posts at Mr. Blakely's, beginning to-morrow," said Cameron, continuing without any further parleying: "You will be paid by the hundred. We will drive, Bill," and Cameron was through with the bargaining.

During the next week or two, from his old-time enemies at The Gore, Blakely had purchased for himself, for Angus Ferguson and for Davy Simpson a supply of the best fence

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posts the county could boast. "Enough," as Bill said, "to keep Nick Perkins busy for three months a-countin' them, the next time he found a mortgage due on a Cameron's farm over by the way of The Front."

In all the transactions of Cameron thus far since his return Nick Perkins was able to discover a piercing dart, truly thrown at the hypocrisy of his own career. The subjects he had chosen from among the people upon whom to lavish such expenditures of money were always certain to be those who had either been oppressed by him in the past or else considered themselves his natural enemies. Perkins knew of the housebuilding to commence in the Spring at The Nole, for already Blakely was completing the contract he held to supply the stone for the masonry of the foundation walls. Another fact which galled Perkins to madness was that the farmers who had been kept constantly employed were, in every case, those against whom he himself held a mortgage, and he saw very plainly his prospects for eventually gaining their property daily slipping more surely from his grasp.

The Ice Raft.

The Spring season had now arrived, and up at The Nole a small army of workmen were engaged in removing the buildings which had once been occupied by Cameron as his home. The return of April's hot sun and warm winds had loosened the grip which for months held the icebound river captive between the islands and shore, and suddenly one day, as the workmen had quit for midday lunch, the long-delayed alarm was sounded that the river was breaking up. Down the main boat channel, as far as the eye could see, a forward movement was on. Great squares and chunks of ice lunged and dipped, then plunged forward again like the wheeling and turning of an army of soldiers. Over on the shores of Castle Island mammoth cakes the size of the roofs of the buildings climbed upward till they broke and toppled over by their own weight, crunching and thumping and groaning, till a dull, rumbling noise like the approach of an earthquake could plainly be heard.

Opposite to The Nole, extending in a zig-zag course through the piles of débris, ran gaping cracks in the ice. All the Winter the

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irregular heaps of ugliness which composed the freight on what was now called "Cameron's Charity Raft" had reminded those who passed that way of the original methods employed by one man to relieve the condition of his brother workers. The useless stone heaps served no purpose upon the farms from whence they were taken, and the discarded wagon parts and dilapidated farm implements which Cameron had purchased from his neighbors had served them only as an encumbrance and nuisance. Now they soon would be beyond annoying the sight, and their last opportunity for usefulness had brought joy and peacefulness into many a home along The Front. As the immense ice floe passed almost intact down the channel, beating its way amidst the warring, jamming ice cakes, a ringing cheer, led by old Bill Blakely and joined by the company of workmen, went up for the man who had brought fortune and good cheer into their midst.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LeClare to Prospect in Arcadia.

In the early months of Spring, LeClare was busily engaged with the architects and builders at work upon the mansion at The Nole. He viewed the undertaking from day to day, which for weeks seemed but a shapeless pile of board and scantling; but, as the work progressed, from out the chaos and confusion could be seen the growing outlines of the stately columns and the extending roofs of many gables.

Nature had spread her mantle of green abroad, and from the islands of the Archipelago nearest the shore LeClare saw each evening, as he strolled along The Front, the shadows of the dense foliage mirrored upon

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the placid waters of the river. Then, as the sun sank lower in the west, and in the gathering twilight, as the evening advanced, the boats of the fishermen stole out from their sheltered coves and headed for the spearing grounds away upon the shoals to the southward.

Andy's Dan was little concerned about the building operations going on upon the site of his former abode. He held aloof from the workmen, who were strangers to him, and in his silent, reticent way he resented the intrusion upon the quiet and primitiveness of the neighborhood. In LeClare, however, he had found a congenial companion, and upon several occasions he had confided to his new friend, whom he bound over to secrecy, the exact spot over by the dead channel where he hooked the shining maskinonge as he rowed near the rushes by the deep waters.

At this time in their undertaking LeClare was finished with the details of the work upon the mansion which he had agreed with his friend to superintend. A few days since a beautifully designed river skiff had come up

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from the city, and as Cameron and LeClare stood talking upon the veranda at Laughing Donald's, they could see at a distance of a few boat lengths from the shore Andy's Dan rowing the new craft up and down the channel. Now it flew through the waters in answer to the long, low sweep of the spoon-shaped oars, and now like a race-horse, responding to the spurs in his side, it sprang ahead in quick bounds as the short strokes of the oarsman grappled with the surface of the water. After they had viewed for a time the skill of the aquatic sportsman, LeClare turned to his friend Cameron and thoughtfully said:

"Andy, should you wander over there to the southward, past the islands of the Archipelago and the shoals of the marshes, and then follow the mountain streams up their circuitous windings, you will come at last to their head, the fountain from which continually spring the waters, clear and pure, which unite to form the rivers. Down the course toward the finish of their run sometimes the sparkling clearness of these streams has become changed to a dullness of color by the conditions of the

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country through which they have passed, and their life and transparency are gone. So it must be with the streams of life. At first the waters down which we glide are clear and bright, but later our course perchance may lie through a troubled country, and in the shallows we encounter the snags which wreck our pleasures in passing. For a time we endeavor to clear the stream down which we have been floating by throwing about us on every side that panacea to unhappiness, speculation or adventure. With me, Andy, the fountain of my happiness lies in the direction of the brooks from the mountains. You are at home, and you have been drinking each day of the clear waters from the springs of true life, and now it's my turn. I'm going back, following the stream up to that fountain where my first happiness began. Out there on the river my craft awaits me, and with your Dan and mine we will prospect this time in Arcadia."

CHAPTER XX.

Lucy Visits the Archipelago.

As the best laid plans of man fail often to succeed against the inevitable, so, too, it is often that the intervention of time makes possible what before Fate had willed otherwise.

Lucy Maynard still resided with her parents in the village of Darrington. Her married existence had been punctuated by the fatal illness of her husband, leaving her widowed while yet in the first year of her wedded life. Seeking no new acquaintances, she sweetened the atmosphere of her home, while her presence spread an angelic glow among the circle of her friends. Hers was now a sad, sweet face, illumined by a smile which ever quickly sprang to her lips and as fitfully died away.

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In those large, hopeful eyes, so frankly turned upon you, was a look of sadness, as of a love unrequited.

Early Summer had come again, the schools were closing, and with the returning of friends who had been at colleges in distant cities a flood of sweet recollections of years not so long past came to Lucy.

"It was down the winding Salmon," she mused to herself. "Oh, how well I remember, Edmond at the oars and I in the stern of the boat, trailing my fingers in the water and thinking of the future—yes, that same future which has brought me so much unhappiness already. But it was of my own bringing. Pique and disappointment, they, too, played their share in my short drama. That love which was the cause of urging me on into the bonds that restrained me from turning back again to the object of my only true affection is the same love which now is fanned into a new life as often as the incidents arise which bring back the memories of the past. On the morrow I will indulge my longing. It will be the anniversary of that day when cruel fate

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changed love into foolish resentment, so that we drifted apart, Edmond from me. With Caleb, our old family servant, my confidant, my trusted friend, I will follow the winding Salmon to the same point of land, and there, resting within the basswood grove, as we did on that day, I will look to find again the tree upon which we carved our initials as we sat beneath its shade."

The sun shone bright upon this day in June, and as Caleb rounded the point of land which lay in the shoals by the marshes he looked backward over the shoulder nearest shore, carefully selecting a landing. Lucy the while watched intently a boat pushing out from a bay farther up the shore. A swiftly gliding boat it was, long and set low in the water. Graceful lines swept from the bow, and, touching the waves at the oar-locks, rose again to gently curve into the rudder posts at the stern. Two men were occupants of the boat, which Caleb assured Lucy was new in those waters. The man at the oars bent to his work, and in response to his long, swinging strokes the boat quickly disappeared from sight, passing

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through a line of thin rushes and making for an island across the Schneil Channel.

Lucy appeared strangely affected. Caleb had now beached his skiff in a sheltered cove, and was waiting, after having called to his mistress the second time to step ashore. The man lounging in the boat of the strangers, and guiding at the stern the craft as it stole swiftly away from shore, Lucy followed, held by a strange fascination, till he was lost to view.

Upon Tyno's Point there was a small tavern run for the accommodation of people fishing and hunting thereabouts, and a few cottages were set back from the shore fronting out upon the expanse of water looking toward the north bank of the Archipelago. Caleb went to exchange gossip with the fishermen standing about the shore, while Lucy strolled alone toward the basswood grove.

Still and quiet was everything in Nature. The bright beams of the noonday sun fell in quivering rays across the sight. Out upon the river not a ripple disturbed its glassy surface. From up the Schneil Channel came the chattering noises of a water hen, and the piping of

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snipes, who called from the rush beds farther up the river. Overhead in the trees a pair of golden robins sang as they builded their nest far out on an overhanging limb. The bumblebees hurried past on their way to the blossoming clover patch, and the distant call of a loon came from over the waters. Lucy stood beneath the high branching trees, and in the distance, toward the village of Darrington, she saw the weather-vane of the church steeple glistening in the sun.

"It must be near here," she thought, "Yes, it was at a tree-trunk like the one in yonder clump," and thither she went, trailing her leg-horn hat by the ribbon strings through the tall grasses. Sweet was the picture of grace and beauty left alone with her thoughts of love. "Yes, it was here. Yes, yes, this is the tree, for there are the marks, the initials we cut."

Suddenly she paused in her delight, for she had made another discovery. Some one had been before her. Around the foot of the very tree, and leading away from it toward the river bank, the grass had been recently trampled. Still in her surprise, curiosity led her to follow

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the path through the grass to the shore. There she saw the fresh imprints upon the sand. Immediately she recognized the small bay, whose extending bank had partially concealed the strangers as they rowed away earlier in the day.

A wistful, excited look had come over the childlike face of Lucy. One hand pressed her heaving bosom, while with the other she clung for support to a bending alder tree. Thoughts were in her mind that she dared not entertain—an apprehension that she had but just missed seeing the lover of her childhood, who possibly had returned like a spirit from heaven to renew the anniversary of a time long past, but ever fresh in memory. It was then as she stood, her frail figure swayed to and fro by the flood of passionate recollections, that coming from behind her sounded the voice of Caleb, her protector.

“We will row away by the Schneil Channel, Lucy,” he said, “and, going by the rush banks, touch at the Caristitee Island. The old chief of the tribe of the St. Regis will be glad at our coming, and once more he will say to us

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that he is the friend of the palefaces."

Caleb True lived quietly on in his way, which called for no criticism, aroused no comment, enjoying the while the respect of those who knew him. He might have been the miller, the town gardener or an unassuming deacon in one of the churches, but, as it was, he had lived very long in the family of Lucy's father, tended the garden and cared for the household during the week, and upon the Sunday he proudly officiated as sexton in one of the village churches. To Lucy he had been a second father, and to him in childhood she went for sympathy as she grieved over some fancied injustice done her. Caleb had known the romance of her school days, and he was now in full possession of the innermost thoughts of her soul, although she had not confided to him that the longing of the returned love of her girlhood was driving her forward in a mad desire to discover his whereabouts.

While Caleb chatted with the fishing guides and river men at Tyno's Point he gained the information that for several days past the

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same quickly speeding boat observed by Lucy had passed and re-passed among the islands, going from place to place with a restlessness and uncertainty of route altogether unusual among the frequenters of the perch banks or the haunts of the wily pike. Once they had touched at the Point, but only to inquire of the landlord for a lodging should they wish to return. "Handsome and strong," they said that he was, "and with the air of a city stranger; but again swiftly they glided away, and into the nearest rushes, where soon was hid from them the beautiful skiff of the boatmen, but they saw over the tops of the swaying reeds the heads of the wandering oarsmen as they crossed to the Caristitee, and from there later, as the darkness came upon them, the light of their camp fire shone on the point of the island."

At once Caleb confided to Lucy the hopes which had risen within him, and together they hurried to pursue them. Soon they had crossed the Schneil Channel. Onward they sped, in their haste going through the narrow passes cut by a current of swift running wa-

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ters feeding the expanse of a broad lagoon. Meanwhile Caleb, a poor match for the fleet-winged oarsmen who unconsciously fled away in the distance, was fast exhausting his strength.



CHAPTER XXI.

Under the Initialed Tree.

Coming at last to the island, they saw the remains of a camp fire, and fluttering by the side of the charred rocks Lucy discovered among the ashes the remains of a half-burnt parchment, upon which had been written an address, and still upon the fragment, but discolored, was a name which to Lucy had been lost but never forgotten. To Caleb in breathless haste she ran with the paper.

"Look," she cried, "'tis the name of Le-Clare, of my Edmond! My heart tells me truly, he is here in the lakes of St. Francis. Among the islands of the Archipelago we must go search for him. True love will seek out the path of his wanderings, and before the

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passing of another sun two thirsting spirits shall unite, to wander no more in darkness."

Among the trees on the point of the island, curling upwards in ringlets of blue, rose the smoke from the tepees of the Indians. Old and decrepit, but ever a friend to the white man, their chieftain, Caristitee, sat in the smoke of his camp fire.

"Two suns gone by, my daughter, he sat where you are now reclining, a paleface wearied of rowing, another sad-hearted and restless. At dawn very early they departed. Down past the islands and marshes their boat glides on like a phantom, and only at night are they seen, by the blazing camp fires, as they rest from their endless going."

Lucy listened, her heart filled with sweetness, to the sayings of the good Caristitee. Overhead the skies shed a lustrous light, and out on the waters around them a stillness had come with the darkness. Filled was her heart with sweet dreams of love, and till the dawn of the coming day Lucy slept, her head upon the shoulder of Caleb, not awakening till the sun in the east came up in the midst of Arcadia.

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At this early hour in the hazy light of dawn they saw a column of smoke away on a distant island. Thither they headed their course. Drawing nearer among the cluster of islands, they watched for the camp of the strangers. Quickly the day was passing; no sight had they caught of the boatmen, and Caleb had tired of the rowing. Lucy scanned closely every island in passing, piercing with a searching look the rush banks that lined the channels through which the boat silently glided. Hopefully she encouraged poor Caleb, saying love would reward his exertions and lighten the way of their going. At last they turned their boat homeward, through lakes where myriads of water lilies swayed and dipped with the waves as they came, then reaching the shoals of the Salmon, the sand bars across which they were passing shone white through the clear, limpid waters. 'Soon Caleb, wearied of rowing, threw himself down at last to rest himself upon the banks of the Point of old Tyno.

Restless, still following her heart's longing, Lucy sought out again the grove and the

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tree where before she had missed her lover by only a minute too late. In a moment of passionate abandon she threw herself at the foot of the tree, held by memories strong, so closely were they linked with the past.

Into the same bay, coming nearer, ever nearer, darted the boat which moved so swiftly, urged on its course by the sinewy arms of the oarsman. Lightly from the seat in the stern sprang the athletic figure of the stranger. Hurriedly he looked about the shore, then leisurely sauntered toward the grove, where upon another day he had come and gone so mysteriously. Not far had he been when before him he saw, extended at the foot of a basswood tree, the figure of a girlish maiden. One arm encircled the tree trunk, while the other lay limp at her side.

At a respectful distance stood the stranger. "She is asleep—it is Lucy," he stammered, "and under this tree! What can it mean? Lucy, I love you! My darling! why can't I tell it you now?" he exclaimed, and unconsciously he outstretched his arms.

By the angel of love she had been awakened

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and told that her lover was near. In an instant his manly form was before her. "It is I, Lucy. Be not afraid, but first tell me, why are you here?"

"I am free, Edmond," she cried, "and I love you, and I came here to tell it alone, that I should wait for you now and forever." With a great flood of joy, Edmond clasped to the heart his Lucy. Then they knelt as on that day of yore, and the stroke which then was omitted now they cut in the frame on the tree.



CHAPTER XXII.

The Mystery of the Corner Stones.

Blakely, with the neighbors whom he employed, had completed the excavations for the foundation walls and hauled the stone and mortar in readiness for the masons. Four squares of granite had been drawn to The Nole from the railroad station, and it was whispered among the workmen that their employer would personally direct the setting of the corner stones.

For several days, four of the master masons were engaged in carefully cutting into the center of each of the squares of granite a bowl-shaped cavity. Cameron, who had usually busied himself in other things which kept him away from The Nole, came frequently now to

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inspect the mysterious hollows being made in the granite boulders.

Soon the work of the masons was completed; then by the aid of crane and derrick, they lowered into position the corner stones just as the hour arrived for labor to cease. Cameron remained till the last man had gone, examining the granite blocks, which he found were placed securely in position, resting upon their cement foundation.

Next morning when the men came to resume work, they saw two others there before them, Cameron and the tall, erect figure of Donald Ban, his lawyer friend. The wonder at finding their employer so early at the works was quickly followed by a second surprise, more startling than the first. The cavities in the corner stones had been filled during the night and a layer of cement covered the tops of the hollow openings and was spread evenly with the surface of the granite rock.

"Lay the wall, men," Cameron ordered in his calm, inflexible voice. "We wish to remain here till the corner stones have been walled under."

The Mystery of the Corner Stones.

At noon hour the burden of the discussion among the assembled laborers was to ascribe a reason for Cameron and the lawyer being among them in the morning. In the midst of the debate, an exclamation of delight came from one of their number, who had been apart from his fellows in the basement, and he held up to view a ten-dollar gold piece he had found in the dirt at his feet. Immediately a mad hunt was in progress around the foundation walls, and particularly at the corner stones. Other gold pieces were discovered, and among them a twenty-dollar gold piece was taken from the miniature gold diggings.

When the excitement had abated somewhat, the foreman of the gang of laborers, with a wise and important look on his face, the while assuming a dramatic pose, pointed to the corner stones, and in tragic tones, he said: "Boys, they are full of 'em!" and a quiet akin to that resting over a haunted house fell upon the superstitious laborers.

The trick had worked well, for very soon the whole county would hear that their mysteri-

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ous neighbor had buried a fortune in gold in each corner stone of the House of Cariboo. Cameron quickly heard of the gold finds made up at the works at The Nole and he smiled with great pleasure when he thought of the look of blank despair which would come over the face of Nick Perkins, on his finding that the worthless bits of scrap iron which filled the cavities of the four corners of the mansion were all that represented the vast sums in gold that he imagined reposed in the foundation walls of his purchase.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Fraser Confers with Perkins.

The eccentric methods which Cameron had employed since his return to The Front had put the people of Glengarry into a state of excitement and wild speculation, which was greatly interfering with the wonted quiet and decorum of its peaceably inclined citizens. While the House of Cariboo, as it was now generally called, neared completion, and the majestic columns which supported the high arched domes of its rotunda stood out in bold relief against the scaffolding surrounding the unfinished parts, extravagant reports were being circulated abroad in Glengarry, even

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teaching to the distant city, of the enormous expenditures made by Cameron on the mansion he was about to occupy.

As the undertakings of Cameron assumed form, and the motive for many of his peculiar trades with his neighbors became apparent, another individual of whom we have frequently spoken also began to figure conspicuously before the people of the county.

The purposes of Nick Perkins for the past few months had suffered so many humiliating defeats before his constituents at The Gore and his enemies at The Front, that even his sympathizers and old time henchmen of his town, of late had shunned meeting him as he went about at his home. Every note and mortgage which he held against the farmers and neighbors of the two towns had been paid back to him with interest to date, and in every case the proceeds had come to his debtors through the liberal wages paid by Cameron for work upon the undertakings he had put under way. Thirty thousand dollars had been paid out for various kinds of work done, either directly by Cameron, or through his friends, Blakely,

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Simpson or Ferguson. Happiness reigned supreme in the families of the two towns, and each neighbor felt that he could look the other full in the face with a frankness which meant freedom from the depressing coils of debt.

Perkins, they said, could no longer impose himself upon them. His money-getting, money-lending and hypocritical pose among the people of the two towns would no longer be tolerated. By Cameron, the man whom he had sought so diligently to enclose in his net, he had been thrown from his pedestal of deceit, and at present he was the object of ridicule throughout the county.

William Fraser, the carpenter, still continued to employ himself in the capacity of the official gossip of Glengarry, but the interested listeners among his neighbors who would bid him welcome had become so few that like his patron, Nick Perkins, he found the vocation which once had placed him in popular demand, was at present in rank disfavor. His neighbors had remarked that even though great activity was apparent in the building trades at The Front, Fraser remained unemployed. Bill Blakely

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sarcastically queried of him one day, as a number of men of a like occupation from an adjoining town stood about the door to Davy Simpson's busy forge, "Whether he didn't think that in balancing on the top rail, speculating on the return of Cameron from the gold fields, he had jumped off upon the wrong side of the fence? Of course," Bill added with a chuckle as his goatee moved up and down, "you had the hull county with you, for Perkins had jumped the same way before you."

As near as could be observed, the shrine to which Fraser had come with his troubles, and the confession of the failure of his accomplishments to charm as of yore his susceptible hearers, was the Court of Perkins. Deserted as he knew it to be, nevertheless here we find him come again, but this time a smile, a grin, covered his face, for he had a choice bit of gossip for Perkins—a pretty little ambush arranged by Cameron into which Fraser and Perkins fell without the least suspicion. Perkins bade his caller welcome, and in his usual cringing, insinuating manner, noiselessly sliding in his peculiar gait about the room, he finally sat

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down on the edge of his chair, tipping it forward.

"Mr. Perkins," he said, rubbing his hands together in glee, "our time has come. It's all up with Cameron. Just as you said, Mr. Perkins, just as you always said, a fool from his money is easy to part, and that's what it's come to now, and I come right over to tell you, Mr. Perkins, for I knew they would have to come to you yet."

Meanwhile Perkins drew a chair to the centre of the room and seated himself before his caller. Every movement he made showed the intense interest Fraser had aroused. "Is it something about Cameron's finances giving out, you have heard, Fraser, or is it something else we both ought to know? We are alone in this, Fraser—alone, you understand."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Perkins," eagerly replied the tattling carpenter. "I heard it by a mere chance. Why, they don't think I know a word about it. You see," he went on, leaning farther forward toward his eager listener, "I heard that some mouldings for the new house were coming up from the city last night, and I

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thought I would go back to the station and see what they looked like. Well, a couple of tall city men got off the train, and while I was looking over the cabinet work which come up to the station, one of them comes over and reads the tag on the bundles, and says he to the other one, 'Well, here is some more of our firm's stuff sent up for this job of Cameron's, but I guess we will cabbage this lot,' says he, 'till we see the color of his money for what he's already put into that house,' and the other chap up and says, 'The best thing we can do is to get this man Cameron to consent to a public sale of this house to satisfy the claims of his creditors. There will be no one here except a few of the largest creditors who will have money enough to bid on the property, and some one of us will get a beautiful house cheap. We can keep this thing quiet, and there will be at least thirty thousand dollars to divide up between us.'

"Where did they go?" asked Perkins, eagerly.

"Well, they come over to The Front in one of Cameron's wagons and the last I see of them

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was down by Laughing Donald's. They weren't there this morning, so I guess they went up to the town last night."



CHAPTER XXIV.

Perkins Again Outwitted.

For several minutes after Fraser the carpenter had finished telling his story, Perkins was silent. From force of habit he ran his fingers upward through the scant growth of reddish side whiskers upon his face, and by the changes in expression passing continually over his countenance, Fraser was aware that the information he brought had greatly interested him.

"There can be no doubt, I suppose, Fraser," began Perkins, very slowly pronouncing his words, "about there being a large amount of gold deposited in the foundations of the house?"

"There is no doubt of it, Mr. Perkins,"

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eagerly answered Fraser, again tipping forward upon the front legs of the chair. "Cameron didn't want it known, you see, but it's the gold pieces they lost in the cellar that spoiled his plan, and now it seems he isn't worth the half he thought he was."

"That's it, Fraser, about as I thought it would be," continued Perkins, well satisfied with the turn Cameron's affairs seemed to have taken. "His gold that he brought back from the Cariboo Mountains has not turned out at the government mint to be near what he thought, so his creditors in the city are going to close in on him quick and get what they can. That's about the case as I see it, Fraser, and I think our turn has come, just as you have said. Oh, by the way, Fraser," as if suddenly recollecting, "where is the young friend of Cameron—LeClare—the city chap who came back with him?"

"Oh, he's gone.. Went away to see his people, they say over at The Front, but I guess he's a wise one, eh, Perkins? Saw what was coming and got out in time."

"It has been pretty rough sailing for us,

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Fraser, since Cameron returned, and although I have gotten back through him from the farmers around here over thirty thousand dollars, yet I am poorer by not being able to let the loans rest. You understand?"

"Yes, I see, Mr. Perkins. Bill Blakely says you have lost fifty thousand by being beat out on foreclosing, and they all seem to be laughing about it."

"Yes, and they think they had a big joke on you and me, eh, Fraser? Well, now we will see who will laugh loudest and the last."

With this last thrust Perkins bounded up, and hurrying to the door in his waddling gait, he shaded his eyes with his hands and scanned the cloudless sky. Turning again to Fraser, he said: "I will have that Cameron house before the week is out. My reputation has been hurt by Cameron. My business is gone, and he has made me a joke for the whole county. Now I'll turn the laugh on him. I will go up to the county clerk at once, and if there have been arrangements made for a sale of the property or a transfer to his creditors, I will soon know it. Now you go back to

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The Front, Fraser, and find out what you can. I will meet you at the four corners on my return."

The twilight of the June evening had faded into the darkness of night and Fraser still waited by the door to his shop. Presently a familiar rattle of the wheels of an approaching wagon announced the coming of Perkins. Fraser advanced from the door of his carpenter shop and met the tardy Perkins in the road.

"Ah, good evening, Fraser," began the money lender in his blandest tones, and Fraser knew his trip to the county town had placed him in possession of favorable facts concerning the supposed financial embarrassment of Cameron. "Anything new, Fraser?"

"Nothing much, Mr. Perkins, but more strangers were hanging about The Nole today. I couldn't get near enough to hear what was up. They looked over the new house and then went down the road to Laughing Donald's. They are staying there to-night."

"Very good, very good, Fraser. Now about LeClare. Have you seen him, or do you know where he is?"

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"I don't know exactly, Mr. Perkins, but I am told that Andy's Dan is away with him."

"There is a doubt there, Fraser, the only weak spot in our scheme. Up at the county seat I see where they have arranged for a quick sale. They were to do it on the quiet. They have advertised according to law, and with the consent of Cameron's lawyer, Donald Ban, the city creditors are to meet at The Nole, and by an arrangement among themselves, will bid in the house, and just enough to cover current bills on hand. Now Cameron is in a pinch. They have sprung this thing on him suddenly. He can't locate his friend LeClare, and these city chaps are after his house at half the cost. Here is our plan, Fraser. Say not a word of what we know. The sale is on Thursday at ten in the morning. This is Tuesday. I want the house. These men from the city want about thirty thousand between them as their share of their slick game. I can afford to overbid that amount because it is in the foundation and they don't know it. I have found that a receipt is on file in the government mint down in

Perkins Again Outwitted.

the city, that this amount was drawn out by Cameron and we have evidence that it was placed there. It is a sure thing, Fraser, that I get Cameron's house Thursday morning. His only hope is that his friend LeClare may turn up before the sale. You must be careful and quiet, Fraser, and leave the rest to me. I will meet you at The Nole Thursday morning a few minutes only before ten."

They bade each other a half-whispered good night, but as their shadows retreated in the darkness, another dark object jumped up out of the ditch at the opposite side of the roadway. It was the figure of a man, cloth cap in hand, who, waiting only long enough to take an enormous chew out of a plug of tobacco, then sauntered at a safe distance from the others down the roadway, past the store, the cheese factory, and on toward home.

CHAPTER XXV.

Donald Ban at The Front.

Meanwhile, at Laughing Donald's, Cameron had carefully concealed the accomplices he had brought up from the city to aid him in fulfilling the most delicate part of his whole undertaking. Through Bill Blakely he knew positively of the moves to be made by Perkins that morning at the sale, and further, he had arranged with LeClare, who, accompanied by Andy's Dan, was spending the night upon the accommodating banks of Castle Island, opposite The Front in the Archipelago about a quarter of a mile distant from the mainland. By a signal from Blakely, displayed at The Nole, LeClare was to pull over in haste to The Front or remain where he was till the sale had been completed.





As the hour of the sale approached, they assembled at the east end of the broad veranda.

Donald Ban at The Front.

Thursday morning had arrived and the strangers from the city, representing the supposed creditors who had forced Cameron into premature bankruptcy, were roaming at large over the House of Cariboo. Then as the hour of the sale approached, they assembled at the east end of the broad veranda, from whence an uninterrupted view of the river and islands of the expanse of the Lake St. Francis stretches away to the eastward.

Gathered about the house and standing in groups around the veranda were the workmen who were still engaged at The Nole. They talked in a hushed undertone, and as Cameron and the tall, erect figure of Donald Ban came slowly up the hill, the hum of their voices died away entirely. A few of the near neighbors were present, and as Donald Ban, who was to act as the referee agreed upon by both sides, took up his position upon the veranda, he saw nearing the outskirts of the assembled group our worthy friend Nicholas Perkins and his companion Fraser, the carpenter. Mr. Cameron had selected an inconspicuous place from where he could easily witness the proceedings.

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without himself being too much in evidence.

Baring his head, beginning his introductory remarks, Donald Ban spoke quietly: "Gentlemen, neighbors, and friends:—I am here before you in the capacity of my profession as a lawyer. I am here also as the confidant of one of the most interested parties to this proceeding, and I am also come to see justice fairly dispensed. We in Glengarry are more familiar with the circumstances which have led up to the building of this magnificent structure, than those among us who are recently come from a distant city. The motives which my worthy friend Cameron may have had in mind while rearing before the public gaze this house of stately proportions, he has succeeded pretty well in keeping to himself. However unfortunate and disappointing the termination of his project may seem, we, who have carefully watched the workings of the heart which has dictated the directions in which these expenditures have gone, must easily have discovered the philanthropic intent of Mr. Cameron, who has been to us the greatest benefactor our

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county has ever known. Now, gentlemen, the facts I have the honor to put before you this morning I hope will inspire within you the spirit of fairness and of charity toward a brother. I am authorized to sell this house to the highest bidder. For the benefit of those wishing to bid I will read the following inventory: For material, labor, trucking, etc., expended in Glengarry for the constructing of this house, and which has been paid, thirty thousand dollars. For fixtures, decorating and furnishing, forty thousand dollars. One-half of this amount has also been paid. You will readily see, gentlemen, that Cameron has a paid-up equity of fifty thousand dollars in this property, and you are easily secured on the twenty thousand dollars unpaid amount, and we hope your bidding will indicate that you have this fact in mind. Now, what is your first bid?"

"Forty thousand," came in a clear set voice from the centre of a group of strangers on the left, and a stillness settled upon the group of men surrounding the lawyer. As soon as Donald Ban had allowed sufficient time to pass in which to recover naturally from what ought to

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seem an unexpectedly high offer, he continued: "It is to be presumed, gentlemen, that a figure covering the indebtedness of the individual firms which you represent should satisfy your employers."

"Fifty thousand," yelled the man with the high silk hat standing over in the midst of an excited group, and Perkins again drew up his shoulders as at the first bid and moved out to the edge of interested bidders. Almost immediately another bid was recorded, a new contestor with a sixty thousand offer, and Perkins looked badly discouraged, for he pulled his side whiskers continually. Then sixty-five and seventy, and seventy-five thousand were finally recorded from the same three strangers, and the bidding seemed to be over. A slight commotion in the neighborhood of Perkins was noticed by Donald Ban, and inclining his head in his direction, the lawyer forced out his first bid, making it now seventy-six thousand. An excited movement was noticeable throughout the assembled company. Donald Ban repeated the offer, and while the crowd surged about the money lender, Donald Ban added a few re-

Donald Ban at The Front.

marks to stimulate the interest already at the snapping tension.

"Gentlemen, to those of us who know, this property is exceedingly cheap at eighty thousand dollars." Perkins and Fraser had caught at once the trend of Donald Ban's remarks, and they feared the disclosure of the contents of the corner stones. "Another unfortunate happening at this time is the absence from The Front of the former partner and friend of Mr. Cameron, whose presence here would be an assurance of this house never passing under the hammer for less than a hundred thousand." Another thousand was added by the man wearing the high silk hat. Seventy-eight quickly followed from his rival bidder, and the lawyer turned again to Perkins.

At that instant Fraser had pushed quickly through the crowd and whispered something in the ear of Perkins. Blakely had displayed the signal, and coming across the Channel, speeding on toward The Nole, was seen the long, low, swiftly-going boat of LeClare making straight for the landing.

"Eighty thousand, gentlemen, we must have.

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Who says the price, and the house goes to him!"

"I do," came in a defiant voice, and Perkins pranced into the space about the end of the veranda where stood Donald Ban, and the crowd fell back from him in awe. "Here's your deposit, and I'll sign the bill of sale at once. Now then, who is there here to oppose Nicholas Perkins again at The Front?" He turned with this challenge to survey the crowd, and for his answer he met a chill of distrust which struck at the very vitals of life, for he saw there, smilingly before him, standing shoulder to shoulder, as if greatly pleased at the outcome of the sale, his tormentors, Blake-ly, Cameron and LeClare.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Cameron's Task Completed.

No sooner had the lawyers completed the legal details for the transfer of the House of Cariboo to the purchaser, Nick Perkins, than rumors were afloat that all was not as it seemed about Cameron's having to sell the mansion to satisfy his creditors. Strange, if it were so, mused Fraser the carpenter, for the day following the sale he saw from his wheelwright's place the strangers from the city grouped before the door of the smithy, around Bill Blakely and Laughing Donald. The jesting and laughter which he could plainly hear were joined in by Blakely and even Davy Simpson, who left his blazing forge to appear at the door of the shop to witness the pleasure of his friends.

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A feeling of uneasiness took possession of the little undersized carpenter, and he drew back from the door and shuffled around among the shavings upon the floor of his workshop. Fear and apprehension had closed in around him so surely that there was no chance of evading the awful certainty of the truth that Perkins had been most artistically duped, and that he had been the one through whom the scheme was so successfully worked. Nick Perkins had acted entirely upon the information he had carried to him, and now as he looked through the dimmed window panes of his workshop and recognized the same men who had so flippantly discussed the affairs of Cameron back from The Front at the station, the extent of the humiliation and expense he had forced upon Perkins, and the extreme satisfaction he had given his enemies, dawned unmercifully upon him.

Again he squirmed in his peculiar sliding fashion around the extent of his place. Stopping at the carpenter's bench, he took up his plane and tried to forget his predicament in violent muscular exertions. Soon a knock came

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at the door. At first he paid no attention to it, thinking Bill Blakely had come over to poke fun at him in his very provoking manner. Another knock followed, and the door opened to admit the short, officious personage of Perkins. At sight of his caller, Fraser collapsed into a frightened, shrinking heap, sorrowful to see. Slamming to the door, Perkins glared at the cringing object before him.

"A nice mess you have made of it, Fraser! It's a wonder you were not in the trick with the rest of them, but they wanted you where you were to do just what you have done—to ruin me, to put every dollar I am worth in the world into that useless house, a monument to Cameron. Every dollar I ever made in the county I have given to Cameron, and he has paid it back to the same people I got it from. The entire cost of that house is not more than fifty thousand. I have paid that back to Cameron. He did not owe a cent to those people you said were representing his creditors in the city, and what is more, I am satisfied now that the talk of the gold in the corner stones is a hoax, like all the rest put up by Cameron to

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use me in carrying out his philanthropy, which has not cost him a dollar. Yet he has the glory, while I am ridiculed!"

Poor Fraser, confronted by such a terrible arraignment of what he knew to be facts, was utterly confounded. He made no answer, but as Perkins turned in resentment and disgust to go, Fraser, in a weak, thin voice, like a wail of despair, said: "I thought I was doing you a service, Mr. Perkins." Again Perkins turned, but with a look of dark hatred and disgust cast in his direction, he went out, slamming the door to after him.

* * * * *

It was possibly a week, or ten days later when Cameron and LeClare stood again upon the veranda at Laughing Donald's. Andy's Dan awaited his passenger at the boat landing for the leave taking of the two friends.

"Lucy and I will expect you, Andy," earnestly pleaded LeClare. "With you present we shall want for nothing to make our wedding a union of complete happiness."

Mr. Cameron grasped the extended hand of his faithful associate and friend, saying in his

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quiet, determined way, "LeClare, we have faced disappointment together, we have endured hardships of a kind to test the merits of our friendship many times before. Defeat we have never acknowledged; sorrow we have borne together side by side in the valley of death. Success and wealth are ours, and happiness, sweetest happiness, Edmond, is yours. Wherever I may be at the call of your wedding bells I will go to add one more good wish for a long journey of life and joy to you."

At another conference held in the office of Donald Ban, Mr. Cameron had told of his plans for the future. Addressing his friend the lawyer, he had said: "My mission at The Front is finished. The death of Barbara has been avenged. The hypocrites, her tormentors, have been brought very low, the weak are much stronger in person, and justice at last has prevailed. I ask for no thanks or recognition but from our children in Arcadia; in the generations to come may they look awe-inspired as they pass the strange mansion, and be mindful of the moral which was taught when we builded the House of Cariboo."

THE GROWING MASKINONGE



It was Sunday morning at the "Point." And over across the bay the last of the phantoms in "Ghost Hollow" had crept up the lampless posts of the walk through "Spook Grove," and, vaulting in an uncanny way, reached cover in the branches of the birch trees that were thickly clustered around the cottages lining "Spirit Lane" west to the bowling alley. It was through "Ghost Hollow" that the cottagers living to the westward passed while going to and returning from the boat landing and the hotel over at the Point.

At the misty dawn on this Sunday morning the forlorn spectres of the spirits which frequented the small bay were stalking from the water, answering from the hidden abode

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among the dark cottages of the lane the homing call of the doleful strains of a "chélla." In obedience to their spirit queen they waded wearily through the rushes and ferns upon the bank; borne by the receding shades of darkness, they sought their resting places under the rafters and the eaves of the gruesome roof of the bowling alley, which crouched along by the vine-covered wall at the brow of the hill. It was then an Indian, from the tribe of St. Regis, on the mainland, stole unnoticed upon the scene and beached his canoe upon the east shore of the bay. He looked about for signs of the awakening day, then stealthily he dropped on his knees, and from beneath a covering in the bow of his "dug-out" dragged up upon the bank a forty-pound maskinonge.

"Hi! hi!" he cackled in the weird voice of his race. "Hotel man like much Injun." Then disappearing to the rear of the out buildings, life to him soon became brighter by visions of "fire water" and a warm breakfast—he had sold the fish.

There was an ominous quiet hanging upon the early sunlight. The suppressed calm was

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something greater than that inspired by the sight of a few devout people starting out upon the yacht for early mass. The guests were appearing singly upon the broad verandas of the hotel. Each in turn as he appeared seemed possessed of the same apprehension, a nervousness of manner. The sleep of this Sunday morning was the closing of a week of wild and reckless dissipation among the guests. Such intense excitement at the island had not been experienced in many summers. From the wharf of the castle across the bay at the other side of "Ghost Hollow" the gramophone had sung "coon songs" and recited at length for several evenings in succession, and a music box in the main corridor of the hotel had given a continuous performance from twelve to twelve, till the nerves of the martyred guests had reached a state fit to be recited in a patent medicine advertisement.

"What's that I don't know, a big fish?" And Mr. Hot Water, dressed in his new bicycle suit, strode excitedly a few steps forward on the veranda, then backed up, balanced himself and side-stepped a little to get a fresh start. Then

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he came on again, with his meerschaum pipe tightly grasped in his right hand.

"By Gum! That's a terror. If it isn't a pickerel it's a maskinonge. It's either one, anyway, if it isn't a maskinonge. Who caught it?" Then he looked at the three individuals before him for the first time. What he saw made him change the meerschaum quickly from the right to the left hand, and then he blinked his eyes till recalled by Mr. Du Ponté. When Mr. Hot Water (a regular patron of the hotel, known to be threatened musically, and also as a local weather authority) comprehended the outfit before him he saw a large fish, of the maskinonge family, strung on an inch pole suspended between two trees eight feet apart. He saw, also, three of his fellow guests at the Point strangely arrayed before him, one dressed in white duck trousers, with a red silk scarf tightly knotted above the knee, another with hand and fore-arm wound with linen handkerchiefs and hung in a sling across his breast, while the third, Mr. Du Ponté, was, aside from his loquaciousness, apparently in his normal condition. i. e., he had escaped from the

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terrible catastrophe that had overtaken his friends with no severe injuries to his person.

Mr. Hot Water, being somewhat of a "sport" himself, was led to inquire for the particulars of the landing of the large fish. After stepping cautiously around the group for a few minutes, he placed the meerschaum between his teeth again and began to mutter questions which showed him to be in a credulous state of mind. "By Gum! I don't know, by Gum! Now, I have been here, and I've been down to my club fishin', fishin'; I've been down to Kitskees Island, too. That's right. My guide—my guide rowed me down there and all the way back, too. I had out a thousand feet of line, but I never caught anything like that." He looked cunningly out of the corner of his eye toward Mr. Du Ponté and inquired again what the fish weighed. Three other guests filled with curiosity had now joined the group, and Ponté began to explain.

"Fifty-seven pounds is the weight of this fish. He has just been weighed in the ice-house around there back of the hotel, near the landing." (Thirty-seven pounds had been the

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original quotation.) "You see, Mr. Hot Water, this is no ordinary maskinonge. Take, for instance, the back extension from shoulder to shoulder, which denotes a terrible propelling force, and then if you notice these spots (pointing with a twig he had cut for the purpose) they are not the marks of a common fish. This 'ere fish was a leader of his tribe; a king, so to speak, among his fellows."

"Perhaps he's a 'King Fish'," suggested Mr. Hot Water, with apparent concern, at the same time winking both eyes at the "cottager" with the red handkerchief tied about the trousers at the knee.

"No," returned Du Ponté; "we have looked him up and we find that having those spots, and the second bicuspid tooth being black, prove him to be a regular 'King Filipino' maskinonge."

"By Gum! that's funny—I wonder how he got here. Must have followed the 'line boat' up the Suez Canal, I guess, or p'raps he didn't. He must weigh more than fifty-seven pounds—though I don't know. I guess not, though those fish grow, those Filipino fish grow very

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fast. They say they do, though I couldn't say myself. I should think he would weigh more, though, being a king. Here's Mr. Mac, he ought to know a 'King Filipino,' he goes to the market every day," continued Mr. Hot Water. Again he blinked both eyes at the "cottager" with the red handkerchief about the knee, and the laugh didn't seem to be on Mr. Hot Water.

Mr. Mac was another weekly visitor at the Island, spending the half holiday about the rush beds and channels in quest of the sly "Wall Eye." For many seasons he had been doing this sort of thing. The distinguishing mark of the pickerel, the pike and the maskinonge were as familiar to him as were the quotations on the Exchange, upon which he was an active operator six days of the week. The responsibility of Mac's habit of listening courteously to what a fellow had to say, for the time carefully concealing his final verdict, dates back for its origin to the conservative atmosphere of old Glengarry County, where he had spent the days of his boyhood.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Mr. Mac,

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in a slow, deliberate voice, slightly pitched, as he reached the inner circle surrounding the fish suspended between the two small hickory trees. The peak of his blue yachting cap was pulled well down over his nose, which shielded from the principals in the "fish game" the twinkle in the eye which would have been the only clue detectable upon his imperturbable features to indicate his belief, skeptical or otherwise, concerning the proceedings. "Well, now, that is a pretty good morning's catch, that one fish is. Where did you get him, might I ask?" and Mac raised his head slowly backward till his eyes from under the shield of his cap rested on the level of the faces of the three bandaged principals guarding the fish. "Must have had some trouble, too, in landing him," and he indicated with an inclination of the yachting cap toward the red bandage around the white duck trousers at the knee of the "cottager."

"Yes," quickly responded Du Ponté. "I hooked him on a small perch line out there," indicating the spot near shore, "in front of my friend's cottage, not more than three rods from shore. He can tell you"—nodding to the "cot-

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tager"—"he saw me from his gallery, which is over the small dock near where I was fishing, throw the pole overboard and heard me shout for help. Now, friend," nodding to the man with the wounded limb, "tell Mr. Mac how we got him ashore."

"There isn't much to say about what we did," began the "cottager," "but it's what the fish did to us. Look at Ribbon Gibbon! His hand lacerated to the wrist; Du Ponté, here, with a dislocated shoulder, while I have a jagged wound at the knee." Mac viewed them as requested, his features at the time screwed up as though a bright sunlight were shining on his face.

"I had just finished dressing," the "cottager" continued. "and had stepped out on the balcony to see what the weather was to be, before I went into the tower to run up the flag. Then it was I saw Du Ponté at his regular trick of fishing the perch bank dry before anybody else was up and stirring. The next instant I heard a despairing yell, and, looking in the direction from whence it came, I saw Du Ponté making frantic efforts to raise the stone anchor to his

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boat, and calling at the same time for help to capture his fishing pole, which was making down stream in a zig-zag course at lightning speed. As I watched the pole it came, now and then, to the surface. I saw that its mysterious kidnapper was making for the small bay which lay where you see, there, between my cottage and the hotel here. An idea seized me, and, with swiftness born only of excitement, I sped down the stairs, out into the roadway which leads through 'Ghost Hollow,' shouting as I ran to Ribbon Gibbon, who had just emerged from the hotel, to meet me at the bend of the bay in 'Ghost Hollow.'

"'Who's drowning?'" said Ribbon:

"'Nobody,'" said I, all out of breath with excitement: 'Du Ponté has hooked a sturgeon, and he made off into the bay here with his pole and line. Look!' says I. 'There it goes again,' and the bamboo pole shot inward a couple of rods nearer shore. Ribbon saw the pole this time, and we set out together to capture the fish.

"'Let's take that boat lying over there on the other shore,'" said he, and we made a run

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for it. I jumped at once into the boat in my haste to reach the runaways, but Ribbon stopped to push off from the rocks. I lost my balance and fell over the sharp end of the oarlock, and that's how I cut my leg. Before I had got righted up again I heard a terrible splashing, and, looking over the end of the boat into the bay, I saw Ribbon with an oar striking wildly at something in the water, a boat length from shore. 'We've got him, we've got him!' he wailed, hysterically, but suddenly losing his footing he fell full length upon the monster as he lay struggling to free himself from the maze of twisted fishlines with which he found himself securely tied. Immediately a cry of pain came from the water, and Ribbon held up a bleeding hand. In his fall he had encountered the sharp teeth of the fish you see here before you in full view."

At this point in the narrative Ribbon groaned, and, holding his injured arm at the elbow, turned slowly away. "Stunned by the beating he had received from Ribbon with the oar," continued the "cottager." "and exhausted by his efforts to free himself from the coils of

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the line, Mr. Fish gave up the struggle, and with the aid of Ponté, who had now reached the shore, we rolled him up upon the beach. We have weighed him over at the ice-house, and he tips the scales at exactly eighty-seven pounds and one-quarter."

The "cottager" then limped to the side of Du Ponté, Ribbon Gibbon edged up beside the "cottager," then Mac, after placing his thumbs in the sleeve-holes of his vest and elevating his head till his eyes had a chance from under the peak of his cap, a cunning smile o'erspreading his face, spoke quietly and deliberately.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "it is remarkable, and only that I have the honor of knowing you three chaps, and know you to be absolutely truthful, I might say to you that you are the best trio of liars I have ever met." Then he made a catlike grin at the "cottager," and, keeping his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest, he turned and sauntered out of the group.

The number of people who now stood gaping with undisguised wonder pictured on their faces edged in closer, forming a compact circle surrounding the terrible monster of the deep,

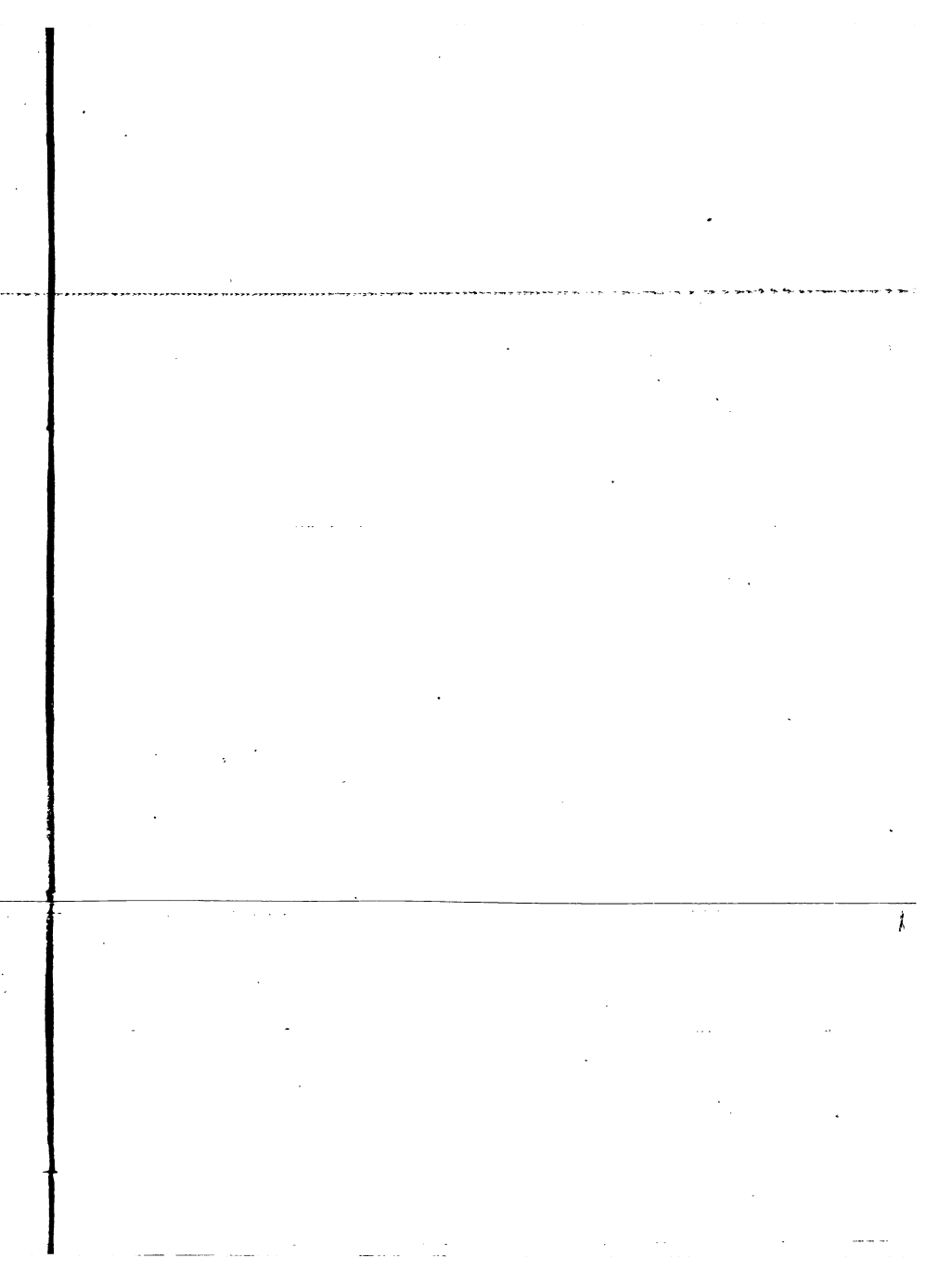
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and viewing the disabled subjects of his vicious attack.

Du Ponté was about to order the fish returned to the ice-house, when he espied emerging from the doorway of the stairs leading to the sleeping apartments in the annex the tall, graceful figure of Harry Weiner Sneitzel. "Here is a rare chance," thought Du Ponté to himself. "Why, boys," in an undertone, aside, "the fun is only beginning; now, Ribbon, it's your turn. Give it to him good."

Harry Weiner Sneitzel was a general favorite at the "Point." He was endowed with a liberal share of good looks, a fine form, with graceful movements, and possessed of a rare interpretation of what a courteous manner should be. His bearing, too, was further dignified by a three years' course at a medical college. When Harry stepped out upon the gravel walk in front of the hotel that Sunday morning, his white canvas shoes shining with a fresh coat of pipe clay, and his tall, erect figure swaying to his easy strides, he truly looked "a winner."

As he turned toward the group surrounding





...Well, it's pretty bad," said Du Ponté, "but Ribbon needs you the worst of any of us."

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the suspended fish and saw his friends in such evident distress, he hastened his steps in their direction. An expression of deep sympathy and concern had o'erspread his classic features, and he elbowed himself quickly to the side of his companions. "By Jove, old man, it's pretty tough! Where have you been?" Ribbon was speaking in an accusing tone, holding his bandaged arm tenderly to his breast. Harry quickly looked from Du Ponté to the "cot-tager" for an explanation. "Well, it's pretty bad," said Du Ponté, "but Ribbon needs you the worst of any of us; his hand is in a bad shape." "Oh, you don't tell me!" replied Harry, sorrowfully. "Can I do anything for you?" he eagerly inquired.

"By Jove, old chap," went on Ribbon, with apparent difficulty. "I thought you had gone away last night on the 'liner,' or I would have been after you sooner. I'm all done up. My hand is in a bad way. This confounded fish has chewed me up. The fellows here tied this bandage all about, but it hurts like the deuce, and I'm afraid of blood poisoning." "Better do something for him," muttered Du Ponté.

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Harry was deeply impressed with the responsibility that was being heaped upon him. He placed the palms of his hands over his hips and drew up his shoulders till they rested akimbo, and then he was completely confused by the suddenness of the call upon his professional skill. "Quick, Harry," snapped the "cottager," "that hand needs to be dressed immediately, then afterward you can take a look at the cut in my leg," "Say, old chap," complained Ribbon, "mother will be down here in a minute; then there will be a deuced row if she sees this." And he gingerly handled the bandaged arm for effect. "But I have no—no medicines," stammered Harry, just recovering his composure. "Medicine!" shouted Du Ponté. "Don't need medicines; get some cotton batting, get lint, get any old thing—but hustle; there'll be trouble here soon!" "That's right, Harry," spoke the "cottager" assuringly. "Find the cotton batting; then we'll get to work." "Cotton batting will be good for that—first rate for a wound," replied Harry, suddenly awakening. "Why, we had some yesterday over at your cottage, fixing up your rig for

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the masquerade. It's in the extension; I know where to get it," and he bolted through the crowd over the side hill and down through "Ghost Hollow," up again on the opposite rise of ground, and fled through the white birch grove, disappearing into the grounds of the castle across the bay. Before the arch conspirators could hold a conference as to their further conduct of the "fish case," which was now assuming an alarming aspect, Harry was flying back through "Spirit Lane," his arms flapping up and down, his long legs dangling, in his haste resembling the flight of a water crane startled from a reed bank.

"Spread it out here," suggested Du Ponté, and he guided Harry to the edge of the veranda, where he unfolded the roll of cotton. The "cottager" had limped to the veranda and seated himself. Ribbon followed him reluctantly. "Go lightly now, old chap; I am afraid it's pretty bad," said Ribbon. "Better dampen that cotton in witch hazel or Pond's extract," suggested the "cottager." "for, if it's blood poison you need an antiseptic." "Excuse me, old chap, won't you," interrupted Ribbon: "this

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is quite serious, I fear. Would you mind getting that bottle of Pond's extract up on your dresser? It would be safer for you to use it, don't you know." "Oh, of course, I never thought of that." And Harry was off again, up the stairway this time, four steps at a bound, out again on the gravel walk, the bottle of extract clinched in his excited grasp. As Harry hurried to the side of his suffering patient to proceed with the bandaging, Mr. Mac had quietly reached the front. "If you will allow me to offer a suggestion," he began, in his cautious, convincing way, "my family physician will arrive here in half an hour from the city; he will have all the necessaries, which I believe you require for this job, and it might be safer all around to postpone this operation till he comes." "Quite right, quite right," Du Ponté replied at once. "Mind you," continued Mac, "I only wish to suggest; I am not interfering with your case, Harry." "Oh, that's all right, Mr. Mac," said Harry; "the doctor probably has antiseptics, and that will be very necessary in this case." "You had better go in to your breakfast, Harry," suggested Ribbon; "I

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can stand this for half an hour, and the other doctor will need you when he comes." Harry, still under the mesmeric spell, obeying orders, hurried into the hotel for breakfast.

The principals fell back, again surrounding the maskinonge, which was now stiffening in the sun. They were considering the plan of their escape from the Island in whispered consultation. In the meantime Harry Weiner Sneitzel had swallowed his first cup of coffee, and began to think. At the second thought he looked out of the window toward the suspended fish, then he sank back in his chair; an expression of fear and incredulity was forming upon his countenance.

"Scamps," he was heard to remark, as he gazed for the second time out through the window at the group upon the lawn. Then, quickly rising, he headed for the office. Hatless he sprang out upon the veranda. Grabbing up a sabre which was thrown aside by a masquerader of the night before, he bore down upon the three conspirators who had made him the victim of their practical joke. As he leaped in one mad stride from the piazza to the ground

The Growing Maskinonge.

his long, thin front locks stood straight up in the wind like the scalp feathers of an Indian.

"Sneak!" yelled Du Ponté. In a flash the conspirators were out of the crowd which surrounded the fish. Over the side hill they scampered, Harry in pursuit, swinging the flashing sabre in the air. Down through the Hollow they sped, and in their flight, as did the ghost spirits of the bay, they mysteriously disappeared into the mazes of the dark cottages, amidst the white birch grove in "Spirit Lane."



