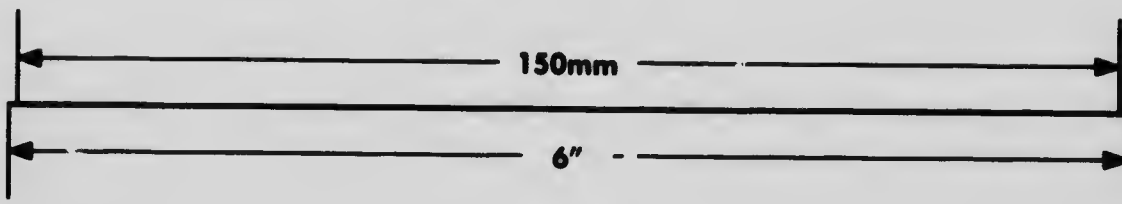
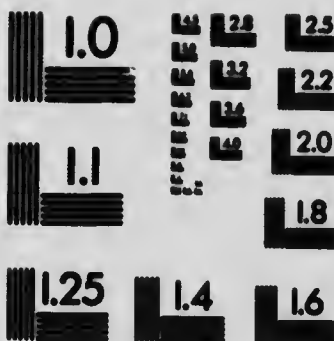
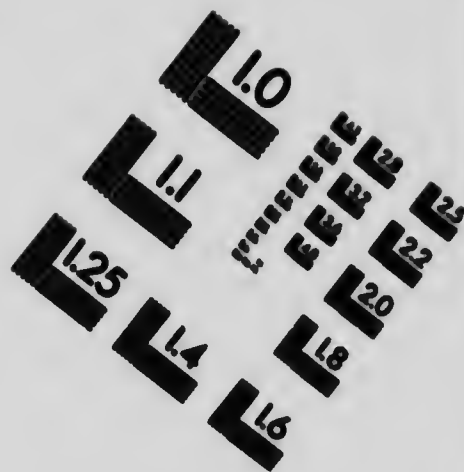
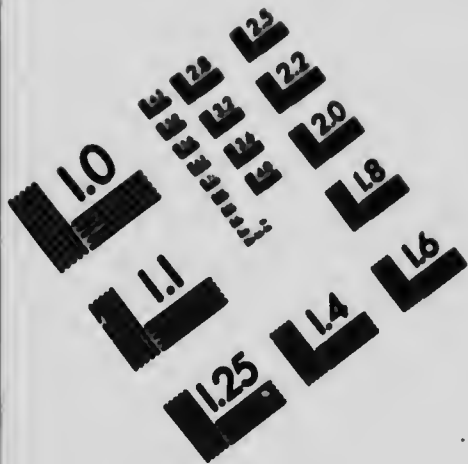


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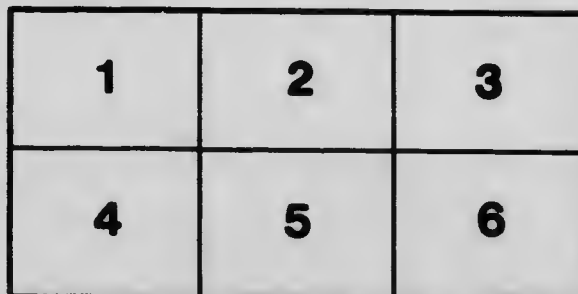
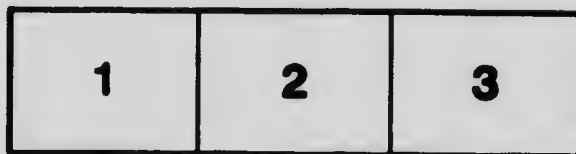
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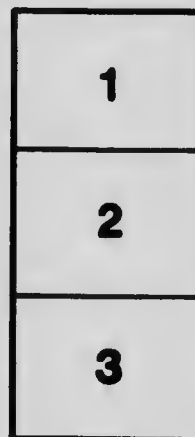
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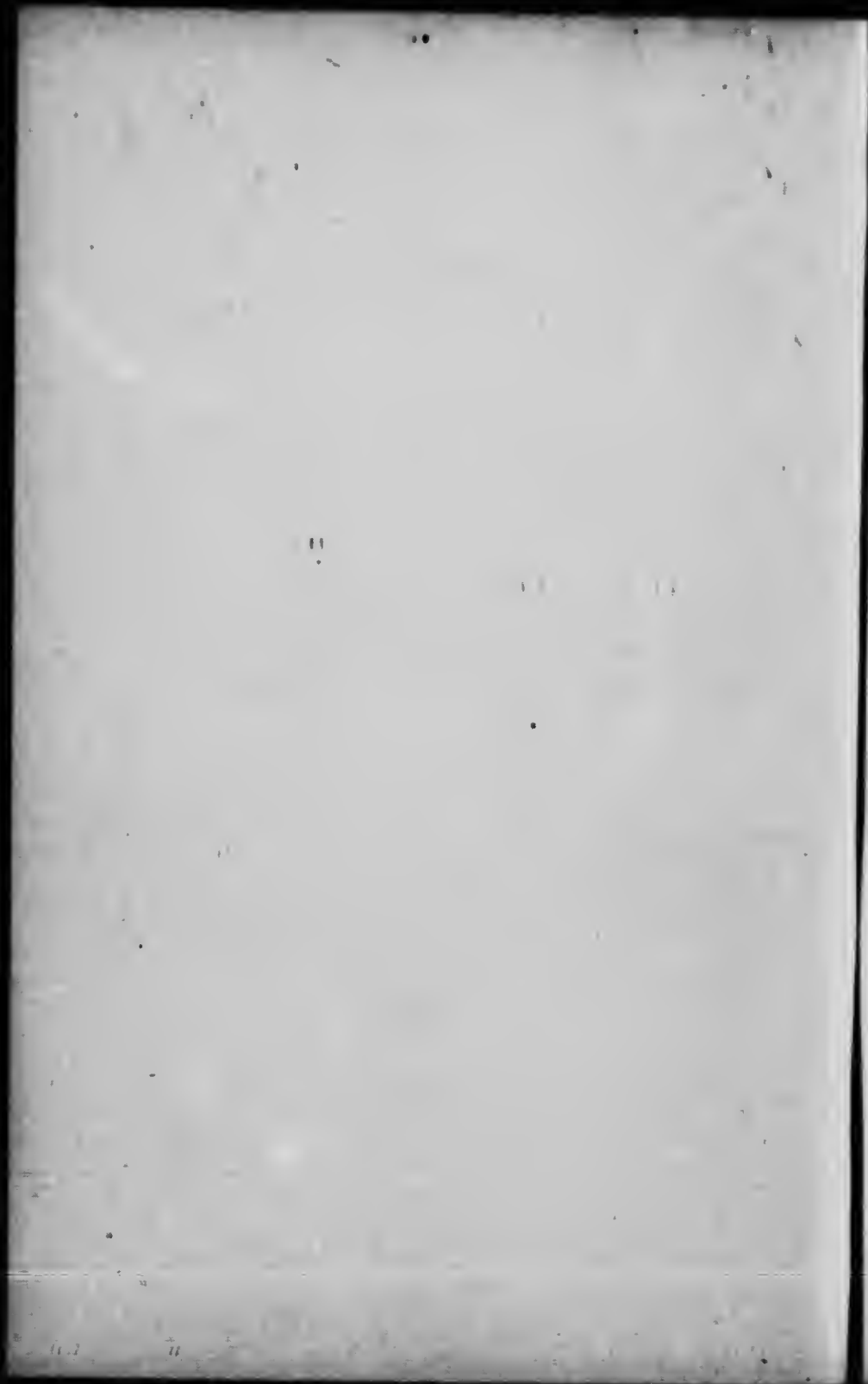
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THE CONQUERING HERO

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

∴
HEARTS AND FACES
The Adventure of a Soul

∴
DRUMS AFAR
An International Romance

∴

THE CONQUERING HERO

BY
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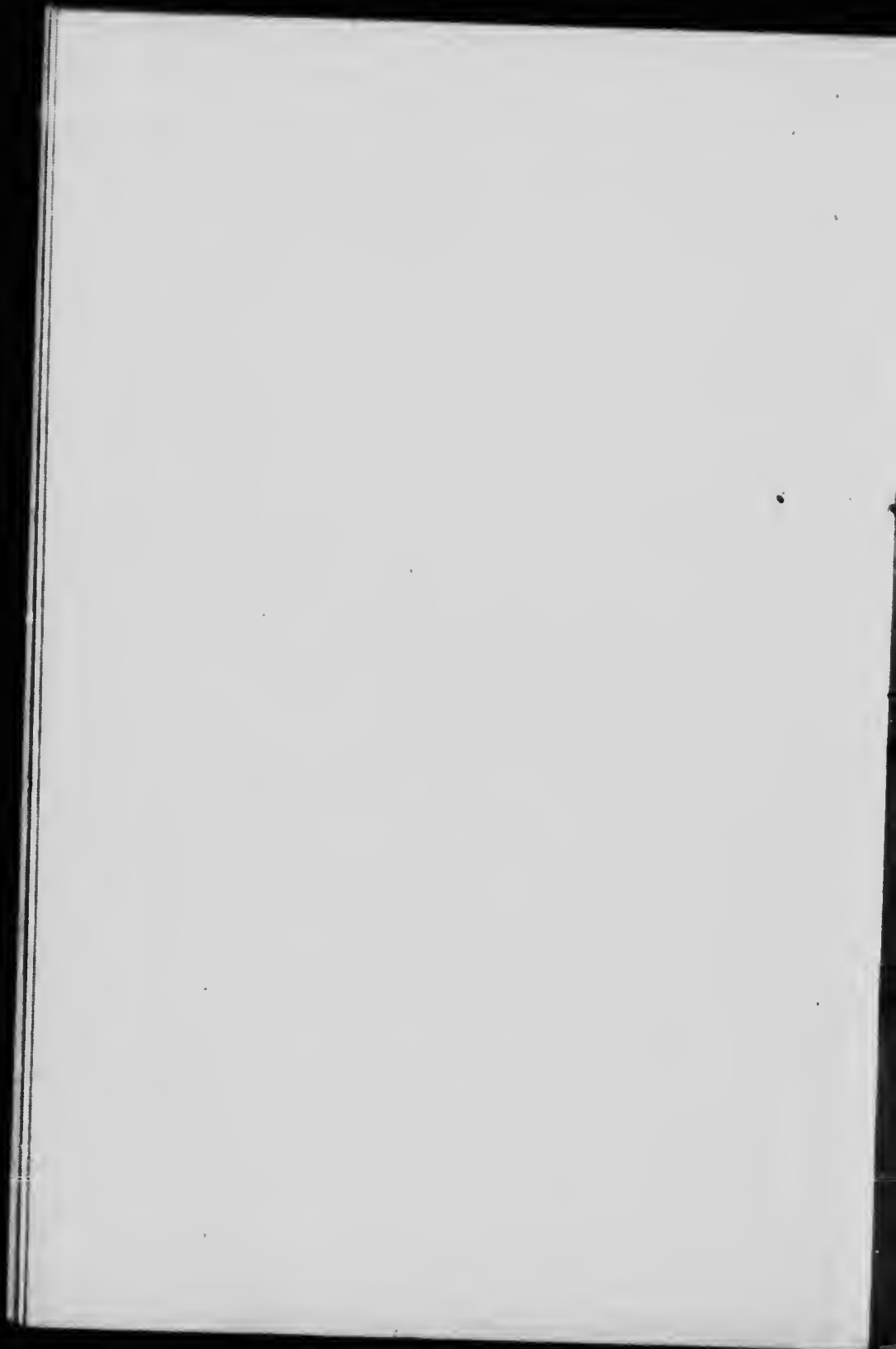
TO
RANDOLPH BRUCE

OF

LAKE WINDERMERE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Who put the "Happy" into the "Happy Valley"

THE CONQUERING HERO



THE CONQUERING HERO

CHAPTER I

BEHIND the smoke which rose from the pleasant crackle of the camp-fire hung a background of pearly mist into which were enamelled the dark spruce trees at the edge of the lake. There was still the tang of frost in the air, and the pail of spring water left outside the tent over night showed a crust of ice, although it was not yet mid September. Donald had done his chores, had helped chop wood, fetch water and peel potatoes for breakfast, and was now back in the guides' tent, watching over his pipe the "sports" wake up one by one to the morning. To the casual eye there was little to choose between "sports" and guide, for, after a fortnight in the woods, chins and cheeks were unkempt with whiskers, shoepacks were muddy, clothes were torn and untidy. But the guides were "tented" while the "sports" had the greater comfort of the log cabin, built primarily as a hunting camp in this lake-enchanted haunt of moose. And according to etiquette the "sports" had their meals first—or as Dickie, the cook, said, "Breakfast is ready for the human beings—the guides will have theirs later."

It was good to be wakened up in this leafy antechamber of dawn by the serenade of a thousand birds, each sweeter singer than the other, proving their lungs before the long flight down south. Two of them had been in particular voice that morning, one with its message of "Sweet Weather, Sweet Weather," another, melodious little aristocrat, with a clear cool call of "King, King, King, King in Canada. Canada, Canada."

The tang of the coming Fall was in the air, and there was unrest among the animals that counted as game. No longer did the deer come inquisitively within a stone's throw of the camp. The open season for the hunter was at hand. Shyly and nervously they slipped through the bush and stole down to the waterside only at night to drink. Too soon they would have with them in the woods not these lazy fishermen, but a more cruel race with a noisy deadly sting for gallant bucks.

Two of the "sports," Johnson and Doctor Adams, were already seated at the rustic table, while Hector Macdonald, the head guide, was pouring out their coffee. Camp conversation consisted largely of "josh," and Donald smiled as he listened.

"Joshing" is a form of entertainment not unknown outside America, but no other continent has so perfected this art of friendly raillery. It seems to offer a natural outlet for the dry humour and playful exaggerations of the American language. That was a language which Donald could understand, and sometimes after a fashion could speak.

Indeed, over in the Old Country, he had several times been asked if he was an American, even though he had the word "Canada" upon his shoulder and wore the kilt of a Highland regiment. At first he was annoyed, until he realised that he had added a nasal intonation and a dash of Western slang to the original Scots tongue of his forefathers.

As a Canadian he had a definite dialect, but there was a richness and variety of phrase in the speech of the American from the United States that he himself knew as foreign. It was foreign, but it was also fascinating, and just now his ears were pricked so that he could catch new terms of expression for his own later use.

Now Dickie, when he differentiated the "guides" from the "human beings," had no grudge against this particular party. They were good-natured, easy-going American business and professional men, each of whom could be counted upon for a substantial tip to supplement the four dollars a day which was his nominal wage as head cook. They appreciated his skill in conjuring dishes—for their wives (in the case of the married men, and that meant all of them except Hugh Johnson the lawyer), who were probably taking more pretentious rests at summer hotels in the Adirondacks or White Mountains, imagined that their husbands were getting back to Nature almost at the risk of starvation in the forests of Eastern Canada, little dreaming of the epicurean character of the table served at the Hoodoo Camp. The afore-mentioned wives were not likely to be un-

deceived, for the Hoodoos, as the members of the Camp called themselves, were sworn to secrecy, knowing that if once the truth of their "roughing it" were known, the wives could not be kept out, and then good-bye to the lazy paradise which they had established at such safe distance from telegraph and telephone.

Nor had Donald any grudge, though he was a cut above Dickie in the social scale. This after all was luxury compared to many a night he had spent thigh-deep in Flanders mud, and anyhow it was the kind of life he loved. It was good to be alive, tent or no tent, when the sun came splashing out of the morning sky through the balsam and maple branches over the half-cleared shore where they were encamped.

"Holy smoke!" the Doctor was saying, as he filled the cavern he called his mouth with food. "I don't know whether it is Dickie or whether it is fishing, but up here a fellow does get an appetite."

"Go slow, Doc," drawled Hugh Johnson.

The Doctor was too hungry to retort.

"Pass the beans," said Hugh.

"Why didn't you say it before?" said the Doctor, and obliging. Then helping himself to half a chicken: "Guess I'm getting re-acquainted with food. No more home-cooking for mine."

Hugh piled his own plate.

"Beans," he said, "are the noblest animals that roam the plains."

The Doctor's face broadened, if that were possible, with a smile.

"What kind of bait do you catch them with, Hugh?" he asked slyly.

"Bait!" exclaimed Hugh scornfully. "I thought you called yourself a scientific fisherman."

"I guess I can sling a nasty fly," chuckled the Doctor, "but I wasn't talking of fish. I was talking of beans."

Just then a loud snore came from the cabin. Pointing with his fork, Hugh said:

"Hark to the Human Trumpet. Joe there is dreaming of beans. If we could only bring some sucker here, we could sell him that cabin for a saw-mill. An expert couldn't tell the difference unless he went inside to see the works."

At that moment Peter Foster, who in New York was quite a well-known architect, shivered out of the door of the cabin. Peter always posed as an old woodsman, and when the time came in the evening to swop stories round the camp fire, he would talk by the hour of what he had done up in the Hudson Bay Country.

"Who's talking of suckers?" growled Peter. "It was sure some sucker that built this camp fire. If any of you guys had camped as I have camped at forty below zero, you'd have learned to build it with half the forest."

"If I had to camp," said Hugh unsympathetically, "at forty below zero, I'd get warm going South."

"Me for the manicure parlour," said Peter, laughing.

As Peter stepped gingerly along the path which led to the common washing place on the shore of the lake, Jack Mitchell, a brick manufacturer, appeared at the cabin door. Jack also seemed to feel the air a trifle cool, for his teeth chattered as he yawned.

"No more camping for mine. I can see I was born for a gentleman's life. Gee! I feel punk."

"You'd feel fine," said Hugh, "if you got up before breakfast and cut eight cords of wood."

"Not on your life!" replied Jack, shuddering. "I don't feel like that kind of health." Then seizing a moccasin from beside the door and hurling it into the cabin, he shouted:

"Get up, Joe. Breakfast's ready!"

The missile evidently hit its mark, for the snoring ceased and was followed by the appearance of Joe Wilson himself. Joe was a swarthy six-footer with bass voice well suited to his business of auctioneer.

"If someone does not close this door," he boomed, "I'm going to get up and dress."

"As you please, Joe," said Hugh. "We're glad to have you in your pyjamas."

"What I want to do," replied Joe, "is to keep warm. Hector," he continued, speaking to the guide, "how do you guides keep alive on nights like this?"

"It's just as well," answered Hector, "to pile everything on, even to putting your jack-knife in your pocket."

"Thanks, Hector," said Joe; "I'll borrow yours tonight. Now I'm going to wash."

"Don't do that, Joe," said Hugh; "you're foolish to wash till you get home."

In the meanwhile a canoe had appeared through the mist and landed Mike Halloran, commonly known as the Judge, on account of his being a justice of the peace as well as a banker. The Judge had evidently been fishing, for he brought his rod up with him and leaned it against the cabin.

"What luck, old man?" asked the Doctor.

"Nothing doing," answered the Judge. "Fish were too damned unreasonable."

"Anyone," said Joe, "who would ask me to go fishing before breakfast hasn't got a mother."

"Where's the whisky?" said the Judge.

"Camp's gone dry, Judge," said Hugh, "till after supper."

"I thought this was a fishing trip," retorted the Judge.

"Come along, gentlemen," interjected Hector.

"Who wants hot coffee?"

"I do, Hector my lad," responded the Judge, "if it will keep you good-natured."

"Give me tea, Hector," said Peter Foster, who had now returned from his toilet. "That's to say, if you have any."

"Sure thing," said Dickie, the cook, with a grin. "It's just ready. They say it's better not to boil tea more than an hour."

Very soon they were all seated at the table and

doing justice to the ample supplies set before them. Dickie, the cook, had his hands full. Hugh was the first to rise and go over to the fire.

"Hector," he said, as he lit his pipe, "I want you to be nice to me today. Will you take me down to Two Mile Pool? I saw a whale of a trout there rising yesterday—four pounds and then some."

"No use your fishing for him now, Hugh," said the Doctor. "He saw your whiskers."

Hugh rubbed his unshaven cheeks contentedly.

"Some whiskers!" he answered. "If he's a sensible fish, he'll be proud to know me. John D. Rockefeller couldn't grow any finer. Hector, old sport, do you know anything about trout and their taste in whiskers?"

"Can't say as I do," replied Hector, scratching his head, "and can't say as I don't. They're queer devils. And yet I guess I know as much as most, after guiding here thirty-five years."

"What beats me about trout," said Hugh, "is the way they rise to a doggoned fly that looks no more like a fly than Solomon in all his glory looks like Doc. Is it imagination or is it sheer stupidity?"

"Tain't stupidity," said Hector. "It's just their nature. I reckon it's like this. Six or a dozen trout are swimming peacefully in the pool, when along comes a sport in a canoe and casts a fly, gaudy as you make 'em, Parmachene Belle or Silver Doctor or Professor, right over their noses. They all see plain as could be that it ain't food, and run for cover,

all except one that is bolder maybe, and he gets hypnotised and goes for that fly like a bull goes for a red rag. That's why you've got to be so quick and strike the moment you've got a rise—it don't do to let Master Trout have time to think, otherwise he'd slip off and run for cover like the rest. But trout ain't stupid, not on your life, or they wouldn't live to be so old. I've heard tell of trout that lived to be over seventy years old."

"That's it, Hector," chipped in the Doctor. "All the ones that Hugh catches are in their second childhood."

"Doc's jealous," retorted Hugh. "Anyway, I don't buy mine from the guides. But what beats me is the way trout, knowing all they do about worms and grubs and grasshoppers and flies, for years and years and years, no sooner see a piece of bright feather tied on a hook than they rush up and commit plain doggoned suicide. Hector, I'm disappointed with you. I thought you could have told us the Secret of the Stream and the Mystery of the Pool. Well, if you can't explain, will you pole me down and watch me flick an insect at that finny, finicky four-pounder?"

Hector once more scratched his head.

"'Twouldn't be any use," he said. "I may as well tell you now. There's a party came in last night, camping right alongside. The trout are all sure scared by now."

There was general consternation at the news.

"Yes," continued Hector, "goldarn them!—

poaching in our waters. It's that doggoned Indian, Yellow Pete, that's guiding. He's played that trick on me before—but I'll skin him pink some day."

Hector's outburst raised a laugh.

"I see you don't like Indians, Hector," said Hugh.

"Some Indians," replied Hector, "are pretty near white men, but Pete is a yellow dog, and I won't like him till he's a dead Indian. He is a Melicite from the Tobique country, but had to make himself scarce there through being too free with his axe. We haven't had occasion yet to tar and feather him here, but the good time is coming. I saw the smoke of a camp-fire there last night, so I slipped down the trail, and sure thing there was Yellow Pete's canoe. What's more, there's petticoats in the party."

"Women!"

There was a general shout of dismay.

Each of the Hoodoos at once was prey to a guilty conscience, suspecting that his wife was on his track; each, that is to say, except Hugh Johnson, still twice happily a bachelor. Each was beset with the revelations that must come, of the excuses and prevarications that must be made, of the curtain lectures that must ensue, of the ridicule they must face, of the probable unlikelihood of their ever being able to come back again in the old way without question to this delectable retreat. It might, of course, be possible to conceal the evidence of their elaborate breakfast and make pretence of pioneering simplicity for a meal or two, but what had brought their wives

at all (if wives they were) into this remote wilderness unless the suspicion that the tales of former years had lacked conviction, and that an investigation was about to be made?

Hugh Johnson, as usual, was the first to rise to the occasion, and his voice at once had a calming effect.

"Gentlemen, fellow fishermen and Brother Hoodoo," he began, "I can imagine your embarrassment and your apprehensions, but I feel sure that you are unduly alarmed. These are not wives—otherwise one of us must have betrayed his oath, and that is unthinkable."

"Hear, hear!" agreed everybody.

"But," continued Hugh, "as we are in evident danger of discovery by a member of that sex to which a secret is less than sacred, something must be done, and I beg to move a resolution."

"I second it," interrupted the Doctor.

"You can't second my resolution until you know what it is," said Hugh reprovingly.

"Well, then," retorted the Doctor, "I beg to move an amendment."

"Hector, where is the axe?" said Hugh. "I want to split this person's head."

"Boys," protested the Doctor, "I object. This is not a resolution. This is bloody murder."

"No, not murder," responded Hugh, "justifiable homicide, otherwise known as the unwritten law. While someone suitable represses this Doc, I beg to move that in view of the unexpected, unprece-

dented, unimagined catastrophe with which this hitherto happy, innocent and congenial party is exposed, threatened and over-shadowed, I move that this camp forthwith, hereby and accordingly without further ceremony be moved, adjourned, shifted, transferred and transported to a safe, salubrious, inaccessible distance from and between the source of danger, jeopardy, risk, hazard and possible contamination. For two weeks, Brother Hoodoos, we have found refuge in this haven from so-called domestic felicity—for two weeks none of us, with the exception of Donald, has shaved or worn a collar or had his hair cut or his shoes shined or his nails manicured or his face massaged—for two weeks we have been able to say and do anything we pleased without concern for wife, sister, cousin, aunt, daughter, mother, mother-in-law or lady stenographer—for two weeks we have been able to wear any old clothes and bathe in no clothes at all—for two weeks Jack has been uninterruptedly on the jag and Joe has been permitted to snore without being hit on the head—it is true that we considered his nose a defence against bears, wolves, panthers and other wild cats that infest these forests, but that is by the way. For two weeks we have lived as it were like our forefather Adam, in the Garden of Eden, but more fortunate than he, for we had all the apples we wanted to eat and no one to prevent us, and moreover were without an Eve—when lo! upon the dark horizon appears the plague we came here to get away from—that snake in the grass, that ser-

pent in human form and front-laced corsets, a Woman. No time must be lost. At any moment our refuge may be discovered. If, therefore, you are agreeable, boys, we will finish breakfast without delay, and immediately thereafter proceed to shift camp. What do you say, Hector?"

"Quite agreeable, sir," replied Hector, grinning, "but unfortunately it is too late. One of the females is already on the trail. I can see her approaching the camp. She will be here in two minutes."

Within thirty seconds only two of the party remained in sight, Hugh Johnson and Hector, the head guide. The others had disappeared into the cabin or tents or in some cases behind the bushes.

Into the clearing there stepped the slender, graceful figure of a handsome woman in velvet riding-coat and breeches of the blue-grey colour of cigarette smoke, with grey boots and gloves and grey velvet roll-brim hat, under which her auburn hair was as a cinder glowing in ashes. In her right hand she carried a riding-whip which she tapped on her boot as if impatient or at least uncertain.

"Cross between a Tragedy Queen and a Fashion Plate," thought Donald, who could scarcely refrain from laughing when he saw the open-mouthed amazement of Hector and Hugh Johnson at this apparition.

"Good morning, my good people," said the intruder in a musical but distinctly foreign accent. "Your cottage is the first sign of habitation I have

seen in this country. This, I suppose, is a hunting lodge. Are your masters in this neighbourhood?"

Hugh, good democratic American, flushed at this, but Hector came to the rescue.

"Mr. Johnson here is the boss," he said. "Pray be seated, madame. May I offer you a cup of coffee?"

"A thousand thanks," she said, with a glance of surprise at Hugh, whose unkempt appearance was certainly against him. She patted her hair and then high-stepped towards the bench to which Hector conducted her. There the display of food upon the table seemed to fascinate her.

"It is incredible!" she exclaimed, pulling off her gloves and continuing the paragraph with her hands and elbows. "Grapefruit! Alligator Pears!—Russian Dressing!—Roasted Chicken!—Plank Steak!—Honey!—is it a mirage? I cannot believe my eyes—my Indian guide says that Canadians eat only flapjacks and bacon—flapjacks and bacon!—in the twentieth century!"

"It all depends upon the guide," said Hugh. "Hector, bring out the hock."

"Hock!"

"Yes, not so dusty considering that this is a prohibition country—and the caviare. Serve it on thin toast."

"Caviare! It is astonishing! You are my deliverer! One might think this was New York."

"It is evident," said Hugh, "that you don't know Hector Macdonald, otherwise Efficiency incarnate,

the greatest guide that ever lived. Out here a hundred miles from anywhere he has the Plaza beaten to a finish. Take it from me, it is Hector who is boss here."

Under his sunburnt skin Hector flushed. He hated compliments. But this was a compliment he surely deserved, for after thirty-five years of catering to American sportsmen, culminating in the five years' experience with the Hoodoos, he certainly had reduced "guiding" to a fine art. There was not a camp delicacy or camp convenience that he had not tested. Most of the latter he rejected, for when it came to beds, for instance, he knew there is no bed more sleep-inducing than a well-made couch of cedar boughs, and nothing warmer than a pair of four point Hudson Bay blankets. In the matter of food supplies, however, he was more catholic, delighting the Hoodoos with unexpected luxuries, and keeping quite a notable vintage in the icehouse near the head camp, this although himself a sworn teetotaller. With the axe he was a magician, and Hugh maintained that he could carve a dryad from a standing tree. Hector was always chopping away—never idle for a moment. A burly square-shouldered fellow, with shaggy hair once reddish but now tinged with grey, he carried his fifty-five years lighter than many a man of thirty. So nimble on his feet that he could clog-dance on a floating log, with arms that drove his paddle like pistons, knowing the woods and rivers blindfold—he was, in spite of his unlettered speech, indeed a "very perfect gentleman." Here

in the woods Hector was a woodsman, but at the Canadian Camp Dinners in New York, where sportsmen once a year foregathered, he was just as at home in evening dress, shaved, to be sure, and a little less shaggy, but always with the merry twinkle in his eye.

As Hector uncorked the wine, the lady set upon the food as one half famished, yet with imperious air. After a while Hector ventured to speak.

"Are you alone, may I ask, madame?"

"Alone!" she cried. "Do you think I would come here alone? With a wild Indian? Do you think I am mad? Why, of course not—I have my maid."

"Your maid?"

"But naturally! Do you think I could travel without my maid? And then, of course, there is my manager."

"Your manager?"

"But of course! and my press agent!"

"Your press agent?"

"To be sure. Do you think I could risk my life in this savage country without my press agent to tell the Americans of my adventures? Ah, but of course, you do not know who I am—me—I am the Princess Stephanie Sobieska."

She announced her name with considerable hauteur.

"Pleased to meet you, Princess," said Hugh, at a loss for anything else to say. "Have a sausage."

In the books on etiquette issued by thoughtful publishers for the benefit of democratic Americans

who purpose visiting Europe where by the grace of God and an over-worked Ambassador they look for the supreme felicity of meeting Royal blood, the very last thing likely to be recommended as apropos on the moment of such an introduction would be the offer of so vulgar, so plebeian an article of food as a sausage, and the suppressed guffaw that came from the neighbourhood of the bush concealing Dickie, the cook, made Hugh realise that he might have thought of something more ethereal. Fortunately this particular Princess appeared too hungry to stand on ceremony.

"You are too amiable," she replied, and allowed him to replenish her plate.

Then when she had disposed of a few further more or less substantial delicacies, she drew a silver case from her breast pocket and lit a long thin cigarette.

"I have always suspected it," she remarked pensively, "but now I know it for certain. My manager is a fool."

"I should like to be there when you tell him so," said Hugh. "What is his particular kind of foolishness?"

"His latest is to bring me here without making proper arrangements to feed the party. My only consolation is that he also is hungry. But if you are a gentleman, I rely on you to help me."

"At your service, Princess," said Hugh. "We can supply you with pretty near everything except gasoline and hymn-books."

"Charming!" she replied. "First of all, for myself," tapping her hair, "I require a mirror and some pins. We lost my vanity case in the rapids, and my maid is desperate."

"You may certainly have the camp mirror, such as it is," said Hugh, "and Hector can twist wire into pins for you. Anything else today?"

"But, yes, certainly—some fruit—some chicken—anything to eat that is not flapjack and bacon—also a guide who does not cook with poison—this Indian Pete is killing us with his atrocious meals."

"Where is Dickie?" asked Hugh of Hector.

"Dickie stays here with the boys," came the gruff voice of the cook from behind a bush. "Count me among the Bolsheviki."

The Princess started, but joined in the general smile.

"How about Donald?" said Hugh of Hector.

"He made that truffle omelette."

"I adore omelette," said the Princess. "Give me your Donald."

"Donald is yours," said Hugh. "He is a good Canadian with a proper respect for titles, and his omelettes are birds. Donald, come here and be presented."

With a sheepish grin, Donald extricated himself from the guides' tent and limped towards the table. Although his face was thin and drawn, the frank hazel eyes, curly hair, and flicker of a smile that always played around his lips made a pleasant impression.

"Sergeant Donald Macdonald, late of the 42nd Canadian Highlanders—wounded, gassed and honourably discharged," said Hugh, introducing him, "not quite such a lightweight as he looks, for what he has lost in flesh he has made up in shrapnel—hence the lame leg, all honour to it!—nephew of Hector and heir to all Hector's virtues—his only bad habit being a fondness for the razor—acquired, I understand, in the trenches, but disconcerting to those of us who came here to get away from civilisation."

Donald, like his uncle, blushed at Hugh's certificate. He was no dandy, but the discipline of the army had not yet been forgotten, and over in Flanders in those days of struggle with mud he had learned to appreciate a clean-shaven cheek, even though it seemed to cast a reflection on the more casual "sports" whom he served in camp. Donald was no ladies' man, and this prospect of guiding for one of such pretensions was more than he bargained for. But Hector had given him the sign to accept, and as a dutiful nephew he was ready to obey.

"So you are one of those heroes who came from Canada to fight for the liberty of Europe!" said the Princess intensely, as she extended her arm towards him. "You may kiss my hand."

Still more embarrassed, Donald felt inclined to bolt. But Hector, standing behind her, tapped his forehead to signify that this eccentric should be humoured, so Donald bent over her hand after the fashion he had seen actors do on the stage, and

brushed her manicured and scented fingers with his lips.

Then Hector came to the rescue.

"Help me to fill one of these cases with grub," he said.

In a few minutes they had a canoe loaded with camp delicacies. Nothing was forgotten, not even a jar of onions.

"Onions!" murmured Donald. "Do princesses eat onions?"

"You saw the way this one put down the sausage," replied Hector. "So far as I can see, she is pretty nearly a human being. Besides, there's the maid. I never met a maid yet who did not fall for onions."

"This way, Princess," said Hector, when everything was ready, conducting her to the waterside. "I'll take you in my canoe and Mr. Johnson and Donald will follow with the grub behind. It's quicker and easier by water than by the trail."

As the two canoes left the shore, the Doctor, the Judge, Joe, Jack Mitchell and Peter Foster cautiously reappeared from the cabin, Dickie, the cook, emerged from the bush, and the other guides came out of their tent, all eyes glued on the disappearing figures.

"Well," said Dickie, "if that ain't the limit! A gay young thing like that—out in the woods alone!"

"Is this my jag," said the Judge, "or is it yours?"

"Gone off with half our grub," continued Dickie.

"Princesses always do that," said the Doctor. "If

she had been a queen, she'd have taken the whole bill of fare."

"She's no Princess," said Joe scornfully. "That's all press-agent stuff. She's a moving-picture actress, or I'm a Dutchman."

"You've hit it, Joe," exclaimed the Doctor. "I've seen her name and picture in one of the Sunday Supplements. She is a Vamp—short for Vampire."

"I hope you're right," said Peter Foster, scenting a possible client; "I'm going to be her friend. All these moving picture stars want to build summer homes over on Long Island."

"When you design hers, Peter," said Jack Mitchell, "make it of brick. I want to be in on this too."

"And let me sell her Napoleon's bed," added Joe Wilson, "the one he shared with the Empress Josephine."

"Thought you had sold that before," said Peter Foster sarcastically.

"So I did, old man—half a dozen of it. All these Vamps fall for Josephine and Napoleon's bed, so we have to keep it in stock. Didn't you say she was a Vamp?"

"I did," said the Doctor. "She killed a Grand Duke and an Archbishop in Russia before breaking into the movies—came to New York a few months ago and is to be the star in some million-dollar thriller."

"Let's hope she doesn't kill Hugh and Hector and Donald," said Joe. "They're just as unsuspect-

ing as Archbishops and a dozen times more useful. It's just what Hector was saying about trout—they are no more stupid than us humans. Here are a dozen of us sitting quietly in camp, when along comes a dame, gaudy as they make 'em—and we all run for cover—all except Hugh and Hector, both old enough to know better—and before they know it she has them hypnotised and got them hooked—Donald too—three at one cast. Princess nix—her name is Parmachene Belle."

"Some fishing!" said Dickie, the cook.

CHAPTER II

“ONE of those heroes who came from Canada to fight for the liberty of Europe.”

It sounded rather pleasant, coming from lips so fair and so distinguished, and yet Donald smiled ironically as he recalled a similar greeting given him three years before by an effusive clergyman in London.

“So you are one of those splendid Canadians who have come to fight for the Cause of Righteousness.”

“No,” Donald had answered, “I have come to fight for the Forty-Second.”

An answer that astonished the gentleman in black and requires some explanation.

The Macdonalds were not merely guides, but also called themselves farmers. In this respect they did not differ so much from the other guides, all of whom had their piece of land and went guiding as much for the sport of the thing as to earn their three and a half or four dollars a day. Hector Macdonald, the head guide, had a substantial bank account and held the sporting rights over considerable territory, and it was largely to oblige his uncle that Donald was with this party at all. He had landed at Halifax a sick man from service overseas only a month before, and had taken the opportunity to pay Hector a visit before going on to his own

place out West in British Columbia. The death of his father while he had been soldiering in France had drawn him closer to his uncle, and since Hector had helped him as a boy to spend many a happy day fishing or hunting or trapping, he was glad to repay this debt by serving for a while as guide in some of Hector's parties. It was too late in the year to do much on his own place in the mountains—that could wait till spring—and in any case Donald had been too much unhinged by military life to settle down at once to the old steady grind. There was this further advantage, as he soon found out, namely, that Dickie, the cook, to whom he acted as assistant, was a past master of his art, and taught him recipes which would be useful when he had to "batch" again out West. With eggs in particular Dickie was a wizard, and eggs were doctor's orders for Donald for some time to come.

Donald's grandfather was a veteran of the Black Watch, the oldest Highland regiment in the British Army, the gallant Forty-Second. While still only a corporal, he had been stationed at Halifax, where he had lost his heart to a Canadian girl. The battalion was called home to Scotland—then sent to the Crimea—then three years later to India where he won his Commission at Cawnpore and rose to be a Captain at the Relief of Lucknow. In spite of strenuous years and change of scene, Captain MacDonald never forgot his fair Canadian charmer, so that when fever sent him home, he applied for his discharge and sailed once more for Halifax. Al-

though ten years had passed, he found the lady still fair, still free, and was easily persuaded to buy a piece of land near her own home town of Fredericton in New Brunswick.

Of the three children that were born to them, Hector, the elder son, grew up to be a farmer, that is to say, he farmed in the intervals of guiding and trapping, while Angus, Donald's father, was trained to be a lawyer. Neither Hector nor the sister Mary ever married, and Donald was Angus's only son. As Captain Macdonald grew old, his affections centered in his grandchild. Donald was brought up on oatmeal porridge, Jane Porter's "Scottish Chiefs" and the history of the Black Watch. He heard a hundred times the tale of how this Highland regiment had won the "Red Hackle" for valour in recapturing lost guns at Guildersmalsen. Whatever he learned about the American War of Independence, about the Napoleonic wars, the Peninsular War, the retreat to Corunna, Quatre Bras and Waterloo, about the Crimean War, about the Indian Mutiny, about the Ashanti Expedition, about Egypt and Tel-el-Kebir, was due to their inscription in the colours of the Forty-Second.

The old Captain indeed looked upon the world as a planet that had swum into the Forty-Second's ken. New York was merely a place where the regiment had fought a hundred years before.

The farm itself provided a comfortable living, and except for the thrill of a threatened Fenian raid, Captain Macdonald remained there placidly until

his death at a good old age. Hector carried on after the Captain's death, and Angus also took as much interest in the farm as in the law, paid as much attention to potatoes as to jurisprudence, with each new crop of hay or oats caring less about the courts. Like so many Eastern Canadians of Scots extraction, Angus was drawn by the lure of the West. He was deeply versed in the journals and explorations of the M'Donalds, Mackenzies, M'Gillivrays, M'Tavishes and other such adventurous fur-traders, reading in the last century of Canada a history of Scottish expansion. An early marriage anchored him for a while, but the death of Donald's mother left Angus free to follow his inclinations to go out West. Donald had shown more interest in outdoor life than classes, and gave up college willingly enough. But the Highland blood in both of them shrank from the treeless prairie, so they settled in a mountain valley west of the Rockies.

In the selection of a new home, Angus Macdonald followed an ancient trail. After helping to wrest Canada from the French, certain Scots officers and merchants of Montreal founded the North-West Company of furtraders with posts stretching westward to the Pacific. These Nor' Westers sent out David Thompson, astronomer and surveyor, to establish on British territory posts north of the 49th parallel, one of which was near the source of the Columbia River. Although a century had passed, Angus and Donald found the actual site of this post still traceable, and themselves nearby selected a

likely piece of land well timbered and watered by a creek. Here for several years they pioneered together, until the outbreak of the Great War.

Then it was that Donald wakened up to manhood. He read how the Fifth Royal Highlanders of Canada, a Montreal Militia Regiment affiliated with the old Black Watch, had raised a battalion for service overseas, and hated himself for not having been quick enough to join it. Then came the news that the original Black Watch was the last of the British regiments to retire from Mons.

Several of his neighbours were Scots, and as he saw them one after the other lock their doors behind them at the call, his heart burned to go with them. His father, however, was ailing, and it was hard to leave. One day, however, Donald read some unforgettable verses. Next morning he thrust the well-thumbed page into his father's hands, and so left the cabin.

Angus Macdonald read:

SCOTLAND YET

(By A. STODART WALKER)

Achnacarry, Cameron's pride,
Whose faith in Scotland's weal
Sends ringing down Lochaber side
The war-cry of Lochiel:
"Leave gowks to stalk and coofs to dance,
The Camerons are furth to France."

"Dunkeld and Menzies, Blair and Scone,
Hae gone the ways o' men."
On Rannoch side the harvest moon
Lights up the harried glen:

THE CONQUERING HERO

From croft and castle, glebe and manse
The Forty-Twa are furth to France.

From Inverary north to Ross
The flow has run to spate;
From fen and moorland, peat and moss
Two lads have gone in eight:
With ache of heart but pride of glance
"Argylls and Seaforths furth to France."

By Lochnager—by Dee and Don,
See Huntly, Farquhar tread,
From lodge and shielding they are gone,
The hungry ranks are fed:
The girls seem walking in a trance,
The Gordons gay are furth to France.

From Dunnet Head to Sands o' Dee,
From loan and mountain pass:
The Isles are swept from sea to sea
From Lewis round to Bass:
The pipes are filled, the horses prance,
The Guards and Greys are furth to France.

The Borderers from Berwick town,
The Scots from deep Glencorse;
The Fusiliers from Banks o' Doon,
Light Infantry in force:
The Scottish Rifles look askance
At men who go not furth to France.

For Scotland's King and Scotland's law,
They "dree'd their weird" in turn:
On Flodden Field and Philiphaugh
These sons of Bannockburn:
And now their glory to enhance
They fight with England furth in France.

The aged chieftain takes his way
Slow down the stricken glen,

And speaks of fame and things agley,
"A few may come again,
But God was good to grant this chance
To fight for freedom furth in France."

When Donald came back, all that the father said was, "When will ye be going?" Next day he was on the train for the East.

He had booked for Fredericton, but on the way had a day to spend in Montreal. Stepping out of Windsor Station, he heard the skirl of the pipers and ran to meet them. They were recruiting for a new battalion of the Royal Canadian Highlanders, to bear the magic number Forty-Second, so with a wild hurrah Donald fell into step behind them till they reached the Armory in Bleury Street.

If he had been a friend of a friend of a friend of the Great Mogul at Ottawa, he might have got a commission in another regiment, but Donald's only thought was to belong to the "Forty-Twa," and the recruiting officers were glad to get this eager well-set-up six-footer, who was quite content to begin in the ranks, as his grandfather had begun before him.

Four months later he was in England—eight months later he was a corporal in Flanders, getting his baptism of fire in working parties—digging, stringing and cutting wire, patrolling, scouting, sniping and raiding. At Ypres on one ghastly afternoon in June, he saw half the battalion mowed down, so that his sergeant's stripes were as bands of crêpe worn for the dead. Three months later he got his first dose of shrapnel in the attack on the Zollern

Redoubt. Four months in an English hospital, and he was back again, in time to win his D. C. M. at Vimy Ridge. He was within sight of a commission, but a few weeks later was gassed and filled again with shrapnel, so that for this war at least his fighting days were over. After fifteen months in hospital, long enough almost to make him a cynic, he was sent back to Canada honourably discharged. The doctors recommended open air with not too heavy manual labour. Hector's hunting and fishing territory entailed few portages, so that the life of a guide suited Donald's physique and temperament.

It was a physique which no one can blame the Princess for remarking. Yet as he poled Hugh Johnson along behind Hector's canoe, Donald was embarrassed by those dark brown eyes. Whether he had the "proper respect for titles" of which Hugh had accused him was open to question. He certainly felt a lump in the throat whenever the National Anthem was played or sung, but that was the National Anthem as well as a prayer for the King. Occasionally some duchess or some member of the Royal Family would pay a visit to the hospital in England where he had convalesced, and the Sisters would thrill over the event for a day or two before and after. They would be doubly attentive and the spotlessly clean ward would, if possible, become spotlessly cleaner, while on the day of visitation the ward would welter in flowers. Then the appearance and the dress of the Great One would set the Sisters buzzing. "If only she had a better figure!"—"Is it

true that she has asked us to the Palace?"—The hospital became for the time being a fever hospital, in which the contagion of title-worship was difficult to escape. But it was a contagion from which the nurses suffered more than the patients, who had been close enough to death to become more cynical about earthly vanities. One of their number, for instance, boasted that while in Roumania he had had a Royal nurse, whereupon the wag of the ward, expert in Indian nick-names, promptly called him "Pale-Face-Washed-by-a-Queen," to the delight of all except the ruddy-checked, snub-nosed warrior in question.

This new Princess had invaded the camp from another world, possibly from a lunatic asylum. It certainly seemed odd that she should be allowed to roam the woods alone. Those of her rank who had come to the hospital would have been unhappy unless they had a Field-Marshal, two Generals and half the War Office dancing attendance. But this new Princess had a party of only three in addition to the guides.

Yet when they rounded the bend to the camp beside the pool, ten canoes and six tents made a conspicuous landmark. The New Brunswick canoe carries a considerable load, and Donald wondered what had necessitated so large a fleet. The Princess had complained of a shortage of food, so that the dunnage must consist of something else than eatables.

Waiting on the shore were three to welcome them—two men and a dapper little dark-haired woman gesticulating in torrential French. If Donald had

not already been in France and thereby many a time witnessed the greetings of a vivacious race, he might have been confirmed in his suspicions of the eccentric character of the party; for the maid, unnerved by cold nights and this unfamiliar camp life, had verged on hysterics at the prolonged absence of her mistress and was recovering in a pantomime violent enough to excuse anyone for thinking she was possessed.

The tall man beside her looked severe and cadaverous enough to be her warden, but was introduced by the Princess as "Mr. Griffin, my manager." The dyspepsia of which Mr. Griffin was a victim had been accentuated by the camp food provided by Indian Pete, and after six days of accumulated misery, he was a most unhappy looking object.

The square-jawed stubby fellow with the camera who stood beside him chewing gum was Jack Lawson the press-agent, cheeriest of the three, since although new to the woods, he had roughed it in other ways as a reporter.

In the background of dark woods, like a spirit of evil, stood a sallow-skinned half-breed whom Donald at once identified as Indian Pete, while still further back beside the large dirty tent to the right were the other guides.

Hector snorted when he saw the Indian's camp-fire of two-and-a-half sticks, and set to with his axe, while Donald unloaded the provisions. In a few minutes Hector had a roaring fire, and a little later was regaling the disconsolate with a luxurious

meal. Indian Pete looked on in silence, whittling a stick with a hunting knife, while the Princess sat on a log absorbed in cigarettes.

When the meal was finished, Hector beckoned Indian Pete to one side—not so far away, however, that Donald could not hear.

"You dirty dog!" said Hector. "Poaching again! Well, this is the last time you'll have the chance—you'll lose your license over this, or my name is not Hector Macdonald. Now, get a move on and wash the dishes—it's all you're fit for, you dirty yellow dog."

Indian Pete's eyes blazed, but he knew he was in the wrong. "Yellow dog" exactly described him as he slunk down to the edge of the stream and set about washing the plates and pans.

While Hugh engaged the Princess in conversation, Donald sauntered along the trail, where he was soon joined by the press-agent.

"Out of what blue sky did you drop?" asked that worthy.

"These happen to be our waters," answered Donald. "It's you that are the surprise party."

"That so?" said the press-agent, flippantly. "What are you then—millionaires in disguise?"

"Don't you know a millionaire when you see one?" retorted Donald.

"Sure I ought to," said the other. "I've worked for enough of them to know them in the dark. They are my usual line—dollar a year men at Washington—I write the articles they sign for the maga-

zines. This is a new stunt for me, this Movie Princess—”

“Movie Princess!” exclaimed Donald. “I guessed she wasn’t the real thing.”

“What d’ye mean by not-the-real-thing?” snapped the press-agent.

“If she was the real thing,” said Donald, “where’s the red carpet? Whenever we have a real Princess in Canada, we always roll out a red carpet and play ‘God Save the King.’”

“You do, do you?” said the press-agent. “Well, we are Americans and we don’t. But she’s a real Princess, sure thing. Dates back to the Middle Ages. It was a Bank President who unloaded her on to me—said I lacked imagination and needed fresh inspiration. Gee, but I’m getting it. She’s sure one skylark.”

“She looks it,” assented Donald, “all except the costume. Whoever thought of that?”

“Her own bright fancy. And as for you, I think she expected to find cowboys in hair pants throwing lassoes and bucking broncoes—that was her idea of Canada—by the way where are your Canadian cowboys anyway?”

“All that I ever knew went to France,” said Donald. “But if you were to look hard, you might find one or two around here milking moose.”

“Some milkers, eh?” replied the press-agent sheepishly, realising that he had met his match. “Got any of that milk handy?”

“Food been pretty short?” retorted Donald.

"The cats haven't been equal to a Friar's Club Blue Plate," admitted the other. "Gee! You certainly put one over on Indian Pete—are you from the Ritz Carlton?"

"Yes," said Donald, smiling. "The one in Plug Street."

"Oho!—returned soldier?" said the other with sudden intelligence. "It was my luck to be thrown out of the draft—flat feet—who would ever have known we were in for a war like this? Say, did you take any prisoners?"

"Not on your life," said Donald scornfully.

"Do you mean to say you killed them?"

"They died a natural death—weak hearts."

"Go on—you're kidding!"

"Foolish questions get foolish answers," said Donald, and walked back whistling to the camp-fire.

Hugh was still talking to the Princess. Donald gave the lawyer a sign as he passed, and a few minutes later Hugh joined him.

"Just been sounding that press-agent fellow," said Donald. "This Princess is a fourflusher. She's only a moving-picture actress."

"She may be that," said Hugh, "but she's a Princess all the same. I met her once before, though she does not remember me. I'll tell you the story when we get back to camp tonight. Hector wants you to take us out fishing in the big canoe while he goes back to see what the other fellows are figuring on. They may want to break camp tomorrow and he wants the cabin anyway for a hunting party."

"Righto!" said Donald, and went down to the shore to get the canoe ready.

That took only a minute. Not so with the Princess.

She walked over to her tent and clapped her hands three times. This was the summons to her maid, who came out as if to slow music from a neighbouring tent.

"Fetch me my sports," said the Princess. "I am going out in the canoe."

When the maid reappeared with an armful of garments Donald sat down to a pipe till the Princess was dressed for the occasion. He was joined by Griffin, the manager, evidently in a mood to find fault.

"The worst of this God-forsaken country," said Griffin, "is that there don't seem to be any fish in your rivers. We haven't caught a thing yet. Pete himself admits it. Whenever we get out our rods he says, 'No good—no good,' and he is sure right."

"Let me see your tackle," said Donald.

To his amusement, Griffin produced two short stiff bass rods with artificial bait and lures.

"Pete was right," said Donald, laughing. "We don't fish for trout in this country with depth bombs. Luckily I brought a fly rod with me, otherwise I'd have to go back to the other camp."

By the time he had set this up, the Princess had reappeared, very chic, in a loose black and white striped costume of silk jersey with open collar and

turned up skirts and a lavish display of slender ankle, her hair now covered with a striped tam-o'-shanter.

"Do we dress for dinner?" stage-whispered Donald to the press-agent, who had joined them.

"You bet we do," replied Lawson, "also for luncheon and five o'clock tea. You should see us in our early morning negligée. Marie, the maid, sleeps with three large innovation trunks screaming of Paris."

The mystery of the fleet of canoes was now explained. Donald began to have more sympathy for Indian Pete. No wonder that some things had got lost in the rapids.

"The only thing we forgot to bring with us," continued Lawson, "was the orchestra."

As if in answer to his sarcasm, an owl hooted from the opposite bank of the river. The Princess could not understand why they were all laughing when she came down to the canoe, but was relieved to find the ill-temper disappearing.

Hector had commandeered Lawson to take snapshots of his own camp, and for lack of a rod, Griffin also elected to go with him. Donald and Hugh and the Princess, therefore, went off alone to a likely pool, fed deep down by icy springs.

This particular pool was easiest fished from the shore, and, once on shore, Hugh was content to let Donald show his skill. The moment his flies touched the water, there was a double swirl and bir-rr-rr-r-r went the reel under the strain. The Princess screamed with excitement.

"Two of them—pound and a half each," called out Donald. "Fetch the landing net, Mr. Johnson, I'll play them over beside that tree."

The trout put up a good fight, but Donald was too deft, and in five minutes they were ashore. Again and again he showed his skill—the long unerring cast so delicately falling, the lightning strike and the joy of battle. Eager at first to try her hand, the Princess soon grew tired of her own clumsiness and found sufficient entertainment in watching the guide at action in the most finished of all the arts. Hugh for his part was fishing in his own particular way, extracting from the lady such personal information as might some day be of use to him as counsel either for the plaintiff or for the defence.

Some of this cross-examination Donald heard and found most entertaining. As for instance when Hugh said to her:

"The question may seem impertinent, but would you not have preferred to bring a larger retinue?"

"What retinue would you expect?" she answered with a laugh. "Ought I to have a Court Chamberlain and a Mistress of the Robes in order to live up to your American ideals? Let me tell you that there are Princesses and Princesses. I am a Polish Princess. In these democratic days, Court Chamberlains exist mostly in the pages of American romancers. We have supplanted them in real life with business managers, so that, as you so admirably express it, we can 'cash in' on our titles."

Then when she saw Hugh's eyebrows lift:

"Ah!" she added. "And if you had lived these last three years in Europe, you would know that we need the cash."

"Not quite so crazy as Hector thought," said Donald to himself. His had always been a matter-of-fact mind, and the Princess of the fairy tales had never appealed to him. Whether Poland had princesses or not was beyond his ken. He remembered the schoolboy recitation ending up with the line:

"And Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell!" and concluded that this was the offspring of a down-and-out dynasty. Well, one had to live, and if she was reduced to earning a living by her wits, she was entitled to more sympathy than if she belonged to the most brilliant of the leisured classes.

"Indian Pete is my Master of the Horse," continued the Princess. "As for Marie, when you know her better, you will realise that she is not only Mistress of the Robes and Lady of the Bedchamber but is also Privy Purse, Privy Seal, Lord High Steward, Grand Almoner, everything almost except Keeper of the Conscience. She has the essential qualifications of a court official—she is vain, selfish, inconsiderate, arrogant, overbearing and insolent to everyone except her mistress or those of equivalent rank; but she is humble, devoted, subservient to those admittedly above her. In a word, if women had souls, which God forbid, Marie would have the soul of a lackey."

The reason for the Princess's presence gradually came to light. She was indeed a "movie" star, or

rather a "movie" comet, new to America, but burning bright in the European firmament, until the war transferred her Paris studio into a hospital. She had come to try her fortune in America, had been tempted with large salaries but preferred to be independent. She already owned her own studio in the Bronx, with her own directors. The American motion picture seemed to her to be crude, in spite of its mechanical perfection.

"I am reminded of your way of fishing," she explained. "Mr. Griffin supplied us with machinery, but you catch the trout with brains. There are, of course, exceptions among the motion-picture makers over here—D. W. Griffith, for instance, a Welshman who some day will make America famous."

She had wealthy backers in Paris and perfect confidence in her own theories, her handicap being that she knew so little of North America. Among the scenarios which had been bought for her was one with a Canadian setting. Her director had proposed to "fake" this, but she had rebelled, in her obstinacy undertaking to find the location herself. Canada was a country that had appealed to her ever since the Canadian army had appeared in France. Here was a nation that had volunteered to fight for freedom three thousand miles away—without any territorial ambition—without anything to gain. These Canadians had come like new Crusaders to fight for an ideal. They came too from a country like her own Poland, in its day the granary of Europe—a country of lakes and rivers and forests and

plains and mountains in the Rockies like her own Tatra Mountains in the Carpathians. She had fallen in love with Canada before she had seen it, and felt it her duty to make this Canadian picture true. Her mistake had been to entrust the details of the expedition to Mr. Griffin, who had never been in the woods himself. Indian Pete, to whom they had been directed, was able to forage for the less particular sportsmen, but had neither the experience nor equipment to deal with such a party. Fortune indeed had favoured her in finding the Hoodoo Camp. The night before, Marie had given notice—Marie, the pearl she had brought from Paris.

"My God!" Donald heard the Princess exclaim to Hugh. "To think that I should have to look for another maid in New York, to replace my Marie, my indispensable staff, prop, support, buttress, mainstay, sheetanchor, the fountain and origin of my incomparable wardrobe, the one and only begetter of my complexion, the architect of my coiffure! Mr. Johnson, you are a lawyer—it is your profession to get unfortunate people out of trouble—cannot you help a poor Princess, cannot you devise some scheme by which I can reconcile my treasure?"

"Speaking as a man rather than as a lawyer," replied Hugh, "I should recommend you to distract her attention from her discomforts by diverting her heart. Could we not get up a little love affair, say, with Donald there?"

"Admirable!" she exclaimed, and though her voice was low, every word carried to Donald's em-

barrassed ears. "Excellent! But not with Donald—he is too handsome—I reserve him for myself—I will give you Hector for your experiment."

"Hector!" Donald could imagine, without seeing it, the smile on Hugh's face. "Too old a bird! Can't be done! I have a better idea—anything to oblige a lady in distress. I shall inveigle the heart of little Marie myself."

The Princess laughed, and Donald, remembering the unshaven, uncouth appearance of the lawyer, understood her merriment. Hugh, however, was undismayed.

"I submit my brief at a disadvantage," he continued. "Give me a razor and access to my suitcase and half an hour's tête-à-tête with your pearl without price, and you will admit I have earned my fee."

"Which is—?"

"The gratitude of a Princess," replied the lawyer.

"Gratitude indeed! Your courage is infectious. I begin to have hope—but do not let it go too far—I did not bring my Marie all the way from Paris to hand her to an American husband. Besides that you may find her somewhat *difficile*."

With the trout that Donald caught, fried in bacon with a sprinkling of corn meal, and with fruit and wine brought from Hector's stores, they had a jolly lunch away from camp.

The midday sun made up for the cool night, and after lunch they were glad to rest in the shade.

There the Princess plied Donald with questions about the country she had come to. In camp he had let others do the talking, but now, as if by magic—and after all there is magic in a pair of beautiful brown eyes—his tongue was loosened, and he told the tale of the log drives, of the ice that cut its mark so high upon the banks of the rivers, of the beavers and their wonderful houses, of the trapping in winter, of the bear and the deer and moose, of the salmon run and the ways of trout.

The setting of his story was more romantic than he himself realised. The pool where they had been fishing was on an outlet connecting the lake above with another lake lower down. Through a clearing one could see the higher lands or ridges covered with maple and beech and birch, which already had been kissed by the first frost and were turning with the lovely colours of the Canadian autumn—scarlet and russet and gold behind the evergreen of the conifers. Under the influence of so fair a landscape, with the blue sky overhead and the mellow September sun, the Princess began to forget the discomforts of the past week.

It was from his talk of fishing that Donald passed to his life in Flanders and the Somme. He had been showing them his flies, and one of these in particular caught the Princess's fancy.

"What is that one called?" she asked.

"Red Hackle," said Donald, "deadliest of all. I tied that one myself—it's on the same lines, only smaller, as the badge we wear on our bonnets—

Balmorals—tam-o'-shanters—in my old battalion, the Forty-Second."

"Tell me all about your Forty-Second," said the Princess.

"It's a tale," replied Donald proudly, "of a Highland regiment and of two hundred years. We fought the French here in Canada and in Europe up to Waterloo, and then we fought alongside the French in the Crimea. When the Germans swept through Belgium, the original Scottish Forty-Second were in the stopgap army thrown by the British across the Channel. Our Canadian battalion earned its right to the Red Hackle at Ypres and at Fabeck Graben and at the Zollern Redoubt, when seven hundred and fifty of us set out and only two hundred and sixty-six mustered to answer the roll on Tara Hill. That was where I got my first shrapnel, here on the left shoulder. But I was back in time for Vimy Ridge. It snowed that day to beat the band, though it was April the ninth. But snow couldn't stop us any more than machine guns. We went up those slopes and stayed up—thirty hours—then came back short three hundred men—some of my best pals went West at Vimy.

"A few days later in supports I got my own blighty. Still, I had earned my own Red Hackle, and it must be a good colour," he added with a laugh, "or the trout wouldn't rise to it so quickly."

The Princess was so thrilled that she did not notice the approach of Hector and Mr. Griffin. Hec-

tor she did not mind but her manager at such a moment was *de trop*.

"Well, Princess," he sneered, "have you found your location?"

"Yes," she said, "I have found it. Give me a scenario with this setting, and I can forgive you everything else."

"You've got your scenario," replied Mr. Griffin, "in 'The Sunset Garden'—cost you \$2,000 already—all you've got to do is change the cowboys to lumbermen, and instead of the prairies have forest, and instead of auto chase stuff have a logdriver standing on a log racing a canoe down the rapids with you and Indian Pete, and bears instead of wolves will besiege the lonely cabin. Instead of being the millionaire's divorced wife, you will be the jealous squaw of the Indian chief."

"Indeed!" said the Princess, lifting her eyebrows. "But what about the author? That is not the story he wrote."

"The author?" Griffin laughed derisively. "He got his \$2,000—he doesn't cut any ice."

"Not with you, perhaps," she replied coldly, "but with me—yes—he is a brother artist."

Griffin sat down snubbed beside Donald, muttering.

"Crazy with the heat!—she calls herself a Vamp—and afraid to hurt the feelings of an author!"

"I have made my decision," continued the Princess. "We will bring up our company here next summer. I will send an architect here to design and

build a studio and a camp and my dressing-room. Mr. Hector here will supply the logs for the drives, and the canoes and the guides and the food."

"And the architect and the studio," interrupted Hector eagerly.

"The architect?" questioned the Princess.

"I have the architect at the other camp," said Hector. "Mr. Peter Foster of Foster and Demsey, New York. Isn't that so, Mr. Johnson?"

"One of the best, trained at the Beaux Arts," said Hugh, admiring the readiness of this Canadian for any emergency. Like a flash Hector had seen the chance of securing a moving-picture industry for his own territory, a sure season next summer, a market for all his farm produce and a building contract on the top of all. He could well afford to pay an architect's fee.

"But what about the interior sets?" protested Griffin. "Where will you get the current for the Cooper-Hewitts and the Klieg lights?"

"All the current you want in the big rapids above," said Hector. "We've got a power plant ready planned. The only thing we want is capital."

"Trust Hector to be on the spot," said Hugh Johnson. "If the Princess builds her studio, Hector can count on me for \$10,000 of stock in his power plant."

"But the props," continued Griffin, despairingly. "It would take a year to bring them in here by canoe."

"Not the props that I want," said the Princess.

"Some compo-board and draperies—the rest we can build out of lights and shadows."

"But—but—" stuttered Griffin. "This is the wildest gamble."

"So much the better," responded the Princess. "Nearly all the money I ever made was by gambling."

"Just one thing," added Hector, when he saw he had the Princess on his side. "Cut out Yellow Pete. We won't require him in your play unless there is a lynching."

"We'll put one in," said the lady, with a smile. "After that flapjack and bacon he deserves to be hanged."

"Gee whiz!" said Donald, looking at his watch. "Five o'clock! What's the program, uncle? Yellow Pete getting anxious for supper?"

"Keep your knife handy or he'll cook your goose, Donald," said Hector grimly. "I guess you'd better sleep over at our camp tonight, but it's high time you started on that seven course supper for the Princess. That son of a gun will swallow it raw if you don't hustle."

It was indeed material for a seven course meal that Hector brought over, and Donald had his hands full getting it ready before dark. Hugh, who had been invited to stay, took the opportunity to borrow a razor from Mr. Griffin, and present his countenance in a form which would have more effect upon the redoubtable Marie. That much abused person eventually turned out the Princess in

a black velvet evening gown so tight that they marvelled how she ever got into it at all. Not indeed that there was very much to get into, for the arms, shoulders, back and upper half of the bosom were bare, except for a transparent drapery of black tulle.

"What do you say to that?" said the press-agent over the camp-fire to Donald.

"Lucky that the mosquito season is over," replied Donald. "Whatever does she do it for?"

"That's what I asked her the first night in camp," said the press-agent. "We hadn't even this lawyer fellow to provide the excuse. 'My only real companion over here,' was her answer, 'is myself. I could not sit with myself if I were not beautifully gowned.'"

"Give me a lily," groaned Donald, "and let me die in aromatic pain."

The fare that Donald provided was such that the ill-humour of all except Pete and his fellow guides—who had the washing-up to look forward to—disappeared, and when at last Hugh and Donald followed Hector to the Hoodoos' camp, they left a very much more contented party than they had found there in the morning.

A salvo of sarcasm awaited them. Hugh in particular had to run the gauntlet of greetings such as "Holy Mackerel! That was a close shave"—and "At least she kept the whiskers." At the head of the camp-fire two rustic thrones had been built, over which was a large sign reading:

"SAVED FOR DEMOCRACY."

Here Hugh and Donald were forced to sit, with pans in their hands for sceptres.

"This is all fine and dandy," said Hugh, after the drinks had gone round and they called on him for a speech from the throne. "But the joke is on you. The Princess may be a movie actress, and I may look like a boob, but if you'll let me tell you the story of her life, or at least one incident, you'd have done as I did and wanted to follow her up.

"When she broke into camp this morning, I felt sure I had seen her face before, and when she introduced herself as the Princess Stephanie Sobieska, I had her placed. Do you want to hear the rest of the story, boys?"

Hugh was the best storyteller in camp, so in a moment they were all attention.

"First," he said, "someone give me a fill of tobacco."

The pipe duly filled and lit, he drew a puff or two and began:

"The place where I saw her first was a very different place from this. It was about twelve years ago—she makes up well—in an oasis in the Sahara Desert called Biskra, which you may have read about in Robert Hichens' 'The Garden of Allah.' It was through reading that novel that I had gone there, though nominally because I needed a change on account of health. Doc over there wrote my medical certificate."

"I remember the lie," said the Doctor.

"If Biskra," continued Hugh, "were populated only by grown-up Arabs, its monotonous grey would make one think of cemeteries. There are, however, the children, wearing bright *gandouras* of viridian and vermilion, all the more vivid when the sun is splashing light upon them against a mud wall. Another note of colour is given by the Turcos and Spahis with their baggy uniforms of blue and red singing out from the drab *burnous* of the idlers at the doors of the cafés, who spit in the shadow of the accursed foreigner as he passes by. You see the flare of the Orient also in the Soudanese woman with her clanging anklets. Strangest of all are the streets of the *Ouled Nail*, a race of dancing girls who earn their dowries by the oldest of all professions in a quarter picturesque with balconies and sun-washed walls and doorsteps alive with these henna-stained ladies of pleasure.

"I arrived at Biskra about the time of the races. We saw the *goums* or Arab squadrons swarm in from the Sahara and from the Aures Mountains, bearing the brilliant banners of their sheiks. At the end of each race they would gallop down the course in threes and fours, firing their long muskets. They were the Saracens of the days of the Crusades.

"The balcony of my hotel overlooked a grey courtyard, the walls of which were covered with scarlet bougainvillea, over which one saw a road, and beyond that the barrack square of the Chasseurs. The balcony extended all the length of the hotel, and

though perhaps a dozen rooms gave access to it, few of the guests were seen there except myself and one particular lady.

"I never had the courage to address her. She had a peculiar way of seeing through you. In the hotel register her name appeared as Stephanie de Brémont, immediately below that of the Prince Casimir Sobieski, a young man in an advanced stage of tuberculosis, to whom she seemed to act in the capacity of nurse and companion. So at least in my guilelessness I thought, but various hints and shrugs from other guests and hotel servants soon suggested a more intimate connection. If, however, she did belong to the *demi-monde*, she did not flaunt her profession, but dressed always quietly and simply, was fond of knitting and sat unassumingly on an ordinary deck-chair, interested just like any other human being in the tapestry of flowers, the passing camels on the road, the gay parade within the barrack yard. As you may already have guessed, she was the lady whom you saw this morning and who announced herself as the Princess Stephanie Sobieska.

"Sometimes indeed the Prince came out on the balcony to join her, but as a rule she sat alone while he remained inside, playing the piano, on which he played really well. Chopin seemed to be his favourite composer—he played those wonderful polonaises and mazurkas sometimes for an hour on end, when suddenly the music would be interrupted by a paroxysm of coughing, and Stephanie would hurriedly withdraw.

"The *femme de chambre*, or maid on our hotel floor, said that she and the Prince gave more trouble than they were worth. They had their meals in their own rooms, together of course, or did not dine downstairs till the officers, who messed at the hotel, were gone. They were not rich and gave no better tips than other people—unless indeed they had been lucky at the Casino, and during the last week Stephanie was said to have won a fortune. As for the Prince, he was just a skeleton and a cough—he had only six months to live—some said less.

"I never can forget his appearance. Once on a time he may have been handsome, but with his sunken cheeks and his head cropped so close that it looked almost as if it had been shaved, he reminded one of nothing so much as a skull and cross bones.

"I said hardly anyone came to the balcony except myself and Stephanie, but there was sometimes a third, a tall stout figure in Arab dress with dark beard. He was the Kaid of Sidi-Aures—one of the most conspicuous figures in the hotel—and usually a guest at the officers' table. On his breast he wore a row of medals, for he was a Chief whom the French Republic delighted to honour. The Kaid certainly spoke excellent French. When I asked him what the medals represented, 'Allah only knows!' he replied. 'Perhaps because I am known to be a ladykiller.' He was a cynic, this Arab chief.

"One evening after dinner to pass the time I sauntered out with Emichaud, the robber-guide attached to the hotel, to hear the new attraction at

his favourite coffee-house. She came from Tunis and was said to be very fat and lovely. She sang an interminable song in a shrill voice, cracking a whip at the end of each verse.

"'When will it finish?' I said impatiently to Emichaud.

"'Perhaps tonight—perhaps tomorrow,' he replied. 'Who can tell?'

"I did not wait to see but left to look for something more thrilling at the Casino. And I got it.

"As usual the *rouge et noir* table was crowded. At a garrison so remote from Paris, almost the only pleasures left to the officers were jealousy and play. The Prince was a *habitué*—in the few months left to him he still had the excitement of gambling. His pale aristocratic face stood out among a thousand. So too did the face of Stephanie, her auburn hair bound in Greek style with a fillet, her profile also Greek, with a complexion which is no doubt worth a fortune to her now in the movies.

"As I came up to the table, the Prince was playing, while Stephanie was whispering her advice. The stakes grew higher, and the Prince's face grew harder. Once he spoke back irritably. I saw her shrug her shoulders and look round.

"A moment before the officers in the room had all been staring at her. Now as one man they turned their eyes in other directions. Only one of those near her did not turn away, and this was the Kaid, licking his lips like a cat sure of its mouse. If it had not been for him, one might have thought she

had no friend there—some friend, believe me! Anyhow she smiled in answer. Again she turned to the Prince, and again the officers stared at her.

“‘What is the matter?’ I asked the Kaid in a whisper.

“‘Her brother is the matter. He is an officer of Chasseurs, and her presence here with the Prince is dishonouring. He has asked the regiment to boycott her—here he comes—he must have returned from Constantine.’

“A lieutenant of Chasseurs, very handsome, was sauntering towards the table. I had noticed him once or twice at the hotel, and had remarked his face, wondering where I had seen its parallel—of course!—Stephanie!—they might have been twins.

“Just at that moment the seat at the table beside her was vacated. With his eyes only on the stakes, the lieutenant sat down. Then, recognising his sister, Stephanie, his neighbour, he rose and walked away, a little paler than before, to a group of brother officers.

“‘Gee Whillikins!’ I said to the Kaid. ‘That’s a nice way for a brother to treat his sister.’

“‘He is an officer of Chasseurs,’ said the Kaid.

“The Prince was commencing to win, and frowned when Stephanie evidently whispered a suggestion to retire. All the same he rose with her and coughed his way on her arm into another room.

“‘I give him a month to live,’ said the Kaid.

“‘Don’t you have any pity,’ I said, ‘for her, if not for him?’

"I still can see the Kaid's sneer.

" 'Why pity him if he is a Prince? Or her, if she is his mistress? Surely his rank, such as it is—if he is only a Polish Prince—suffices for a woman of that type.'

"De Brémont now returned to the rooms. He had evidently been drinking. I saw the Colonel of his regiment go up and pat him on the shoulder. The lieutenant took the hint and walked towards the door. Then, glancing at the table, and noticing that the field was clear, a little less steadily came back and began to play.

"The stakes rose rapidly and the game turned into a contest between de Brémont and a rich old Jew. We were fascinated by the play, standing three or four deep. De Brémont was now staking thousands of francs at a time. Luck went definitely against him and he lost everything to the Jew.

" 'That's the end of de Brémont,' whispered the Kaid.

"Someone pushed in between us. It was Stephanie who must have heard what was happening.

"She placed a bundle of notes on the table before her brother. De Brémont stared in a dazed sort of way, stretched out his hand to take the money, then looked up.

" 'Go on, Valerien,' said Stephanie. 'Luck will turn.'

"The lieutenant rose deliberately and offered her his chair.

"'Mademoiselle,' he said, with emphasis on the *Mademoiselle*, 'you wish to play?'

"Without waiting for an answer he made for the door. The Colonel caught his arm, but he shook himself free.

"For a moment there was a silence. Then the voice of the croupier.

"*'S'il vous plait, mesdames et messieurs, faites vos jeux.'*

"Deadly pale, Stephanie took the vacant seat and staked the bank roll.

"The Kaid, I noticed, had shifted his position and was now beside her. The Prince was not there.

"Suddenly a shot rang out from the garden outside the door. The gamblers suspected tragedy, caught up their stakes and hurried out.

"The presence of Death always unnerves me. I could not follow, but even where I stood I could picture the scene, and most vividly of all that delicate face of de Brémont, paler now than ever in its last sleep.

"Then, looking up, I saw that just one other still remained in the room. It was de Brémont's sister, Stephanie. She also had not the courage to look Death in the face."

The speaker paused, and for a minute there was silence.

"Is that the end of the story?" asked someone.

"It was the end for Lieutenant de Brémont," said Hugh. "He was buried next day. On the same morning a telegram from Paris was printed in the

local paper announcing the death of the Princess Natalie Sobieska, our Prince's titular wife. I must say for him that he wasted no time on court mourning. A week later he had made his nurse and companion, the former Stephanie de Brémont, the Princess Natalie's lawful successor."

"My golly!" exclaimed Peter Foster. "He must have been a cheerful person to live with."

Hugh's story had made a deep impression on Donald, and that night his somewhat morbid imagination ran riot in dreams. One effect of the nerve tension of his war experiences was that although by day he could direct his thoughts to present realities, under the spell of sleep he once more lived the life of a soldier, now on parade, now doing fatigue duty, now creeping out at night on a wire-cutting expedition, now shivering in the trenches with fierce excitement at the minute before zero, now in a wild swirl of hand to hand bayonet fighting or choking with the fumes of gas. Sometimes the association of ideas carried him back to his grandfather's tales of the old original Black Watch, and so it was that this night—this story of the desert at Biskra brought to his mind the battle of Alexandria where the Forty-Second had fought their way into the ruins of Cleopatra's Palace and had captured the standard of Napoleon's "Invincible Legion." For its heroism in that desert campaign, the regiment had won the insignia of the Sphinx—The Sphinx!—Before his eyes there grew the reproduction of a picture he had seen of a modern Sphinx—crouched upon a

rock, with the head and breasts of a woman. The nude figure of a man was reaching up to embrace the woman he thought so fair, only to feel too late, with terror, her claws gripping and piercing and crushing him to the rock. In this dream the face of the Sphinx seemed to grow nearer, to loom over him—it was the face of the Princess—and he, Donald, was the man—and—”

Then he woke up in a cold sweat.

CHAPTER III

DURING the preceding afternoon, when Hector had asked the Hoodoos their intentions, everyone declared for breaking up. Most of them were due back at their offices in a few days, and the hunting parties would arrive and require the camps as soon as the season opened on the 15th. On the morning after Hugh's story, however, there was a mental change. One after another came to Hector privately suggesting an introduction to the Princess. Whether it was that in his heart of hearts the true born American has a sneaking affection for titles, or whether it was the fascination that the lady with a past so often has for the married man away from home, it is hard to tell. Hector, however, held them to their purpose by painting a lurid picture of the state of the larder.

"Never bargained on two parties at once," he said, shaking his shaggy head, "and that movie outfit is a regular whale for food."

Peter Foster, who had been nominated as the Princess's architect, was, however, in another category. He was up early next morning to shave, and donned a presentable suit of clothes. Donald took him down to the Two Mile Pool, while Hector conveyed Hugh and another cargo of camp delica-

cies. Hugh's presence was requested by Hector in view of the Princess's uncertain financial status.

Whether she paid her bills or not, she certainly patronised good houses. She welcomed them in a gown that had Paris written all over it—a sheath of dark brown silk girdled with a bronze sash knitted behind. Stockings and shoes were also brown and brown too the cloche hat under the brim of which her brown lustrous eyes were very deadly. She had a scarf of bronze tulle, the ends of which fluttered out behind under her arms as she came to meet them. Round her hat was a bronze silk cord, from which over the brim hung two red and blue little manikins like tassels, gaily dancing with every step she took.

"You see, Mr. Donald," she said, pointing to these with a laugh, "I too have come from the war. These are Nnette and Rintintin, our mascots in Paris against air raids."

While the plans for the proposed studio and camp were being discussed, Donald had another edifying conversation with the press-agent.

"Have a heart, young fellow," said the latter, "and put me in the way of a real live story. My job is to flash this Princess as a Vampire. Haven't you got a Governor General or a Railroad President in these parts, that she could lure to destruction? I paid a visit yesterday to rubber a victim at your camp, but as soon as I saw that bunch of hoboes, I faded out."

"Our Governor General," answered Donald, "is

busily engaged on a afternoon teas at Ottawa. Please do not disturb him or the British Empire might fall. Our Railway Presidents are on their annual trips out West. Our Vice-Presidents dot the landscape more freely, but none of them is suspected of anything worse than Black Jack or auction bridge, so I don't know how we can fit you out. But if the Princess stays on for a couple of days more, we can give her a moose hunt—and, come to think of it, that's something in the vamping line, for we call the bull away from his old cow to what he thinks is another cow."

"PRINCESS VAMPS BULL MOOSE—the very idea," exclaimed the press-agent, delighted. "You've saved my life, young fellow, my lad. I was afraid I had come all this way to draw a blank, but that's a story I can put over blindfold. Let me get a close-up of her with her arms round the dying moose's head, and it'll be a scream."

As they were discussing this idea of Donald's, Mr. Griffin joined them in a very bad temper.

"What do you think of this, bo?" said the press-agent, unfolding the scheme.

"Anything for a quiet life," responded Mr. Griffin. "I hope you all get drowned. Take my advice," he continued, addressing Donald. "Steer clear of movie stars, especially the imported variety, unless you wish to die young. Of all the—"

"Don't mention it," interrupted Donald, afraid that the Princess might overhear. "I can imagine the rest."

Mr. Griffin glared at him—then reacted into a laugh.

"I guess you're right. What's the use of talking? But if you had had to put up with as much as I have you'd have gone bughouse—have a cigar."

Lighting one for himself, the manager sat down beside them. Under the soothing influence of tobacco Mr. Griffin became more coherent and recalled some of his tribulations.

"It was in a seven-reeler of Delilah that I saw her first—screened in Paris by a company that was new to me—a regular hair-raiser.

"'Gee Whiz!' I said to myself. 'That looks like a million dollars to me—she should have all the other Vamps skinned a mile on the high society stuff. I made enquiries and was told that she was an honest-to-goodness Vamp, not one of those hybrids that Vamp on the screen and then give interviews to the magazines about home and mother. The market was running short of Vamps, and it looked as if Theda Bara would have a monopoly unless we cut in, and this Polish Princess seemed to fill the bill. So I pulled my passports for France—me for the boulevards.

"This was when President Wilson was still doing the neutral stunt. All the way across I studied French, and even got a smattering of Polish, so that I could parlezvous with the lady when I met her. When I got there, surprise number one—she could speak English as well as I could myself. When I

asked her how she did it, she replied that in Europe education is not confined to the middle classes. Surprise number two—in the course of a friendly little game of poker, she trimmed me so thoroughly that by the time it came to fixing the contract, she had me hired instead of me hiring her. Which meant that instead of my bringing her back with me, she sent me on ahead of her till she had bought herself a whole shipload of hats and gowns. In the meanwhile Uncle Sam gets into the war, and it was the devil's own job extracting her from France. When she did arrive, and I let loose on the landing stage, her only remark was, 'Pray compose yourself. You will soon be sorry I came.' And I was, and I am, and I ever shall be."

"Why don't you quit?" asked the press-agent.

"So I would if she weren't so infernally competent," replied Griffin, ruefully. "Everything she does is against my advice, and every time she proves her case. That's the annoying part of it. I go and hire the highest priced technical director in New York, and after two weeks she fires him for a painter fellow who cleans out the studio and tells me to shoot back the junk to the place I rented it from. Then they hand out to each other highbrow talk about simplicity and art, and the worst of it is her pictures are so effective, you can't deny that she is right. What's more, she makes a picture at half my estimate—just by cutting out the frills. If there's one thing that gets my goat, it's to be proved in the wrong by a woman."

"Is it as bad as that, bo?" said the press-agent. "Give us some more of the local colour."

"Well," continued Mr. Griffin, "I had a dozen scripts picked out for her, bought and paid for, and what does she do but go and read them—*read them*," he raised his voice derisively, "as if that was not the director's job, and her job to register and do the action stuff. Anyhow, it gave her the chance to argue, and once a woman starts to argue you may as well quit. She certainly is a bad-tempered performer with the tongue. 'Yours is a wonderful nation,' she said to me one day, handing me back a script. 'I see that you produce even your scenarios by machinery.' Then again, take the five-reeler we had written around the Garden of Eden—it was called *The Serpent*—she said she couldn't play the part of Eve till she sent over to Paris and had a fig-leaf embroidered by Gabrielle Chanel—can you beat it? Although I had imported her as a Vamp, she would not live up to the part the way we planned it outside the studio. Over in Paris she was already trained to Russian Cigarettes, but in New York she flatly declined to wear the \$20,000 panther-skin cloak I had gotten for her—she said she preferred to look like a well-dressed gentlewoman than an escaped chorus girl—if it was an advertisement I was looking for, it would make much more talk if I wore it myself and called myself her Janissary. It was the same with the oriental furniture. As soon as she saw it, she rang for the manager at the Astmore, where I had rented a suite for her, and

asked if he mistook her for the Yellow Peril. Then she made him put in chairs and tables that might have come from Grand Rapids. All the incense I had ordered for her to burn in her reception room was wasted, as she is a fresh-air fiend. Next time I get hold of a Vamp, she's going to be a good American from Kalamazoo."

When the moose-hunting proposal was put up to her, the Princess expressed herself as charmed. Hector figured that there were enough provisions to last the additional two days, particularly if Donald undertook to catch the fish. There were plenty of moose in the woods—one could hear them calling every night now, and the weather looked promising. He had a couple of spare rifles in camp, and none of the hunting parties were due at this particular spot for five or six days yet.

"Let me get these men started off for home," he said, "and then I'll come back and guide you myself. Donald can handle the canoe and Mr. Johnson can do the shooting, but it's me that knows the ground and that can bring Mr. Moose where we want him."

Except in the eyes of those who believe in original sin, Indian Pete might never have become a villain. It is true that his penchant for fishing in other people's preserves was reprehensible, and yet not so difficult to understand when one remembered that the Melicite was in New Brunswick before the white man, and the white man's appropriation of streams and territories under the pretext of game and fish

preservation never did appeal to the In an even though certain territory should be allotted as a reservation for his own particular use. Pete was only a half-breed, but so far as fishing and hunting were concerned he was pure Indian.

He was only a half-breed, and his French-Canadian wife was fond of reminding him of it. To tell the truth, she nagged him till he was glad of any excuse to get away from her into the woods. There as a rule he had silence, even though it was usually accompanied by hard work, and a quiet smoke beside his camp-fire in the woods was Pete's idea of heaven.

When he undertook to supply the guides and outfit for the Princess's party, Pete jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. In the first place he could not fully decipher the letters sent him, and had not understood that there were to be ladies in the party, much less anyone so fastidious as the Princess. Then this amazing litter of trunks upset his calculations and his temper. Thirdly, his nagging wife paled into insignificance beside the arrogance and importunities of the maid, Marie, who vented upon Pete's unfortunate head the irritation caused by her own mistress' exactions, driving him from pillar to post with her insatiable demands for hot water and milk and camp supplies at all hours of the night. She was ten times more exacting than the Princess herself, and treated him as if he belonged to some lower order of insect. His insufficient vocabulary handicapped him in making excuses for his catering. By the time that Hector appeared upon the scene,

Pete was in a state of exasperation bordering on insanity.

Hector's intervention was the last straw. The loss of his license would be fatal to the half-breed who dreaded above all things the fury of his wife when she heard the news. He cursed the unlucky day on which he had met this party and spent yet another sleepless night planning some way out of his predicament. When next morning Hector added insult to injury by pitching him into his canoe and telling him to clear out, his fury knew no bounds. But that fury did not express itself in open opposition. He merely scowled in answer, and though he poled out of sight downstream, he had no intention yet of going home till he had accomplished his revenge.

At four o'clock on the day of the hunt Hector touched Donald's shoulder and they got breakfast ready. It was a still, frosty night. Not a breath of air ruffled the surface of the water above the pool, barely visible in the misty darkness. During the night they had heard moose calling, and at one time there was a long continuous crashing and smashing in the woods, which Hector said must be a fight between two bull moose in the ridges five miles away. Any talking was done in a whisper, as the least sound might spoil their chances.

It was six years since Donald had last hunted moose, and though in his time he had brought low not a few fine heads, he was thrilled as never before. If it had been only Hugh for whom he was guid-

ing, he might not have felt it so much, but now the reputation of Canada was at stake; they must make good in the eyes of this European. They had just one day to prove that the country had its big game, but if they had luck and could get the Princess her head, she would surely become enthusiastic, and Hector would have his studio.

The plan of campaign had been arranged the evening before. About a mile from the camp down river there was a swampy clearing through which meandered a sluggish stream barricaded at one point by a beaver dam. Just above this a rocky promontory cut into the river, capped by a clump of scraggy spruce which somehow had evaded the onslaught of the ice-jams. From this clump Hector was to call, hoping to entice a bull into the open swamp. In the deep grass beside the stream Donald and the Princess and Hugh could lie concealed. If the moose should come at all, they would get him before seven o'clock.

Stealthily the two canoes slipped through the dark to the place appointed. Hector took Jack Lawson, the press-agent, in his canoe, for a photographic record. Not a sound came from either bank of the river, and both Donald and Hector used their paddles so skilfully that there was not a splash. At one moment indeed Hector knocked his paddle three times against the gunwale of his canoe.

"Imitating a bull," whispered Donald to the Princess.

In silence they took up their positions. They

were just in time, for already the morning twilight was beginning to flare the sky and scatter the mist. Now from the beaver dam Donald could clearly see the silhouette of the clump of spruce. He handed his field glasses to the Princess and whispered, "Look half way up the middle tree," pointing to Hector who had climbed up to a vantage ground from which his call would carry clear.

At last it came—deepening to a wail and a low grunt.

"That's just the way we hunt for wolves in my country," whispered the Princess. "The hunter imitates the howl of the she-wolves, and the males come after the call."

Fifteen minutes passed with no sound in answer. The light was clearer now and when Hector lifted his birch-bark horn to call again they could see him distinctly.

This time, after a minute's pause, Donald held up his hand and then pointed to the head of the swamp. They all listened, tense with excitement. The bush behind crashed and cracked.

Nearer and nearer—then quiet.

Donald put his finger on his lips to signal silence. The bull was reconnoitring the swamp before trusting himself into the open. Then after an agonising pause they heard a splash. It was the moose crossing the stream above the dam. Donald signed to Hugh and to the Princess to get their rifles ready. The Princess shook her head. She was shivering with cold and excitement and could not trust herself

to shoot. The smart blue serge she wore was no doubt suited for a September constitutional at Aix-les-Bains, but on a frosty morning in a New Brunswick swamp it was poor protection. Hugh was fortunately less afflicted, and lifted his rifle to the shoulder. He had a perfect target, for the dark mass of the old bull, broadside on and crowned by a great head of antlers, appeared at the edge of the river only fifty yards away.

Crack went Hugh's rifle, and with a groan the bull dropped down. "Got him!" cried Donald exultantly, and, forgetting his own lame leg, was dashing forward when three unexpected shots in rapid succession were fired from across the river. As Donald pressed forward there was another shot from the same point, with the whizz of a bullet.

"Down!" he yelled to Hugh, who had risen to follow him, and both flung themselves upon the ground.

"Some fool across there is shooting wild," he said angrily.

"Get into the canoe, Donald," came the voice of Hector through his birch-bark megaphone. "It's Indian Pete—behind the cedar."

Donald obeyed and crawled into the canoe, which he cautiously paddled to the mouth of the stream. Out of the corner of his eye he had seen Hector slip off his tree, and now he saw him paddling across towards the cedar, while Indian Pete was stepping into his canoe with the evident intention of escaping. Darting out into the river, Donald made for the

half-breed, who, realising that he was intercepted, stepped back on shore and stood waiting their arrival.

Pete had fired his last cartridge, but he still had his axe, and when Donald sprang on shore he found Hector with a broken paddle holding off the Indian, who was snarling like a dog as he struck at the guide.

"Leave him to me," cried Donald, snatching Hugh's rifle as he ran to help his uncle. He could have shot Pete, but there was more fun in clubbing him, and club him he did, with a twist learned in the old days of Hun-chasing, spinning the axe out of Pete's hand—then a punch in the stomach followed by a crack on the head which sent its owner very nearly to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

"What was the crazy fool doing anyway?" asked Donald as Hector came up and kicked the prostrate body.

"Dirty yellow dog," said Hector, "but he very near got me. Look at this hole in my shirt. If I hadn't spotted him in time and slipped behind the trunk of the tree he'd have had me sure. Then when he saw you coming, he used his last cartridge on the off chance of stopping you. I guess this was his notion of revenge. He knew I'd get his license cut off. If he had hit me, he would have said he was aiming at the moose—I was right in line behind it from where he lay—but Mr. Johnson's shot killed that excuse—the bull was down before Pete had his rifle so much as sighted—as if he could get away with a

cock and bull story like that in this Province—well, he'll lie quiet for an hour or so. We'd better go over and look at your old bull—a dandy, Donald—sixty inch spread—I hope the Princess was not scared.”

They found Jack Lawson, the press-agent, already there. Hector had left him behind, but he had followed on foot along the river bank, had witnessed the fight, and then seeing its successful issue had turned to where the moose lay. Hugh's soft-nosed bullet had torn up that heart, and death had been instantaneous.

“One peach of a fight,” he exclaimed as they stepped on shore. “Where's the Princess?”

Donald found her with Hugh in the spot where he had left them—warmer now in Hugh's sweater and wild with excitement to know what had happened. As they could not see anything they decided to await developments. When they had themselves seen the giant trophy and heard the reason for the other shots and the story of the fight, the nostrils of the Princess dilated.

“It is thrilling,” she exclaimed. “You have truly a wonderful country. You will act it all over again and Mr. Lawson will take photographs—it will be beautiful. Oh, I am so glad I came here.”

“Let's go over and see Indian Pete,” said the press-agent.

The Princess who thought that Pete had been killed suddenly paled.

“Oh, no, no,” she said, shuddering. “I do not

like to see dead bodies. They are unlucky for me."

The press-agent turned and said under his breath to Donald:

"What do you know about that? And she calls herself a Vamp."

Hector it was who saved the situation.

"Pete ain't dead yet, worse luck. He's just having a quiet rest—vermin are hard to kill. I guess he'll keep where he is till we need him."

Hugh, as a lawyer, was more interested to see the bullet holes in the tree where Hector had so narrowly escaped with his life. He examined the direction of the bullets, heard Hector's elucidation and agreed with his theory.

"We can jail him for such life as Donald has left to him," was the lawyer's verdict.

Hugh was delighted at his own prowess in bringing down so fine a head at the first shot, and if he had had his own way, would have used up all the press-agent's films in snap-shots of himself beside the dead moose.

Jack Lawson, however, had his salary to earn, and made pictures of more practical value.

With the help of a make-up kit brought down from the camp and some of Pete's clothes, they transformed Mr. Griffin into a ferocious Melicite, and posed him in fight pictures blood-curdling enough to inspire any scenario writer. The one person not pleased was Indian Pete himself, who recovered consciousness as the last picture was being taken.

He sat up and watched the proceedings in the terrified belief that he was already in another world and that this was the form of punishment reserved for him by the Great Spirit—and then once more fainted away.

CHAPTER IV

ALTHOUGH Hugh Johnson had shot the moose, Donald was the hero of the day. It was in vain for him to protest that over in France such a fight was an every day affair. The fact remained that he had saved Hector's life.

The one most pleased at Donald's new glory was Hector himself, who felt for his nephew the affection more of a father than of an uncle.

When it came out that Donald had won the D. C. M., the Princess clamoured to hear the story. Donald was shy, but Hector told it as it had appeared in the *Official Gazette*—a daring raid on a nest of machine guns. Then they asked to see the medal itself.

"Too valuable to bring out on a trip like this," said Donald. "I might get upset in the rapids and lose it. I wouldn't want to wear it anyway except in full dress."

"And you shall wear it in full dress," said the Princess. "When we get back to Fredericton, you shall walk along the Main Street with me, wearing all your medals. I remember when I was in Paris and saw your Scotch soldiers with their pipers playing and their kilts swinging I would have given anything to have been able to march along with them."

But I had not the courage. Now it is different, I know you—and you will let me march along with you—now won't you?"

Donald laughed and blushed.

"Since you insist, Princess—yes—perhaps—"

Later on as he set about preparing the evening meal, she came over to him and said:

"I feel ashamed when I see you at so menial a task. It is I who should be serving you."

"Forget it, Princess," replied Donald, blushing again. For in spite of himself, a curious thrill passed through him when she spoke to him. "Glad to be able to serve you in any way. Out in the woods we don't think anything menial—everyone has to do his share."

As there was nothing to detain them, Hector hurried the party back to Fredericton.

They had two days' poling to the station on the railway connecting them with Fredericton. It was only two days, but long enough to make them realise that the charm of the Princess was considerably discounted by the exacting insolence of her maid. The Princess had not exaggerated Marie's characteristics, and Hugh Johnson found that all his good nature was required to live up to his undertaking to entertain her. Had he not succeeded in making her think that he was elderly enough and wealthy enough and wicked enough to be at least a senator, he would have made little progress, but Marie entertained a secret ambition to be an old man's darling, and therefore condescended to his flatteries. Hector

and the guides, however, received no such consideration, and two-thirds of their time in camp was spent in ministering to her whims and comfort.

Donald fortunately escaped the lash of her autocracy, as the Princess elected to travel in his canoe, and he became attached, so to speak, to the regular court staff. This distinction rather embarrassed him, but it gave him an opportunity for further interesting conversation.

"I love Canada," remarked the Princess. "It is different from the kind of country I imagined it to be, but nothing could be more beautiful than this river and these forests. And the Canadians—who could help but love them—especially the Canadian soldiers. You see—we Poles cannot forget that it was at Niagara—in a Canadian camp with the help of Canadian officers—that so many recruits for our Polish-American regiments were trained."

"Is that so!" exclaimed Donald. "I did not know."

"More than twenty thousand," she replied. "Volunteers who held true to our watchword '*Jeszcze Polska Nie Zginęła*'—*Poland is not yet lost*—and who offered their lives for the cause. France provided the money and Canada the camp and the training. We owe you a debt of gratitude which can never be fully repaid, but if I can do anything in return for any Canadian I want to do it. What can I do for you?"

In his embarrassment Donald was at a loss for a reply.

She raised the question of his wages, and he told her "three and a half dollars a day."

"Incredible!" she exclaimed. "So hard a life for so little money—and you say you mean to live in these forests all the winter, guiding and trapping. Why do you not come to New York—with me? I can get you a position in the studio, if only as an extra. But you could learn to act—I myself would teach you—you would do very well—you are young and handsome."

Donald flushed but shrugged his shoulders.

"Thank you for the offer," he replied, "but I cannot take it. I owe it to my uncle to help him out this winter—labour is scarce, and I must live an open-air life. I like the life—it is not three and a half dollars a day that keeps me at it. New York would get my goat—besides, in the spring, I mean to go back to my farm."

"To your farm?"

"Yes, the farm," he said, firmly, "out West in British Columbia—in the most beautiful valley in the world. In that moving-picture studio of yours I would be taking orders all the time. No, sirree. I've been taking orders in the army for three years, and I'm fed up with them.

"I was once in New York," continued Donald, "and sometimes in the trenches over there, when I was living in mud, sleeping in mud, eating mud, I used to think 'Me for the bright lights and the steam heat.' But then again, when it was hailing shrapnel, or when I was lying in hospital with my lungs

all blistered up, I kept myself together thinking of that valley out in B. C., where father and I cleared thirty acres or so beside the creek and put in potatoes and alfalfa and trees—apple trees—running ditches and laterals to irrigate the land and make it rich. A fellow gets fond of anything into which he has put real work, and we sure did work on our little homestead. And then the valley itself is so beautiful. It lies along the upper reaches of the Columbia River between two mountain ranges in each of which the peaks are capped with snow most of the year—and yet the valley itself is not so very high, so there is good growth of trees, just like an Old Country park. We don't get so much rain there as here, but more long days of blue sky and sunshine. But if you have a creek like ours you get all the water you want."

She was carried away by his enthusiasm, and her voice softened in sympathy.

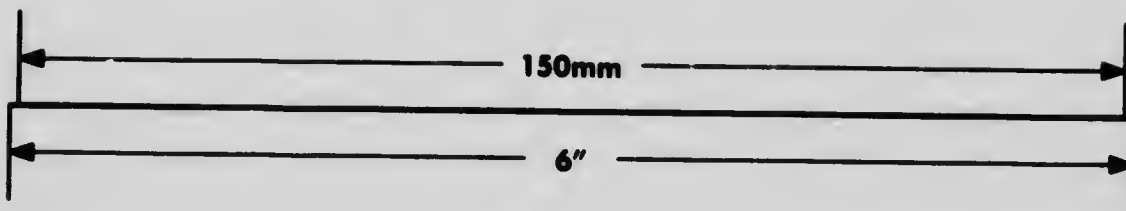
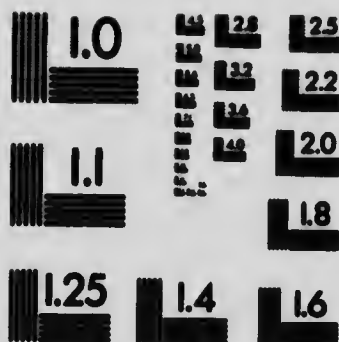
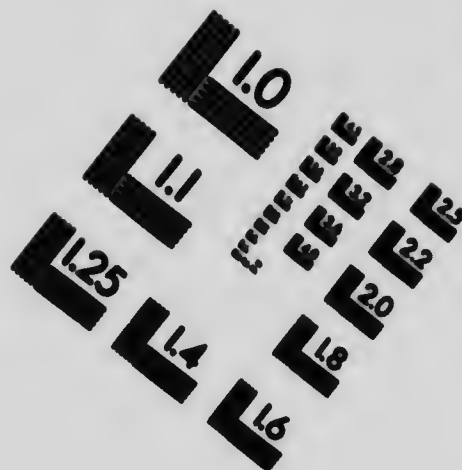
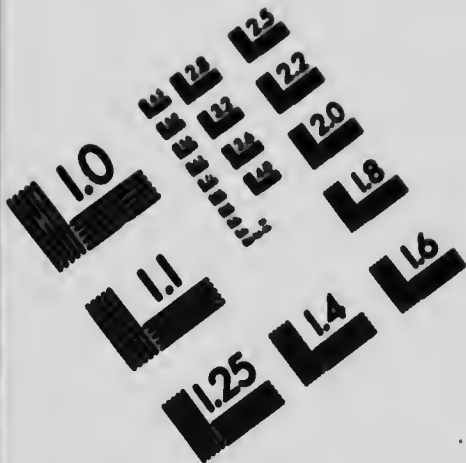
"In a mountain valley, in your Rockies—I can imagine the landscape—it must be like Zakopane in our Carpathians—my heart goes out to it already—A farm? Call it rather a garden, set in a fairy courtyard of jewelled mountains, serrated ridges of silver and cobalt, enamelled with green terraces of forest and the jade of glacial lakes—the very thought of it fills my eyes with fine colour, my ears with lovely music and my soul with ecstasy."

Her exuberance might have sounded natural to a European ear, but to Donald it seemed overstrained.

"Don't mistake our little valley for the Garden



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23
22



of Eden," he said; "at any rate the Eden before the Fall. It would not be itself if it had not some crime to talk about and at least two unhappy marriages. We can rival any city on this continent for gossip, envy, malice and uncharitableness."

"All the more attractive to a woman," she answered with a smile. "And are you sure you think only of the potatoes and the alfalfa on your homestead?" she added. "Is there not also the memory of one of your Canadian girls in your beautiful valley?"

"Not for mine!" said Donald with a laugh. "That was never my luck. I was perfectly happy 'baching' with father, and we were short of calico out our way—not one that you could call a good-looker."

"What a place for some of my friends!" she said. "No rivals! I feel tempted to go there myself. Is it far from here? May I pay a visit some day?"

"Sure!—but it's no place for your class—you would be bored stiff."

"So lonely as all that? But loneliness does not frighten me. I have lived in the Sahara desert."

"Yes, but there you had the Casino," said Donald, the words slipping out before he realised what he had said.

The effect upon the Princess was electric. So violent was her start that the canoe nearly upset. She gripped the gunwale.

"Jesu! Mary!" she exclaimed almost with a hiss. "What do you know about the Casino?"

Donald also was startled by the change in her appearance. He saw before him a pale set face with narrow eyes haunted by fear—the fear he had seen in trapped Germans who expected no quarter, or in Belgian women who knew men only as beasts—fear that had hell behind it and hell in front of it. “Old as Sin,” he thought of the face that a moment before had seemed fresh and charming. “Hugh Johnson’s story of Biskra is true.”

It was perhaps not surprising that the Princess should be startled. Hugh Johnson, in all his conversations, had never hinted to her that he knew anything of her past—for all she knew she had been taken at her own valuation—when suddenly this peasant soldier, this three-and-a-half-dollar-a-day guide carelessly disclosed that the most intimate and tragic episode of her life was known in this remote Canadian wilderness.

Donald realised that he had been indiscreet. He could have put the blame on Hugh Johnson, but that would be telling tales. Then his eye fell on Jack Lawson, in the canoe ahead.

“The Casino,” he replied, as if trying to recollect. “It seems to me that your press-agent fellow told me about the Casino in the Sahara Desert—said you broke the bank there—I guess he was just romancing.”

“Broke the bank?” She gave a laugh of relief, and the colour returned to her cheeks as quickly as it had gone. “I don’t remember that particular

story. I hope you don't believe everything that Mr. Lawson says about me. I am not really so lurid as he paints me."

Under that picture hat and auburn hair her face was very charming, yet no more charming than the whole figure. Never before had Donald been so long in the company of a beautiful woman, and he was disturbed by her glamour. An artist might have analysed this as a complex of contours and shadows suggesting rounded shapes—would have realised the form of flesh and muscle beneath the folds of her dress. Donald had no thought for such analysis, knew only that he was under a spell, especially when she spoke to him in a voice every note of which was music.

The faintest trace of a smile passed over her lips. What she really was smiling at was the recollection of the ingenuity with which Jack Lawson could make a thrilling and to her mind excruciatingly funny melodrama out of some incident in her career, with so little to go upon. That she was the victim did not disturb her. The art of caricature appealed to her sufficiently to make her forget any damage to her reputation. After all what did reputation mean to her among these foreigners?

Donald, however, misread her smile. This, he thought, might be to her almost as good as a play—he was only a simple Canadian—only a sergeant—but she had called him handsome, and this was America, where rank did not count for so much as in Europe.

"Practising her Vamp tricks on me," was his conclusion, as he poled along.

The effect of her beauty was indeed discounted by her incongruity with her surroundings. From her trunks, up to the very last minute, the Princess kept extricating something wonderful and new. This would have had more effect on Donald if his ideal had not been a very different type of womanhood. Before he went overseas he had taken little interest in petticoats, but in England during the months of training and later of convalescence he came under the inevitable spell. It was only a silent spell, for he was too shy to speak to any of the fair-haired, rosy-checked Old Country maidens at whose sight his heart went pit-a-pat—but it was a spell sure enough which for a time filled his dreams with visions of a lane and two lovers in it of whom one was himself, Donald Macdonald, and then of a steamer where he stood on the deck bringing home with him his English bride. She was always rosy-checked, and always fair her hair. Her shoes were low-heeled and her waist at least thirty-three. She was a country flower, not one of those corseted, waspish, hothouse, citified misses that seemed to be the fashion on the western side of the Atlantic.

He had never met, never spoken to, never made love to, never been accepted by the girl he had in mind. She had remained a creature of his fancy—all the sweeter perhaps because she was only a dream-girl. But she was real enough in his waking life to be the standard by which any other woman

must be gauged. And beside her the Princess with her high-heeled shoes and panoply of costumes and drug store complexion shone a pale and ineffectual star, until she herself in turn came under the glamour of memory and dream beneath the romantic veil of night.

Then it was that Donald's peace of mind was seriously disturbed. He was at the age when sex plays havoc with a man's life, and though in his waking hours it was held under restraint, in his dreams it was reinless, violent, untrammelled, anarchic. These dreams began by bringing back some scene of his childhood in which his mother would appear and his Aunt Mary. These two figures would somehow merge into the fair-haired, rosy-checked ideal with whom he laughed and played in pleasant comradeship in a garden full of flowers. But again, there was a change. The hair darkened to auburn, the lips grew noticeably red and the eyes passionate and disturbing. He tried to hold himself back, but she enticed him into an inner chamber, although he knew, that she was a witch luring him to destruction. With a tremendous effort he turned to escape, but to his ears there came the voice calling—rich, low, musical. He turned again and flung himself passionately into the outstretched arms.

CHAPTER V

AT the midday rest before the end of the river journey, Hector discussed with Hugh and Donald the disposal of Indian Pete.

"We could jail him ten times over and get him hard labour for life," said Hector, "but that means holding the Princess in Fredericton as a witness, perhaps bringing her back from New York. Besides I am beginning to work up some sympathy with the poor duck—we've had only three days of Marie, whereas he had a week. I guess she must have driven him crazy, and he wasn't responsible. What do you say to letting him accidentally escape?"

"That's your funeral, Hector," said Hugh. "It was you that he shot at."

"Goldarn it!" exclaimed Hector. "In these last two days I've sometimes wished he had hit me. If I had had to guide a week for Marie, I'd have been ready to shoot at the Angel Gabriel."

Donald, therefore, was not surprised when a little later there was a splash and a rush of guides and shouting and confusion round the canoe where Indian Pete had lain captive. Hector had indeed surreptitiously loosened his bonds, contriving his release, though of course pretending concern at what had happened.

The final effort of the Princess was an immense black velvet picture hat with a black satin cape trimmed with huge monkey-fur collar, the sight of which created a riot among the unsophisticated ladies of Fredericton when they saw this Parisian vision stepping along past the Cathedral with an ordinary Canadian sergeant. For, as the Princess still insisted, Donald put on his uniform and his medals, and escorted her along the Main Street, coming back to luncheon with her party at the hotel.

Particularly were they interested in the Crest of the Forty-Second—St. Andrew and his Cross, with the motto "Nemo Me Impune Lacesit."

"What does that mean?" asked the ever inquisitive press-agent.

"'No one attacks me with impunity,' or as the Scotch translate it, 'Touch me gin ye daur,' or in English, 'Touch me if you dare,'" replied Donald. "It is the motto on our Scottish national crest, but in that the emblem is a thistle. We try to live up to it."

"What a pity Indian Pete didn't know," said Lawson.

Donald went with Hector to the train to see them off—the Princess and Marie and Mr. Griffin and the press-agent and Hugh Johnson. As the Princess said good-bye, she shook hands in the friendliest way.

"Now remember," she said, "I expect to see you in New York. You will find me at the Astmore."

"If I do come to New York," Donald replied evasively, "you'll be the first I'll ring up. Good-bye."

"Jumping polecats!" said Hector as they walked away from the station. "You made a hit there, boy. You'd best come with me to New York when I go to fix up that building contract."

"Nothing doing!" said Donald. "I know where I'm safe."

The older man laughed. He was glad to think his nephew had a cool head.

"Well," he said, "let's to work and get the stuff loaded for that Boston party coming in to-night."

They walked along to one or two stores ordering provisions, and then to the hotel where Hector usually stayed. There as he stood in front of the mirror brushing his hair Donald suddenly made a sickening discovery.

His D. C. M. was missing, ribbon and all.

Where could it be? Had it slipped off when he was helping Hector to load up—had it been stolen—the medal the King himself had pinned on his breast—perhaps he could get a new one, writing to Ottawa and explaining—perhaps!—but it would not be the same.

Impatiently he walked with Hector over every inch of the ground he had passed that day—without result.

If the medal had been stolen, who had stolen it? The only person in the Princess's party who could

possibly be suspected was the press-agent, that Lawson fellow, who had all the earmarks of having risen from the gutter—and yet could he have been so mean and dirty? According to his own story, Lawson earned a hundred and fifty dollars a week, and the medal itself would only fetch a trifle. Still, Americans were notorious for collecting souvenirs, and he might have looked at the medal in that light—curse him!—if that were so, he would go round the world to wring his neck.

It was not the medal itself so much as what it represented—the token of the most tremendous hour in his whole life. During the swirl of a fierce rush forward, his platoon had been penned up in a crater red with blood, the lips of which were lashed by enemy machine gun fire. A communication trench leading to the left was so heavily barraged that exit seemed hopeless. Donald, however, made the attempt, found a shallow lateral running towards the hostile lines, crawled unnoticed through its slime, dashing the last thirty yards upon the gunners, who were already stiff, when his platoon emerged and overtook him.

It had been a forlorn hope, and the memory of those terrible minutes when he had crawled through the barrage was scared white-hot into his brain. The wound that followed was easier to forget than this reckless challenge to death, the reward for which had been the medal now lost or stolen.

Next morning they had to go into the woods with the Boston party, so there was nothing to do but

to leave the search to friends. Then Donald tried to forget his loss in hard work.

It was not easy to forget. Every time he came out of the woods and picked up a paper, there was something about the Forty-Second. One time it was the story of how they raced a British regiment as they bombed their way through Cambrai, chalking up the streets to prevent any rival "capturing them again." Another time it was the final dash through Valenciennes and the triumphant march into Mons headed by the pipers on the day of the Armistice. Donald's heart glowed with pride at the prowess of his battalion. They were now in the victorious vanguard—no longer battling against odds. Yet even though glory shone upon his old comrades, there was the dark shadow as well, the shadow of the casualties. It was almost four years since he had joined the battalion, and in those four years more than three thousand reinforcements had been required to fill the gaps in the original twelve hundred. Over seven hundred lay with simple wooden crosses to mark their last resting place in France or Flanders.

Always, too, there was the personal note of bitterness that ran as an undercurrent through his thoughts—"My medal is lost—where is my medal?"

When the hunting season was over there was still plenty of work to do about Hector's farm, and into this work Donald plunged to distract his thoughts. The farmhouse itself had hardly changed from the building erected fifty years ago by Captain Mac-

donald. The Captain for lack of an architect had copied the pioneer log-cabin of the United Empire Loyalists who had come to that neighbourhood sixty years before, notching the logs at the ends so that they fitted into place without any need of nails. A great brick chimney on each floor carried away the smoke from the hospitable fireplaces, but the house was sufficiently large to require a furnace as well as the open hearth.

Donald's grandmother and his mother had both belonged to Loyalist families, and the old home had become a museum of corner cupboards crowded with porcelain and pewter, grandfather clocks keeping inaccurate time in both the living room and the kitchen. The living room had a Colonial bureau and a fall-leaf table dating back to early New England days. Over the chimneypiece were flintlock guns and a Lochaber axe which the Captain had brought from Scotland as a memorial of Black Watch history.

Although at night the rooms were lighted with oil lamps, an array of old brass candlesticks told of other times, and Donald still was served with a horn spoon for his porridge.

Such porridge it was! Aunt Mary had had her training in that northern manna under Captain Macdonald, and it was not the insipid mush that passes for porridge in an age of semi-ready breakfast foods. It had the stamina that built up and satisfied big-boned six-footers three times a day when there was nothing else in the larder. Not that there was noth-

ing else in Aunt Mary's larder. Who ever made such apple-sass or pumpkin pies? Who had such turkey and ham, such bread and honey and maple sugar? Who had such cheese and doughnuts with spruce beer to wash them down?

It was Aunt Mary's larder that had lured Donald every week-end and every holiday from Fredericton in the days when Angus, his father, still made pretence of being a lawyer.

How it was that Aunt Mary never married, Donald never could fathom. Although he loved his mother in a dutiful sort of way, Aunt Mary seemed so much more wonderful, so much more pretty with her rosy cheeks and jolly laugh (she had not paid in nerves and health for bringing Donald into the world). She was not so helpless and so querulous, she did not keep him indoors till he had done his tasks—in fact, she spoilt him, and he loved the spoiler.

Yet his mother had had her lasting influence on Donald's life. It was more out of respect for her memory rather than from any native goodness that Donald had kept to the straight and narrow path. Without being superstitious, he somehow felt that she would be grieved if he got drunk or went with women.

Along the road the old zigzag snake fence had been replaced with wire, but one side of the farm was still marked off with this primitive enclosure, threatened now by the demand for firewood. One quiet corner hedged with cedar sheltered those Mac-

Donalds who had died, and many a brooding hour Donald spent there reading the inscriptions on the headstones. His father lay there, too, for Hector had brought back the body from the West to sleep beside her whom they both had dearly loved.

Donald found a solace in this calling back of early days. What happy days they had been! In the shack behind the barn he had excavated smugglers' caves, and in the hollow oak tree built a pirate's den. The garden always had yielded a rich crop of berries, and no orchard in the neighbourhood ever had such apples. Above and below the old swimming hole there were famous pools for trout, and the forest at the back of the farm swarmed with deer and partridge.

Every month in the year had had its wonderful adventures. Winter brought the skating, the tobogganing, the snowshoe tramps and the trapping. Spring came into the woods with the sweet scent of the trailing arbutus, when trout once more rose to the fly. The summer days should have had a hundred hours, there was so much to do. And then the fall, the hunting and the camp-fire.

When he was not brooding over his lost medal, Donald's thoughts circled more round the Princess, the exotic flower that had bloomed so unexpectedly in these Northern forests. Had she really taken a fancy to him, or was she merely a play actress passing the time? If she had stayed there longer, would her friendship have developed into something deeper? What was her true history and character?

Was she only vampire by profession, or was she vampire at heart? What would he have done if she had opened her arms to him? What would he have become?

She had spoken to him of Poland, and by chance as he turned the leaves of music played by his Aunt Mary, he discovered that Chopin was a Pole. From that moment Chopin became his favourite composer, and every evening when he was at the farm Aunt Mary had to sit down at the piano and play the Nocturnes and Mazurkas and Polonaises found in her cabinet. They were so rich in melody that it was easy enough to retain their musical sequence, and out in the forest on his trapping expeditions, as he lay in the lean-to with his feet to the fire, he hummed to himself the notes of Chopin's sweet but melancholy fancy. As he hummed, the Princess's face came back to him in the flames of the camp-fire—he saw the profile, and then the arch of her brows and of her lips as she turned to look at him with eyes so brown and auburn hair under a grey hat—burning flame in ashes. Yes, if she were to come again—

But she could be only a memory and a dream. If she came again up north next summer to build her studio, he would be gone—out west on his farm. Since she had left Fredericton, she had not sent him so much as a postcard. The only news they had of her was through Hugh Johnson who wrote to Hector that he had the Princess working for him in a Liberty Loan Drive, and that she would write

about the studio when Peter Foster had submitted plans to her satisfaction.

"Out of sight, out of mind."

Aunt Mary, of course, had been told about the Princess and her gowns, but had refused to be impressed.

"She may have been all you say," she commented, "but could she make good butter?"

When she realised that Donald's health was threatened by the loss of his medal, Aunt Mary tempted back his appetite with all the art of her kitchen. And to her credit as a cook, be it noted, she succeeded. Thereupon she indulged in a pardonable pæan.

"It would have been so foolish to have gone into a decline, Donald," she said one day as he mournfully passed his plate for a third helping. "There may be pies in the other world, but they say that even in heaven they keep you short on apple-sass."

Then out of a February sky a few weeks later, or rather out of an unsuspecting post office, came an astonishing note from the Princess.

"Why don't you come to see me? Don't you want your medal back again?"

"Stephanie."

For the next few days Donald brooded so that Hector feared the loss of the medal might lead to mental tragedy.

"Don't take on too much," he said one morning, laying his hand affectionately on his nephew's shoul-

der. "You have the papers and the published record that you won it, and it will be all right in time."

Towards Donald Hector had a peculiarly tender feeling. The reason he had never married was that he himself had also loved the girl who became Donald's mother. She had preferred his brother Angus, and he had bowed to the choice, transferring his affection later to her boy. No doubt his influence had much to do with Donald's taste for outdoor life, for he loved to take the boy with him and teach him the lore of the woods. When the steamer brought back from overseas a pale and sickly convalescent, his heart was nigh to breaking at the apparent wreck of so dear and so gallant a lad. And when, as if by magic, the breath came back to the blistered lungs, and the bloom to the cheeks and the flesh to the bones, how his heart leaped with gladness. Now the cheeks were paling again with mental suffering and Hector was plainly distressed.

The older man's sympathy went home to Donald. He pulled Princess Stephanie's letter from his pocket and gave it to his uncle.

Hector read and re-read it, and then handed it back.

"Let's have a pipe and think it over," he said. "This beats bear traps."

For three or four minutes they puffed away in silence.

Then Hector spoke.

"That Canadian Camp dinner in New York is

on the fourteenth—I've got to go anyway. Will you leave it to me, or must you get it yourself?"

"I've got to get that medal," replied Donald, "and if there's any killing to be done, it's my job, not yours."

"It surely won't come to killing," said Hector, shaking his head. "It looks to me as if she'd give it up quick enough once she had you in her parlour. I'm just afraid that once she got you in there she'd hypnotise you, and—women are devils when they want a man—he has a poor chance against them, human nature being what it is."

"It's not what she wants—it's what I want," said Donald grimly. "That medal is just a bit of silver to her but it's the three best years of my life to me—three years of fighting and struggle and hardship and the trenches, all for an ideal. I don't regret those years, especially now that we've won, but why should a hell-hound be allowed at large to feed on things that are priceless? I've got to get my medal, and she has got to get her lesson."

"Is she worth it?" replied Hector. "Remember the old proverb, 'You can't touch pitch without being defiled.' I guess you had better leave her to me."

"I guess not," said Donald decisively.

CHAPTER VI

FOR over a month now the transports from Europe had been pouring out their swarms of tawny heroes into the Jazzband City, otherwise known as New York, to the accompaniment of cheers, tears, flags and brass instruments from docks, patrol boats, excursion steamers, and welcoming committees. For over a month now the cabaret girls had transferred their affections from the tired business man to the war-worn soldier, and were having transferred to themselves in turn the price of the soldier's railroad ticket home. The hero's homecoming was very often the reason why the hotels in Broadway and Fifth Avenue had to find room for the hero's father, mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins and what not. Buyers from every State in the Union were also here as usual stocking up for the summer. Trains to New York were crowded and late, as Hector and Donald found when they scrambled out of their upper berths on the morning of the fourteenth of February, somewhere between Troy and Poughkeepsie. To have any hope of breakfast they had to stand in line in a narrow aisle on a swaying car, till the earlier risers had appeased their appetites.

As they waited there four or five places from the

front, a bagman of hyphenated Hebrew ancestry whose efforts in worming himself ahead had not escaped Hector's watchful eye, tried to slip past them. Hector, however, successfully intervened his burly form, so the Hebrew tried to bluster—

"I am a shentlemans just as you, and I have a friend who is keeping a seat for me, I tell you."

"Nothing doing," said Hector, and held his ground.

The Hebrew became more noisy until Hector remarked loud enough for everyone to hear:

"All right, lkey. This is the breakfast car, not the Promised Land."

After the stillness of the woods and the quiet traffic of Fredericton, the surge and swirl of New York beat all the more forcibly on Donald's senses. How small an affair was any one man's tragedy in such a human maelstrom! Up in the north on those solitary trails, when he was gliding over the snow from trap to trap, or smoking under a lean-to beside his camp-fire, the whole world seemed to revolve round his catastrophe, but here amid ten million souls, each concerned with its own problems, in an area so closely packed with human life that the streets were crevices between sky-scrappers, the insignificance of the individual came home to him.

Donald felt creeping over him the same despair and disillusionment that had sometimes overwhelmed him in Flanders. There he had come to realise how small a part is played by the individual soldier in an immense army—and yet over there one could

make one's mark and achieve some definite end. More than once he had crawled out to kill some particularly deadly sniper, and never failed. The Princess was now his sniper.

Hector knew only one hotel in New York, an unpretentious, old-fashioned hostelry in 28th Street, popularly known as Noah's Ark. Donald declared for the Astmore, thinking it would be easier to storm the citadel from within, if there was any storming to be done. He had, however, reckoned without the Astmore room clerk, who by this time had lost even the semblance of politeness and to his request for a room answered:

"Not this year."

Donald would have taken this as a personal affront if he had not seen a dozen men ahead of him as cavalierly treated. After trying three or four more neighbouring hotels, he saw his mistake and rejoined Hector at Noah's Ark.

From here he at least could telephone, only to find out that the Princess was out. The dragon guarding the witch's cave was evidently a spitfire, for after he had called up half a dozen times, the voice at the other end of the telephone suggested about noon that he would save twenty cents an hour if he gave his name and number to be called up if the Princess wished to see him. When he did so, all the encouragement he got was the voice's comment:

"I thought that would fetch you—it never fails with the Scotch."

"I said I came from Canada, not Scotland," protested Donald.

"It's not what you said, Mr. Donald Macdonald," retorted the voice, "it's the way you said it. A rainy day like this must be a great day for kilts."

The sally at first made him laugh, then sulky.

"They evidently think me a Rube," he said to himself, "and mean to make me look ridiculous."

At two o'clock he was called to the telephone.

"Mr. Canadian Scotchman," came the voice, "Her August Imperial Highness hopes you will have dinner with her this evening at seven o'clock."

"Is she in now?" asked Donald angrily. "If so, I'll come now. She can cut out the dinner."

"You *are* in a hurry," came the voice. "Hold the line." Then half a minute later:

"That's all right. Come at five-thirty. Ask for suite thirteen on floor thirteen—I'll be there. And in the meanwhile the Princess suggests that you go to the Palazzo Theatre—I will telephone to the box office to give you two seats."

"Thanks," he replied. "If I go, I prefer to pay my own way."

On looking at the newspaper, Donald found the Palazzo had as its attraction a moving-picture entitled:

"UNDER TWO FIRES"

"Featuring the Princess Sobieska"

Hector had another appointment, so Donald went to the theatre alone. It came as a shock to his

thrifty soul to pay a dollar fifty for a seat instead of the fifteen cents to which he had become accustomed in Fredericton or the free entertainments of the Red Triangle.

At the doors of the theatre stood, apparently as an advertisement, for they were surrounded by a curious crowd, two tall men dressed in sheepskin cloaks embroidered with pink and green designs and tied in front with pink ribbon. Under the cloaks one noticed close-fitting white trousers, slit at the ankles, which were decorated with red rosettes. These men wore soft sandals, and black hats trimmed with white beads, while they carried a sort of tomahawk axe on a long shaft. The girl at the box office said they were Polish mountaineers. The seat attendants were girls with bright orange kerchiefs over their blonde plaited hair, and wore Persian shawls over scarlet blouses and green sleeveless jackets. Their top boots looked very smart under their short white skirts.

The cover of the program showed a white heraldic eagle on a scarlet background, while inside there was a preface stating the production was under the auspices of the Polish National Committee and in the interests of the Polish Relief Fund.

The play itself was an intensely realistic drama of Poland under the ravages of war, and certainly achieved its purpose of stirring up the sympathies of the audience.

"My God! My God! How terrible! Where can we subscribe to the Relief Fund?"

Such were the comments Donald heard, as he half stumbled out of the theatre. He was left in a maze by this entirely unexpected performance. What was the object of the Princess in sending him to see it? Was it to convert him to Polish propaganda? Was it to show him how clever an actress she was? How popular to be able to fill such a theatre at such a price with such a moving picture? Was it to hint her condescension in considering him at all—she, who had at her command an army of actors and the immense resources necessary to reproduce such a story?

Once more he realised his insignificance, and thereby was all the more puzzled that she had troubled to entice him to New York. What was he but a mere backwoods guide at three and a half dollars a day? Whereas she had rank and wealth and culture—was of a world above him. This picture-play was evidently part of a campaign in the United States on behalf of Poland. The theatre program said that the new Poland would have thirty-five million population—five times as many as there were Canadians in Canada—and he was only one Canadian. Did she think he was going back to Europe to fight for Poland?—If so, she had missed her guess. He had had all the fighting he ever wanted—the war was over now—and he had still to get back his medal.

With renewed determination he set out for the Astmore and for the interview. By the time he had reached the hotel he was ready for anything.

He had not faced death in Flanders to become the plaything of this movie star.

A page in buttons opened the door of suite 13 and eyed him suspiciously.

"I wish to see the Princess," said Donald sharply.

"Name and business," replied the page, holding out a card and pencil.

Rather taken aback, Donald wrote down his name, stating as his business the word "Restoration."

After a minute the page re-appeared and ushered him into a large office, on the walls of which as decoration were hung striking posters with lettering in English and some foreign language which he guessed to be Polish. Some of them seemed to be recruiting posters with appeals such as:

**Poles! Kosciusko and Pulaski fought for
the liberty of Poland and other nations.
Follow their example and enlist in the
Polish Army!**

Another was the plea for the starving people of Poland. Covering one whole wall was a scarlet flag on which was worked in silk a white eagle. The room appeared more like a recruiting station or Relief Committee Room than the ante-chamber of a moving-picture Vampire.

In this office was a large desk, at which sat, supremely self-possessed, a lady secretary, with a telephone receiver in her hand. This was evidently the original of the voice. He had imagined a pert, red-headed little thing, but this stately dark-haired beau-

ty, if she had not been chewing gum, might have posed for a Madonna. Only, however, when her mouth was shut.

"Handing out conversation as per usual," she remarked, nodding him to a seat—then to the receiver, "Hello! yes, this is the secretary—hel-lo, Colonel, I didn't know you in that voice. Sure, this is dandy weather for colds. No, not tonight—got a date on with an old friend from Canada—off to Palm Beach tomorrow. No, I am left behind in charge—some one has to answer the love-letters—Oh, Colonel, you perfectly sweet thing, you bet I would—sure you prefer to have me?—be careful, or I'll tell the Princess—6:30 then—meet you downstairs—bye-bye."

Then when she had put back the receiver:

"Aren't men the limit! Here's this old Colonel writes a letter to the Princess saying he'll commit suicide if she don't have him, and when she turns him down all he does is to ask me to dinner instead."

"Same thing," said Donald, pleased at this opportunity to get one back.

"Huh!" she bridled all over. "You think you're funny. Where did you get your training?"

"Over in England among the barmaids," replied Donald.

The sharp ring of a bell prevented further pleasantries.

The boy in buttons sprang towards the inner door which he opened with a salute, ushering Donald into a reception room—and coming to meet him

from a door at the other end of the room through which he could see a small table set with wine glasses—the Princess.

"Isn't this glorious news!" she said, coming forward with both hands outstretched. "To-day!—this afternoon!—this very hour!—for the first time since ninety years—our Sjem, our Parliament is meeting at Warsaw, and Poland at last is free. There is no day on which I could have been so glad to see you—you, who fought for liberty and who were wounded in the great cause!"

How different from the reception of his dreams! The Princess wore a simple outdoor walking costume of blue serge, only relieved by gold embroidery upon a red girdle; whereas he had half expected to find her in voluptuous negligee, and indeed his overwrought imagination had many a time pictured the anticipated scene. The Princess in such visions was lying on an Oriental divan, her arm resting on the head of a great polar bear. She was another Cleopatra—wearing an Egyptian robe of bizarre colour, cut so low that the breasts were cupped, not covered. Round her neck was a chain of rubies, and as a pendant to that chain, lying between her breasts, was his stolen medal.

"Ah!" he imagined her as saying. "You have come—my hero! Here is your medal—next my heart. Take it if you will."

In the dream he was almost overcome with the temptation of her beauty, but recovering himself, he wrenched the chain from her throat, cutting the

flesh as he did so. She screamed, and then he always woke up.

That was the dream. Now came the reality.

"Can't you picture them!" she continued. "There in that historic chamber being addressed by our splendid Paderewski—"

"Paderewski!" thought Donald, "the piano fellow with the fuzzy hair! What does she mean by dragging him in?"

"I don't know what you are driving at," he said aloud. "If you look at that card I signed, you'll see I said my business was Restoration."

"Yes!—my beloved Poland! restored at last to freedom—"

"That's not the restoration I mean," said Donald roughly; "it's my medal—the one you mentioned in your letter."

"My letter? I do not understand."

"I did not come here to palaver."

The Princess stared at him, then stepped towards the bell. Donald, however, was ahead of her.

She drew herself up haughtily.

"This is more than a joke," she said; "explain yourself."

"It's for you to explain," said Donald, producing the letter. "You say here you have my medal and ask me to come for it. I've come, and I'll thank you to hand it over."

The Princess took the letter and glanced at its contents.

"My notepaper," she said, "but not my hand-

writing or my invitation. I do not understand—let me call my secretary.”

“This is between you and me,” said Donald fiercely. “Give me my medal.”

“Your medal? My brave fellow, if I had your medal, do you think I would not gladly give it to you? Do you think I could ever for one moment have thought to deprive you of it?—you who came from Canada to fight for Liberty—I who had a son who died for Liberty.”

“You—Princess—is this true?”

“Why not? Is it so strange for a woman to be a mother, and for a son to be a soldier? Don’t you believe me?” she continued.

Then solemnly, holding up her hand: “By the blood of all our soldiers slain in the war for faith and liberty.”

“I did not know,” said Donald, overwhelmed by her intensity. “Of course I knew you were married—Mr. Johnson told us about Biskra and the Prince.”

“He did, did he?” she said, evidently surprised. “I wonder how much he told you. When was that?”

“It was up in camp,” said Donald, “the first night after we met you.”

“That explains it—I understand now,” and a melancholy smile passed over her face. “You thought me capable of anything because you knew only half the truth. You must get Mr. Johnson to tell you the other half—he knows it now. I tell him frankly, I do not understand why he should have been shocked—he, an American—coming from

a land where the marriage ceremony is so often only a step towards a divorce. Well, well—that was twenty years ago—and I have no regrets for what I did—my grief came later, just six months ago, when I lost my Valerien.”

Her smile had faded and a tear rolled down her cheek.

“My poor Valerien—he was only a second lieutenant—only nineteen years of age—he joined the Polish Army raised with the authority of the French Government. He fought under the White Eagle with General Haller and was killed in his first action, but he died fighting against those accursed Germans—he died for Liberty.”

The sincerity, the sadness, the pride with which she spoke convinced Donald that she told the truth. He remembered that the Princess’s brother had been called Valerien—the son had carried the same name and also had met a tragic fate.

He saluted in memory of the dead.

“How we misjudged her,” he thought. Then aloud:

“You looked so young.”

“It is my profession to look young,” she replied with a shrug of the shoulders, “and I do not care to talk to strangers about my family affairs. I have told you this so that you should understand. But now about your medal—let us unravel this affair. There must be some dreadful mistake or perhaps a foolish trick. I know nothing about it, on my word of honour—some cruel practical joke—I do not

wonder you were rude to me, thinking I had committed such a theft—for such a reason. Believe me—I had nothing to do with this outrage.”

“I do believe you,” said Donald impulsively.

Calming herself, she rang the bell for her secretary. The chewing Madonna appeared, notebook in hand, ready for dictation.

The Princess handed her the offending letter.

“Do you know this handwriting?”

“Why, yes—that is Mr. Lawson’s. By the way, he left a package this morning.”

“Bring it at once,” said the Princess so peremptorily that the secretary shrunk out of the room, to reappear a moment after with a small parcel and an envelope, addressed in handwriting plainly identical with that of the first letter.

Sure enough, the parcel contained the missing medal which in silence the Princess handed to Donald. Motioning the secretary to withdraw, she then opened the envelope which proved to contain a note with some printed proofs.

“This may explain the mystery,” she said, sitting down beside a reading lamp.

What she read brought a flush to her face and her brows contracted.

“Despicable!—an outrage!—unpardonable!—*canaille!*—I can read no more—Oh! how can I ever make amends—my poor, poor boy—your feelings!—your honour trampled—a gallant soldier—held up to such ridicule—and by that contemptible *embusqué.*”

Overcome with anger, she pushed the letter and the proofs into Donald's hands, biting her lips and tearing her handkerchief as she watched his face.

The letter ran:

"Herewith is the medal of the Canadian guy we met in the woods last fall, with proofs of a story I have just sent out. I did not put you wise to this till I felt sure we had drawn blood. The guy landed in New York this a. m. with his uncle, who is due to speak at a Canadian Camp dinner tonight. I saw him try to book a room downstairs this morning so he will probably call for the medal. Miss Flint can hand it to him and choke him off. This is a corking good Vamp story and I had no difficulty in planting it with a syndicate. It is the real dope."

The printed proof read as follows:

**"THE GUIDE AND THE PRINCESS
TRACKS FAMOUS VAMP TO BROADWAY"**

"In the deep pine-fragrant woods of Canada, Donald Macdonald, returned hero of the trenches and famous guide, tracked the moose, the bear and the lynx over the new-fallen snow this winter with trusty rifle under his arm so that he could bring back pelts for the fur-traders who ransack the world for the stoles, the cloaks, the rugs demanded by America's market. But as he trapped and hunted, Donald's thoughts were elsewhere, for one of those for whom he had guided in the Fall was the Princess Stephanie Sobieska, celebrated movie queen, who

went to look for locations in Canada last September and found Donald among her corps of guides. He was tall and handsome and a redoubtable hunter. The Princess?—well, everyone knows her beauty and her record as a breaker of hearts. Did the guide succumb? All we have on the subject is circumstantial evidence. The Princess has the medal which Donald won on the bloody fields of Flanders, a medal which almost never comes into the market, so greatly is it cherished, while Donald has landed in New York, nominally to attend the Canadian Camp dinner, but more probably to see the lady with the medal. The question now is, what will the Princess do? Others before our Donald have made great gifts and still have lost the lady. The Kaid of Sidi-Aures out of hopeless love sent the Princess his eyes, and now stands blind outside the Mosque of Santa Sophia in Constantinople. Will our Canadian Romeo stand among the extras waiting for a glimpse of his unattainable Juliet outside the Art-Film-Sphere Studios in the Bronx, or will he consume his heart as a movie fan in the theatres which show the Princess in her Vampire rôles? The problem is certainly interesting."

Donald sickened as he read the proofs. They were illustrated with an unmistakable snapshot of himself, and with another of the Princess as Lucrezia Borgia. This must already be in the hands of some newspaper, and was beyond recall. Then the door opened, and the secretary announced "Mr. Lawson!"

"Just in time to get the continuity," said the press-agent with cool effrontery as he walked in. "Sorry, Princess, you did not see my note this morning so that Miss Flint could have been posted. I had the story written some time ago but thought it better to wait till our Canadian friend showed up before releasing it. Some publicity stunt, believe me! Well, how does our hero take it?"

Speechless with indignation, the Princess sank back in her chair. Donald, however, was prompt to action. Stepping over to the door, he turned the key and put it in his pocket.

"You are going to be sorry for this," he said. "Do you prefer to have your jaw broken or your nose? I give you your choice."

The press-agent jumped for the telephone, but Donald was too quick and with a twist of the arm had him at his mercy. To give him his due, Lawson did not lack courage.

"I'll get even with you yet," he panted.

While Donald hesitated as to which bone he should break, the Princess intervened.

"This is my affair," she said, stepping up to a cupboard and taking from it the same grey riding-whip that Donald had seen her carry the first day they met in the woods. "He can hit you back through his dreadful newspaper, but I don't think he will care to write the story of how he himself was horsewhipped by a woman!"

Next moment she was lashing the astonished press-agent with a vigour which that worthy had

cause to remember for many a day. His moans brought Marie, the maid, who held up her hands in amazement. Exhausted at last, the Princess desisted, leaving Donald to unlock the door and with a vigorous parting kick to eject the battered romancer past the terrified secretary, and the delighted boy in buttons.

"Well," said Donald, as he returned, "now we know who did it. Princess, I humbly apologise."

The Princess, who was allowing herself to be restored to her normal complexion by Marie, gradually regained her composure.

"Now that you have your medal," she said, "the question is whether you intend to accept my invitation to dinner. I cannot offer you the superb menus you provided for us in the woods—this is only the Astmore—but the exertion has probably given us both an appetite."

"You are too good to me," began Donald.

"I know what makes you hesitate," she said, "you are afraid to dine alone with a professional Vampire—but you do me an injustice. I always have with me here a chaperon—that Persian Cat over there. *She* is married—and oh! Miss Flint!" turning then to the secretary, "ring up our advertising agency and instruct them to place a large advertisement, a quarter page, in every New York paper with the following text, quote:

*The Princess Sobieska
Desires to Inform*

THE CONQUERING HERO

*The American Public
That on the Twelfth of April
Nineteen Nineteen
She will be
Forty-eight Years of Age.*

CHAPTER VII

NOW, my friend," said the Princess, "what shall we order for dinner?"

"If it's to please me," said Donald, "let it be something Polish."

"Bravo!" she cried. "An old-fashioned Polish supper. And if you will permit me, in honour of the occasion, I shall cook it myself."

"If you do, Princess," said Donald, "show me the kitchen."

"I shan't poison you," she said with a smile.

"That's not the idea," replied Donald, blushing. "Out West I have to bach for myself, and any new kind of a dish is good news."

"You shall be my pupil," she said, giving some orders rapidly in French.

A grin lit up Marie's face, the first sign of common humanity that Donald had yet noticed.

The Princess then excused herself so that she could change her dress, leaving Donald the opportunity to study the reception room at more leisure. The oak-panelled walls were hung with paintings of Cracow, and with a coat of arms carved in wood. The furniture was of the same light fumed oak as the walls, and the pictures had richly carved oak frames into which dull gold had been rubbed. On

the centre table was a great carved oak bowl filled with red roses. There was an open fireplace with heavy oaken mantelpiece, on which were two noticeable photographs, one of a cadaverous, aristocratic figure whom Donald instinctively identified with the late Prince, and the other of a young officer in uniform tinted pale blue, rather French in character except for the square topped kepi—with a white eagle in front under the brim—this must be Valerien, the son. Judging from the cabinets of books, the Princess must be a reader, while the open piano was laden with music.

Over her evening gown the Princess had fastened an apron, and with a laugh she ushered Donald into a baby kitchen with electric stove. There were potatoes to boil, but the *pièce de resistance* was minced meat which the Princess fried into cutlets with various seasonings. As the frying pan greeted his nostrils, Donald noticed that the windows were open and instinctively recalled Mr. Griffin and the scheme that had gone agley—of incense for the Vamp's apartments, brought to naught because the Princess was a "fresh-air fiend."

Supper itself was delightfully homelike. First of all there was a sort of unsweetened junket, with boiled potatoes; then the cutlets; then a compote and cake and fruits. It was all washed down with strong tea diluted with hot water.

Donald smiled at the turn that circumstances had taken. Who that saw them now could have imagined he had come to her apartments expecting to

be "vamped," and quite prepared if necessary to kill her? What would Hector think of them now—the Princess in the prevailing fashion of bare shoulders entertaining him to a meal she herself had cooked?

"Ever since the first day I saw you, I wanted to be a mother to you," said the Princess, towards the close of the meal.

"Why do you smile?" she remarked.

"You are the youngest looking mother I ever had," replied Donald, and the Princess at once forgave him.

"Just spell out the recipe for those cutlets, will you please, Princess?" he added, taking out his notebook. "Excuse the change of subject, but I want to tell my Uncle Hector all about this tomorrow."

"Give me your pencil," she replied, "and I will write it—ah, but it is nothing to the beautiful dinners you used to cook for me in those Canadian woods. Of course the charm of the surroundings was the sauce—the simplicity of everything."

"Except the menus," said Donald.

She laughed at his correction and continued, "Donald—let me call you Donald—I like this American fashion of using first names as if we all belonged to one family—now that we understand each other—Donald, I was wrong when I tempted you to give up the simple life for New York. Here competition is so terrible. It seems to be the thought of every man or woman to oust the man or woman above. And the cheating! No, no! You are much

more happy where you are, and if fate is to let me see more of you, it will be because I come to you in the forest or on your farm, not because I ask you to live in this merciless city."

"Don't you like New York, then?" asked Donald.

"I admire it," replied the Princess, "but I cannot love it. It is magnificent, but it has no soul. The measure of anything here is 'Does it pay?' not 'Is it good?' Some day perhaps a new spirit will arise. There are poets who think so. Do you like poetry, Donald?"

"Can't say I understand much of it," he replied. "I take more stock in seed catalogues."

"You are like my Valerien in that. He was very practical. He wanted to be an engineer and build bridges. He thought poetry and art only fit for women. Poor boy! At least he met a man's death, and his whole life was a poem. He was already doomed—tuberculosis—and it was perhaps better that the end should come quickly."

Before Donald's eyes there passed the picture that Hugh Johnson had painted that night in camp, of the Prince—just a skeleton and a cough—passing away the few months left to him in the excitement of gambling. So it may have been also with the son. Better than the Princess knew, he understood.

"Don't I know it," he said aloud. "My whole platoon was gassed, and gassed badly at that. I was lucky to get off so lightly. But if I had been like some of them, it would have been 'roll to your rifle and blow out your brains' for mine. Say, Prin-

ness, you've been mighty good to me—and I don't know why, seeing the difference in our class—”

“Dear boy,” she interrupted, “forget that I am called Princess. I only retain the title because I have to earn my living and the title helps me. But in my own class, I am—*declassée*. If these people here were not such provincials, they would know. My title here brings me wealth in this profession, but out in your Canadian woods, when I heard you telling the story of the life you lived—of the log drives—the hunting and fishing and trapping, the beautiful custom you have of burying your dead in cedar boughs, so that their last rest should be soft and sweet—then I remembered that all these artificial things such as titles counted for nothing, and that there was an elemental world in which you were greater than I.”

“I remember your saying you had a hankering after farm life,” said Donald. “I suppose that's what you mean, but the language you use is prettier than mine. I wish I could talk a foreign tongue as well as you talk English.”

“I had an English governess,” she murmured.

“Over in Paris,” continued Donald, “it was as much as I could do to ask for a cup of coffee and a bun—*cafee eh cressong*—and cost you a dollar without the tip. Say, there's one thing that I'm going to ask you, and I hope you won't think I'm nervy, but it's been worrying me ever since I met you—it's this—I wish you'd tell me what it feels like to be a Princess? Does it really make you feel better

and above other people, or is it just a kind of dress you put on when in company—and you take it off when you're by yourself?"

"You put it quaintly," she replied with a laugh, "but in my case it is as nearly true as anything I could say. So far from feeling above other people, I know that nine people out of ten I meet are enemies, ready to prey upon me, and my title is my spear and shield. You may think me bitter—any woman would be bitter who has had to fight the world for twenty years. I was embittered by a terrible experience which put me for a time outside the pale—and when I got back, I was hard and cynical. I have no illusions left. I realise that most women hate me but I know that most of them would let me cut off both their breasts if they could have my title—both their breasts though they may have been mothers. But why do I talk of such horrible things? I am not a German."

"I think I can understand," said Donald. "In the army of sharpshooters which you call Society, a title comes in useful to keep up discipline. I was only a sergeant myself, but I found my stripes sometimes came in handy in dealing with the rank and file. They left no place for argument. I was just It."

"And now let me ask you a question," said the Princess quizzically. "Don't think me rude. What does it feel like to be a Canadian? Does it make you feel better than an American, or an Englishman, or even a Frenchman?—I won't embarrass you by talking about the Poles."

"That's a good one," said Donald, heartily, "and I'm glad you asked me. Yes, I do feel better—because as a Canadian I think I have a better country—more of a white man's country—no place for weaklings—twenty below zero in February and a keen air in the hot summer that makes you put sixteen hours' work into an eight-hour day—a chance for everyone to have land and a home of his own—and scenery! Say, Princess, if I could get you to ride up the creek to the heights above my farm, where you can see a hundred miles across the Rockies, across the icefields and névés and serrated peaks of snow, glistening like crystals in sapphire—while down in the valley below there are those lakes, and the emerald green fields of young alfalfa and the tawny benches, and then above those the dark forested slopes, believe me, you would throw your Poland and your title into the discard and say, 'This is the country for me.'"

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Canadian," replied the Princess with gentle irreverence. "How good it is to be young and an enthusiast! And now that we have finished supper, you must tell me frankly what you think of my cooking."

"Princess," said Donald, "if ever you come to the point where you are looking for a job, I'll hire you as cookie at fifty dollars a month."

Marie, who was hovering in the background, understood enough English to be evidently shocked, but the Princess greeted this offer with a peal of laughter.

"Thank you, Donald—thank you for the compliment," she said. "You have relieved my mind of a dreadful doubt. And now I am going to let you into a secret. I have been practising this cooking just in case I ever do have to earn my own living in my own country in another way. My dear friend Paderewski, the President of our new Republic, has announced that there will be a clean sweep of all titles under the new Polish Government. What do you think of that?"

"I wish we had your Paderewski up in Canada," replied Donald. "If we had more pianists and fewer lawyers in our Parliament it would be some country."

"My dear, splendid Paderewski is more than a pianist," exclaimed the Princess. "He is a great soul. When Poland was in chains he chose to express himself in music. Now that we are once more reborn to freedom, he is composing the human harmony of a united nation. When my work is finished here, I am going back to my own country a simple citizen."

"So you really mean to go back?" said Donald.

"Of course I do, but not yet— Everyone who goes now means another mouth to feed. Our country is so poor, so stripped by the Germans, that the only food available is what America sends. That is why I am working here for Polish Relief, using my title and influence. My place is here till we have our harvests and our industries again. Just think—not a single child in Poland left alive under

seven years old—all have perished of starvation and disease. The older ones who are left have neither clothes nor boots except what America sends."

"I have shoepacks to spare," said Donald.

"Good!" she replied. "Send them to our Committee. They will be your payment for tonight's supper."

Her heart was full of her countrymen, and for the rest of the evening she told him of the German atrocities, more terrible than those of France and Belgium because more hidden from the eyes of Europe. Donald who had thought himself case-hardened was deeply moved.

"Tell you what," he said at last. "Just before I came down here, I had a surprise packet from the Government in the shape of a cheque for deferred pay—never knew it was coming to me."

So saying, he handed her the cheque.

"Seven hundred and fifty dollars!" she exclaimed.

A tear rolled down her cheek.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said with a great sigh. "This is the most splendid gift of all. If some day I come to your little farm out West"—and here she smiled again—"I am willing to cook for you as long as you like for nothing except just gratitude. You will let me come and visit you, won't you? This is surely not the last time I shall see you?"

"Come and welcome," said Donald heartily. Thereupon he explained to her on the map whereabouts his farm lay, and how to get there.

"Nearly three thousand miles from here!" she exclaimed. "Almost as far away as Poland."

"Quite a step," he admitted, "but worth it. You can take in Banff and Lake Louise by the way and see our Canadian high spots."

"I've heard of them," she replied, "but these great summer hotels don't appeal to me. If I go to your mountains, I want to be heart to heart with nature."

"You don't have to stick to the hotels," said Donald. "Go camping. It's a different kind of camping from New Brunswick—you have to ride, you don't travel in canoes."

"Riding!" she cried. "That is the Canada I used to imagine—with teepees and horses and cowboy guides. I shall go there, and you will go with us—it will be heaven!"

"I'd love to," said Donald, "but I'll probably be too busy on my own farm. However, I'll find you the guides, and you can have the time of your life. Then you can come on into the valley for your little visit to me. But now it's time for me to go. It is getting late."

The chewing Madonna and the boy in buttons were both gone when the Princess escorted Donald to the door. She held his hand in both of hers as he bade good-bye.

"Donald," she said, "will you, as a favour, let me give you a kiss?"

"Go to it, Princess!" said Donald, bending down his face.

Back in the hotel, he sat in his room smoking and thinking over the incidents of this extraordinary day. Every word of the Princess seemed to be burned in his brain, and every gesture that accompanied it. At three in the morning, Hector broke in upon him along with Hugh Johnson who had been Hector's guest at the Canadian Camp dinner.

The medal was lying on the table beside Donald, together with a photograph of the Princess.

"Well," said Hector, curiously, "you got all you went for?"

"You bet I did," said Donald with a sigh, "that, and a whole lot more."

"How long did you stay?" asked the older man, sharply. Donald caught the note of suspicion, and a spirit of devilment prompted him to get some fun out of the situation.

"Let's see," he said, looking at his watch. "Five to twelve—just seven hours."

"Skunks and porcupines!" exclaimed Hector, and Hugh Johnson also seemed surprised. "Were you alone with her?"

"For the last six hours, yes," replied Donald. "What do you think of her new picture?"

Hector's brows contracted as he picked up the photograph. It was signed—

"To my dear Donald from Stephanie Sobieska."

"I thought better of you, Donald," said the old man, quietly—then fiercely, "Damn her!"

"Hector!" exclaimed Hugh Johnson. "Don't say

that—there's something else that Donald has not told us. The Princess is not that sort. I know her better now. If only I had known the circumstances under which she came to Biskra, I would never have told that story in camp. You must understand that since I came back to New York, I have seen a great deal of the Princess, who has done me the honour of making me not only her legal adviser but also her friend. She worked for me all through the last Liberty Loan Campaign, and there was no finer worker in New York City. Then she roped me in for her Polish Relief Fund work—a fund into which she herself puts every cent she earns. What I am going to tell you is no hearsay, but the facts, as I can prove.

“The mistake we so often make about people we first meet is to expect them to fit at once into the environment to which we ourselves are accustomed. If they do not, we think them absurd or even outrageous—taking them, as it were, in cross section instead of realising that they too have become what they are naturally out of their own past lives. ‘What the devil is this Polish Princess doing in this neck of the woods?’ we said when we first saw her, and yet her presence there and her apparently eccentric behaviour were to her quite natural. But to understand her you have to go back a hundred years—a mighty long time to you and me, but nothing to Stephanie, for she carries about with her a pedigree going back to Noah, and then some. That is to say, the Prince's pedigree, for the Prince Casimir So-

bieski belonged to the old nobility of Poland. The connection between the French and the Poles has always been close. After the Partition over a hundred years ago, the family from which the Prince Sobieski was sprung found exile in Paris, though it continued to draw rentals from its old estates. In Paris they found another Poland, for numbers of their fellow countrymen sought refuge there, particularly after the failure of the Rising in 1832. Doctor de Brémont, the father of our Stephanie, was associated with the colony in Paris through his marriage to a Polish lady. The Doctor in his day was celebrated as a pioneer in the science of eugenics, that is to say, in the theory that only the physically fit should be allowed to marry. Stephanie and the late Prince Casimir were playmates as children, and their boy and girl attachment grew into a love affair which in normal circumstances might naturally have ended in marriage. For though the Prince perhaps had the longer pedigree, the Doctor was also of good birth and could provide his daughter with a substantial dowry. The Prince was by no means poor, and by most parents would have been considered a highly eligible *parti*. But Doctor de Brémont knew that he was already the victim of deep-seated tubercular trouble, and although sympathetic with his daughter refused to let her become the Prince's wife. In order to distract her thoughts, the Doctor took Stephanie on a voyage to the Orient, spending several months on a leisurely trip through India. During the absence of the de Brémonts, other less

scrupulous parents seized the opportunity, and the Prince, who undoubtedly was piqued by Stephanie's subservience to her father's wishes, was inveigled into a marriage with Natalie des Fontaines—a marriage which ended in disaster. It accelerated the Prince's malady, and the symptoms became so distressing that within a month after the wedding Natalie refused to live with her husband. She had his title and his money, and that was all she had married him for.

"When Stephanie returned to Paris, she found her former lover prostrate, only half a lung left, no money and no one to look after him. Angry with the Prince for having married in spite of all warnings, Doctor de Brémont declined to give any assistance.

"'Let him take his punishment,' he said to his daughter. 'You see now how fortunate was your escape.'

"Stephanie, however, was less cold blooded. She was at a sentimental age, and had, perhaps, read too much George Sand. She visited the Prince in secret, and overcome by pity took the desperate step of defying convention and undertaking to nurse her old lover through the few months of life that remained to him. Emulating the example of George Sand, who had taken Chopin to Majorca, she carried the Prince off to Biskra, in the hope that the dry sunshine of the Sahara would give him a few more months to live. Hopelessly compromised by that action, and discarded by both her father and

her brother, a lieutenant of Chasseurs, Stephanie was pursued by the vindictive letters of the titular Princess. What complicated the situation still more was that her brother's regiment was transferred to Biskra, and out of consideration for a brother officer the regiment ostracised her. Just about the time when I arrived at Biskra the tension was at its height. What kept Stephanie still fighting was the recent news that the Princess Natalie herself had had a fatal accident. Her death would release the Prince and enable him to reinstate her to some extent in the eyes of the world. She longed to tell her brother this news, but he had been called away to Constantine, and before she had the opportunity to speak with him on his return, the tragedy of the Casino was enacted, and he had died by his own hand.

"It was in that sombre atmosphere that Stephanie at last became the Princess Sobieska. One can imagine the effect upon her character. What added to her bitterness was that her father refused to be reconciled, even when she was widowed. For the death of the Prince was followed by the birth of a posthumous child, whose very existence was fatal to the Doctor's propaganda for eugenics. If he could not prevent his own daughter from bearing children to an incurable, how could he hope to persuade the world at large?

"For her part the Princess became profoundly cynical and careless of gossip—let the world say what it pleased. She was the Princess Stephanie Sobieska, and nine persons out of ten were snobs.

"The stage offered a career which appealed to her. She had come under the influence of the Polish actress, Modjeska, during a visit to Cracow and followed the example of that wonderful genius in perfecting her knowledge of English. It was Modjeska also who drew her attention to the United States as a possible field for her career, although it was not till this recent venture that she had the opportunity of actually crossing the Atlantic. When the new art of moving pictures sprang up to challenge the legitimate stage, she was fascinated by its possibilities and quickly achieved success. She had both beauty and talent, and in rôles popularly known as 'vampire' she took particular delight.

"In order to understand her properly, you must remember that although French by birth, Stephanie is more than half a Pole—not the rude Polak who helps to crowd our slums, but an aristocrat in a race which for centuries was famous for its advanced civilisation and its ideals of chivalry. She was of a type that overcomes every obstacle. Bismarck said he would rather fight two regiments of Hussars than one Polish woman. Stephanie's interest in Canada was brought about by more than a mere scenario. Nothing in the recent war appealed to her more than the thought of this new country coming across the seas to strike a chivalrous blow for ravished Europe. This was to her true knighthood, and her heart went out to you Canadians. It went out especially to Donald here when she found that he took a pride in the history of his people. Sentiment plays

a big part in Stephanie's life. It is because she admires Canada and admires the Canadians she has met—you, Hector, and you, Donald—that she persists in her determination to build a studio in your country in Canada this summer. She has the plans prepared, and all that Hector has to do now is to work out the estimates.

"Don't believe all the stories you may read about her in the newspapers. These damnable 'vamp' stories put out by Lawson only make her smile.

"'Artistic enough to be true,' she says.

"I tell her she is taking chances, that some day Lawson will write a story which will wound a friend. She merely smiles one of those enigmatical smiles and says, 'Wait till the trouble comes.'

"I have watched the Princess at work, I have stood by when she was handling men, both in public and in private life, I have seen behind the mask she offers to the inquisitive, and I tell you that if ever there was a true artist and a fine woman, it is the Princess Stephanie. If Donald spent seven hours with her, I bet it did him a whole lot of good."

"I can see she has you hypnotised, too," said Hector, still sceptically.

"I don't know if you would call it being hypnotised," said Hugh, "but I've promised to go with her tomorrow to Palm Beach."

CHAPTER VIII

NEXT morning, before Hugh and the Princess left for Palm Beach, there was a conference on the subject of the proposed studio. Peter Foster brought his plans and specifications, and Hector undertook to send in an estimate of the cost. The seriousness with which the Princess discussed the matter, and the evident thoroughness with which she had gone into the plans, convinced Hector more than any of Hugh's assurances that Stephanie was a much maligned lady. Until this conference, he had been tempted to think the proposed studio a castle in the air.

Before they returned to Fredericton, Hector insisted on taking Donald to a good tailor. When the latter protested that he was going back to a farm and not into Society, Hector persisted:

"Don't take any chances," he said. "Some day you may have to make a killing. Better men than you have lost the girl they wanted because another fellow spent a hundred dollars on a new suit. It was the smart uniforms that reconciled our women to the Canadian army. If our boys had shown up only in their old camping clothes, they would have been reckoned martyrs, not heroes. But when they paraded as the best dressed men in the country, every girl agreed that this was a righteous war."

"Uncle," said Donald, "you are growing cynical in your old age. Can you explain why you are the best dressed guide in or out of Canada, and yet have remained a bachelor?"

"It wasn't always so," replied Hector with a sigh. "I'm giving you the benefit of my experience."

Then like a flash Donald recollected the old story about his uncle. Hector and Angus had once been rivals for the hand of his mother, and Angus, the lawyer, the city man, probably the better-dressed man, had won. And yet Hector had surely been more a man's man.

Perhaps Hector suspected that he had said too much, for he continued:

"Don't blame the women if they do attach value to appearances. A man who looks to his clothes is clean and tidy in his habits, and a good man to live with. That makes half of the happy marriage."

Before she left for Palm Beach, the Princess found time to order for Donald gramophone records of Polish music—folk-songs and chamber music of Polish composers, players and singers. She had discovered his good taste, a taste which had been fostered in his English hospital. There Donald had had Covent Garden and Queen's Hall brought into his ward, for the medical officer in charge, himself a virtuoso, was studying the effect of music upon patients, taking advantage of the talent placed at his disposal. The effect upon Donald was to refine a natural taste, so that he returned to Canada preferring *La Bohème* to *The Bohemian Girl*, and really

liking Beethoven, even though ragtime was more cheerful.

Donald therefore went back to New Brunswick with more than the medal. In Fredericton he found a letter from his old Colonel, now in Montreal, telling him of the impending return of the battalion, and asking Donald if he could be present at their arrival. There were indications of a formal reception and parade, and the Colonel wished to make as good a showing as possible with the help of the originals and veterans already in Canada.

This invitation suited Donald, for spring would soon be at hand, and Montreal was a step on the way West to his farm in British Columbia. He spent the intervening days on farewell visits and in selecting harness, the seed potatoes and other such farm necessities as he knew would come in useful.

Montreal was reached the day before the battalion was due to arrive. The Armory was very little changed from the old days when he learned the elements of drill and discipline. The Colonel and such officers as were there to assist were busy with the arrangements proposed by the City authorities in honour of a battalion of which Montreal had good reason to be proud. Donald met a few old comrades, but the great rally was arranged for the evening when the Colonel expected three or four hundred veterans, who for wounds or other sufficient reason had been earlier disbanded.

The local papers were full of the reception al-

ready given to the contingent, nearly six hundred strong, at Halifax the day before, but the printed list of those returning had its tragic side. There were so many that he looked for and could not find. These were in hospital perhaps, or beyond the need of hospital, passed on to the last promotion. Where were Sandy and Jock and Jimmie, who had been corporals along with him and had stepped at the same time into the sergeant's mess? Three out of four of the names were new to him—some that he seemed to remember as having belonged to the 73rd, which had been broken up to supply the 42nd with reinforcements, others that were quite unknown. Well, they were all comrades now, had all fought under the same colours—fought up to the very last minute before the Armistice was signed.

That evening at the Armory cheered him up again. There were some present who, he thought, were under the daisies but who gave him the long, warm handshake of live, staunch friends. Only half were in uniform, but all had the soldierly bearing due to a proud regiment.

The parade next morning was called for eight o'clock, as they had to march some little way to the station. They were played down by the pipers, and as he heard once more the strains of the wild, glorious music the memories of his soldier days poured thick upon him. Now he was in camp at Shorncliffe, now he was on leave in Scotland, visiting the fields at Aberfeldy, where the Black Watch was first mustered, nearly two hundred years ago, when the

Highland clansmen, who so long had harried each other's glens, were enlisted to harry the enemies of England overseas. Now he was landing at Boulogne and crawling along in a crowded car—forty men to the car—along a dinky French railway. Then Flêtre—Bailleul—and the working parties in the trenches—and then the orders to take over the line on the Ypres-Menin road—

“Look out!—shell hole!” rang in his ear, and then a laugh. They were marching into the station yard, and a drain hole in the snow had suggested the jest to men who had fallen over many a real shell hole as they marched through Flanders. Donald woke with a start from his trance to realise that the walls of the station yard were mantled with a black crowd of Montrealers, gathered to give their Highlanders a royal welcome. Along the roof over the station entrance was an immense sign with the names of the places in France and Flanders identified with the battalion—Sanctuary Wood, Hooge, Maple Copse, Fabeck Graben, Zollern Graben, Arras, Vimy Ridge, Passchaendaele, Amiens, Le Quesnoy, Petit Fontaine, St. Olles, Cambrai, Tilloy, Valenciennes and Mons—and on the other side the wild, cheering masses. “What’s the matter with Montreal—she’s all right—you bet!” said a brother sergeant as they stood at ease.

A fierce orgy of factory and locomotive whistles heralded the appearance of the trains. The band of the garrison regiment tried to pour some harmony into the welcome with the strains of “O

Canada," but could scarcely be heard. As the train slid in, the officers and civilians on the platform rushed unceremoniously at the coaches, and if the veterans in the guard of honour had not been veterans, they might have rushed also. Then there was a rain of helmets, kitbags, rifles and Highlanders—tears, embraces, handshakes and Scotch accent—and then discipline again as the platoons drew up in front of the lines where Donald and other veterans were standing.

"How grandfather would have loved to be here," thought Donald as he saw the colours once again, and heard the roar of cheers from every roof and wall and railing that commanded the yard.

The second train brought further welcoming, then the lines formed up and the pipers led off the last parade.

If Donald on the march down to the station had been blind to his surroundings, he was surely open-eyed now. Half a million men, women and children packed the streets and the squares between the station and Peel Street Barracks. He could see an ocean of heads swaying over the Champ de Mars as they swung past the City Hall. In the narrow business streets confetti and paper tapes snowed down upon them. Every step they took seemed to be through a denser crowd and a deeper roar. The hill at Beaver Hall reminded Donald that he had lungs, but soon they were on the level again facing a riot of flags on St. Catherine's Street. Then they had turned the corner of Peel and lined up to keep

the last two hundred yards clear for the home comers.

At last, veterans and all, they were inside the barrack doors. No time was lost in speeches. The Colonel, who had brought the battalion home, ordered the last salute to the colours—"Fix Bayonets!—Slope Arms!—Unfix Bayonets!—Stand at Ease!"

And then with a tremendous cheer, this first great chapter of the Forty-Second Royal Canadian Highlanders had closed.

That evening there was a great gathering at the Armory at which Donald met old mates and was introduced to new ones. Other such gatherings were announced for the following days, and a week later there was to be a dinner for the sergeant's mess. But for Donald these were vain appeals.

When the train for the West pulled out next evening, Donald was on board, busy now with plans for the life that lay before him on his farm in the Valley.

CHAPTER IX

NOW that he had actually started for the West, Donald was so impatient to see his farm again that he wondered how he could ever have delayed so long. Originally he had planned a day at Calgary to pick up a team of horses, but now only a train wreck could have stopped him. The third day of travel, however, was less fretful, for at Winnipeg the transcontinental was boarded by one Bill Panns, a rancher on his way back to the foothills after two years in a German prison.

At first Donald hardly recognised him. But it was Bill, sure thing!—too tough for any German to kill, launching new enterprises with true Western spirit. Before the war he had guided for Jim Brewster at the summer resorts of Banff and Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies, and now he meant to start out for himself on the same lines, with other returned soldiers of his kind.

Bill unconsciously recalled the Princess Stephanie, for he had languished in a prison camp in the Mazurian marshes after his capture at Ypres, and vividly described what he had seen of the tragedy of German Poland. He himself had been tortured beyond belief, flogged, bayoneted, baked, hung from the wrists with only his toes to the ground for six hours

at a stretch, because he had held to his rights as a non-commissioned officer and refused to do prison work.

"Bill," said Donald, "I can put you on the track of a party right away. What would you say to guiding for a Princess this summer?"

"Would she wear a crown or a halo?" replied Bill, cautiously. "I got rusty on court etiquette."

"This one deserves a halo," said Donald, "but in the meantime she looks pretty dusty in a Paris hat. Met her in the woods last Fall, and fell for her ever since. She's Polish—from New York—"

"Jewess?"

"No, white—acts for the movies—and she's the goods."

"Is she good for fifteen dollars a day per head?" asked the practical Bill.

"You bet your life."

"Then she's good enough for me. Give me her palace address."

Donald had gone hunting with Bill several times with his father before the war, and knew he could be trusted.

"Rustle up some stock for me, Bill," he said as they parted, "and bring it along in about a month's time."

It was still dark when the train entered the Gap, but by the time they had reached Canmore, dawn was stretching its rosy fingers over the white crests of the Rockies. The Three Sisters loomed overhead, sentinels as it were of some fantastic trench

dug in a War of Worlds, where the artillery of Mars and Saturn had blown gigantic craters, the lips of which were frayed with the barrage of shooting stars.

Then over the Great Divide into the Canyon of the Kicking Horse with castellated bronze and grey and silver ramparts on either side, through a final gorge down which an ice-bound torrent plunged to the Columbia River.

"What a country to fight in!" said an American who sat open-mouthed beside Donald.

"And what a country to fight for!" added Donald proudly.

At last he stepped off the train at Golden and gazed up the familiar valley. He was still eighty miles from his destination, but already scented home air, and imagined the rustle of the home creek. On the right were the Selkirks ermined in snow, and on the left the rugged Brisco Range, a spur of the Rockies. In the valley itself the Columbia River added each summer a pastoral charm to an Alpine setting of high horizons. Just now this charm was less evident, for snow was still the universal mantle, snow which harboured in its white radiance the thousand and one entertainments of the spectrum, and in particular the fairy-tale cobalt and cerulean shadow beneath the still leafy conifers.

The branch railway was still unfinished when Donald had left for overseas, but now it threaded the whole hundred and seventy miles of valley so that his farm was only six hours' distant, whereas on

his first arrival it was three days from Golden by road. The longer and more primitive journey had, however, given the Macdonalds the chance to meet old-timers by the way—prospectors and miners mostly who had drifted into the Valley in search of ore and while sitting on their claims raised hay, potatoes, horses and—occasionally—children. Honest-to-goodness farmers such as the Macdonalds were rare, but shortly before the war English settlers had come in, attracted particularly to the arid but irrigable benchlands round the central lakes. Some at least of the old-timers raised the cash to slake their thirsts by clearing land, cutting cordwood, building ditches, bungalows, barns and the like for the moneyed newcomers. Others less energetic practised the profession of “rubber-necking for drinks.” What these two classes of the community would do when the Province adopted Prohibition remained to be seen.

With the new settlers came church services and schools and a “rooms with bath” hotel, whereat the old-timers shook their heads. “Too many lantern-jawed Christians coming into the Valley,” said one of them, and withdrew three miles higher up his creek. Over the newly made grave of Joe Potter, Skookum Smith said, “He was bound to die when they gave him a bath at the hospital. That would sure kill Joe.”

At the Fair, held once a year to promote good feeling and good farming, a prize was offered once to the most contented settler. It fell to an old-

timer, a fellow of shrewd simplicity and charming humour.

"Now you know the road, come again," he said to the Macdonalds when they called to borrow a horse, and if you said "Here's your health," he would come back with "Drink hearty!"

Golden itself earned its euphonious name in more optimistic mining days when it was said to have been the wickedest town in B. C. Now it had the more melancholy appearance of the reformed rake. To the outside world it was known chiefly as the post office address of the best guide for hunting in the Rockies, a certain Grizzly Gordon, but there were also hotels, stores, a lumber concern, a pool room, and a Chinese restaurant.

Grizzly Gordon was still overseas, but on the station platform Donald was affectionately welcomed back to the Valley by one of its up-country characters, not inaptly nicknamed "Stubbly Field," in view of the normal condition of his chin.

"I hear you've won the D. C. M.," said Stubbly. "Well, I've been elected a school trustee."

"Congratulations!" said Donald, clapping him on the shoulders. "When did you learn to read and write?"

"That wasn't the platform they elected me on," replied Stubbly. "It was the size of my family. I was the only father of twelve."

Donald had heard the tale of Stubbly's wedding from Jack Simpson, who drove the stage from Golden to Cranbrook in the days before the rail-

way. Jack had been the middleman, so to speak, for Stubbly had asked him to find a wife.

"I've got four milch cows, three hundred and twenty acres, six sows in litter and a field of potatoes," said Stubbly. "If I had a wife, the shooting box would be all right."

At the end of a month Jack reported a prospect.

"Stubbly," he said, "I've found her. She's a bear. Come with me to Golden."

Stubbly, however, was cautious. What if the lady was too particular?

"I'd be out the stage fare up and down," he said, "if she's no willing."

"She'll take you," urged Jack, "if you time your visit to the week you shave."

Stubbly eventually bargained that if she took him he would give Jack a steer.

Three weeks later Stubbly took his seat in the stage for Golden. The lady had waited patiently, for which her mistress (the future Mrs. Stubbly was a domestic servant) had good reason to be thankful, as three weeks was a long time for any mistress in these parts of Canada to retain in service a marriageable maid fresh from the Old Country.

As soon as the stage arrived, Stubbly made for the house where his Juliet lived. The mistress was out, but Juliet came to the door.

"Be you Kingston's woman?" he demanded.

"No, I'm his maid."

"Be you the one that wanted to marry?"

Her blushes were her confession.

"Well," said Stubby, "I want to marry. Let's take a walk."

They took a walk, and when they came back it was all settled. Mrs. Kingston saw them coming and commenced to write an advertisement for another maid before she heard the news officially. Then all that she said was:

"What's the name?"

"He's never told me yet," replied the maid. "But they call him Stubby Field."

Stubby never regretted the steer.

After Stubby, up strolled Wallace Burns, the uncrowned king of the Valley, through whose unswerving faith the railway had been completed, mines had been developed, land had been cleared for settlers, irrigation systems had been built and many a pioneer who otherwise would have lost heart had been encouraged to persevere. Wallace was short of sight, but he recognised Donald's laugh, less changed than his figure and features.

"Glad to see you back again," he said cheerfully. "Your trees are looking fine—you'll have the best farm yet in the Valley if you stick to it. Jim Davidson kept your ditches going and took three dandy crops of alfalfa last summer—five tons to the acre—thirty-five dollars to the ton—there's a nest egg waiting for you. He told me to tell you in case I saw you first."

This was indeed a pleasant surprise. Hector had said nothing of any arrangement to look after the farm, and Donald expected to find everything

neglected. Hector indeed had made no arrangements, but neighbours here were friendly. One of these had cows to feed, and so Donald's crops had been irrigated and cut and transformed into credit at the bank.

Wallace chuckled at Donald's delight.

"Your welcome is all coming to you," he said. "The Valley is proud of the likes of you. Come up to the house tonight and help me open a bottle in honour of the return. . . . I'll give you a bed, too. You can go on to your own place in the morning. It will be cold to sleep there after all these years without a fire or an airing."

"Listen to him!" said another old-timer, Frank Stuart. "Opening another bottle! He has all the makings of a bad old man."

"Hello, Frank!" said Wallace, turning at the voice. "Been salting any mines lately?"

"God forbid!" replied Frank. "I guess I'm getting too old for that—or if I did, it's because I'm getting old—a fellow is apt to make a break—get off his base—when he grows old."

"The only breaks you make, Frank," said Wallace, "are when you forget to keep sober."

"That's so," admitted Frank cheerfully. "I'm all right to buy things from when I'm sober, but when I'm drunk I'm foxy. You remember the claim up Toby Creek?"

"Which one? The one you thought was gold and was going to make you a millionaire?"

"That's the one. I offered you a quarter inter-

eat, and you wouldn't take it. Well, I got drunk, and I sold the quarter interest nineteen times."

"What did your wife say, Frank?"

"She doesn't know yet. I came down to Golden to buy her a peace offering against the discovery."

"No wonder they call this the Happy Valley," said Wallace. "Come on, let's have a bite to eat before the hotel dining room closes."

In the hotel at Golden and on the train up country Donald met other old-time acquaintances, so that by the time he reached Wallace's house he had already slipped halfway back into the old life. The years in France were as a dream. Yet, alas, there was no father now, and life must be more lonely.

But there was work to do—so let the dead bury their dead!

Wallace Burns had recently built a new house on the lake shore, and Donald enjoyed the unlooked-for luxury of quilts in addition to the champagne and the excellent dinner cooked by Wallace's faithful Oriental Ching. He heard the tale of the last four years of the Valley—a tale of progress in spite of labour shortage, a tale of confidence that brought him untroubled sleep.

Next morning Wallace lent Donald a rig to drive the three remaining miles to his farm. Jim Davidson, his neighbour, used the same road, but had been away from home for a month, so that the only tracks in the snow round the farm were those of coyotes. Chickadees, however, whistled a greeting from the tall fir trees.

Great icicles hung from the shingle roof over the verandah, telling of the chinooks that had passed by. The stormdoor was frozen to the lintel, but an axe soon forced an entrance and removed the boards from the windows. Once inside, Donald found the house in good condition. It was built of logs which he had helped his father to cut and peel and stain, trimming and laying them true. The walls inside were lined with cedar shingles, sweet smelling and vermin-proof—fresh as the day he had left. The doors and window sashes had been painted a pale blue. This had faded, but needed only another coat. Hector had wrapped the player piano and the gramophone and the pictures in rugs and blankets so that they survived the cold. From the prongs of a deerhead hung a pouch half full of Old Chum tobacco, there was tea still in the canister, logs were piled on the hearth ready for the fire, and in an hour or so Donald had the place looking like home again, with the sparks flying up the chimney, and a pipe in his mouth and the kettle boiling.

With the pictures and skins and Indian-work and heads of game back in their places on the walls, the rugs laid out on the hardwood floor and the furniture rearranged, the big living room looked very pleasant. Angus Macdonald had believed in doing things well, and here he had certainly succeeded. It was a booklover's room, for the lower half of one whole wall, thirty feet in length, was lined with

well filled shelves, and a revolving case also carried its quota.

On this latter Donald placed a portrait of his father, a square-browed face suggestive rather of the scholar than of the farmer. The shelves along the wall carried legal volumes and works of general interest, but in the revolving case were the books that Angus Macdonald had really loved—Masson's *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord Ouest*, Alexander Henry's *Travels and Adventures in Canada*, Ross Cox's *Adventures on the Columbia River*, Alexander Ross's *Fur Traders of the Far West*, Sir Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America*, Samuel Hearne's *Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*, Sir George Simpson's *Narrative of a Journey Round the World*. In the evenings after the day's work was done, Angus would sink into the great easy chair and read aloud the stories of the pioneers, always with the implication that he and Donald were in the line of succession with earlier Scots who had blazed the trail for future generations.

On the mantelpiece over the hearth Donald placed the photograph of the Princess, wondering if she would ever visit him. If she did, he would have the place all spick and span—and that reminded him, he might as well see how the farm had weathered the winters of his absence.

The apple trees had evidently come into full

bearing with a good crop—some of the branches indeed seemed to have broken under their load of fruit. Several fences needed repairing, and a flume built to water two acres beyond a gully had decayed. In the barn there was quite a stack of hay—timothy and clover—enough to carry a team of horses till spring. Jim Davidson had evidently taken the alfalfa to his own place—yes, there was a statement nailed to the door:

80 tons in 1916;

87 tons in 1917;

96 tons in 1918.

Gee whiz! There must indeed be a nest egg at the bank if Jim had given due credit, even if it figured at only twenty dollars a ton.

That reminded him of the note Hector had put into his hand at their parting.

"Don't open it till you get back to your farm," the older man had said. "It's a nest egg that you can hatch at home."

The unopened letter was still in his pocket, so Donald opened it. As he read its contents, a tear rolled down his cheek—here was Hector's cheque for five thousand dollars.

"There's a Prince for you!" he muttered. "I'll have to make good on this."

By Jove! This was a fine world after all! It was worth while going through the hardships and wounds of soldiering to find it out. If he had stayed at home, how could he ever have known?

He would have known of course that he had relatives and acquaintances, but would he have known that he had such friends? Why, the whole Valley, the whole world, was bathed in friendship!

Donald was about to throw the envelope away when he noticed that it held another slip of paper. On this was a message from Hector:

"Look inside the top drawer of the bureau. You will find a note from your father."

Retracing his steps to the cabin, Donald discovered the note and read:

"Dear Donald,

"I know now that we shall never meet again in this world, for the doctor has given me but a week to live, and you are far away overseas. Perhaps you too may never return, for this is indeed a terrible war, and the Reaper has a wide swath. If He spares you, perhaps you may not wish to continue the work we began together here. You may prefer to stay back East, or choose a city life. You were always a dutiful son, and maybe it was only out of duty that you stayed with me so long.

"But in case you do come back after I am gone—and if I had lived, how gladly I would have welcomed you!—you will find this message of good cheer, and will know that in coming back you have fulfilled the dearest dream of your dead father. I never wished to force you into this life. If you had decided to enter a profession, you would have had my help and blessing. But this Canada of ours is a young country still, with many a fertile acre crying out for men to sow and reap and bring forth

abundant food for a world in which so many have to go hungry.

"Over in the Old World the seed you sowed was Death. Here in the New World the seed you sow is Life. Better than in any other way you can help your fellow men by harvesting from virgin soil. The finest life is that of a farmer, and the finest of all farmers is the pioneer who tills the empty lands, breaks and enriches new ground, fills with new life the desolate acres.

"God bless you, my boy!

"Your loving father,

"ANGUS MACDONALD."

How glad he was that he had come back to the Valley! Donald had dearly loved his father, and would have done anything to please him. Instinctively he had carried out the dead man's wishes, and his heart rejoiced.

This Valley had always had for Donald a peculiar charm. Its natural beauty had been enhanced by the glamour of romance. Through the rampart of mountains across the Lake the Indians of the Plains had threaded the passes to traffic with the Indians of the Kootenays, staining the cliffs with vermilion pictographs as they passed. The Valley itself had once been the main route of travel for the fur traders of the great North-West Company between the Saskatchewan and the Pacific Coast. To the north of the lake beneath the farm, one Finan M'Donald, clerk of the North-West Company, had helped David Thompson build stockades and bastions over

a hundred years ago. The fur trader had been followed by the miner, and the miner by the settler and the railway builder, but so wide and deep was the Valley that romance still lingered. From the Indian Reservation tawny riders still rode into the village at the head of the Lake. Miners and strings of pack ponies still climbed the trails up the canyons to dizzy prospects. Even the little white church at Windermere had its flair of romance. Originally it had graced a construction camp in the early days of the great transcontinental, and when those days were ended one of the engineers had shipped it up the river to the lake where he himself had made up his mind to settle. The Bishop at the Pacific Coast thought otherwise and demanded its return. "Return like hell!" replied the engineer, and held on to his Stolen Church.

Then there were the Hot Springs at Fairmont and Sinclair with their rumours of cures. Even bears with rheumatic paws were said to steal down in the night and test their healing virtue.

And now to the glamour of romantic landscape was added the sunshine of friendliness and his father's blessing. Can Donald be blamed if once and for all he lost his heart to the Valley?

CHAPTER X

WHEN Donald went over his account next morning with the local bank manager, he found that with Hector's cheque he had over sixteen thousand dollars to his credit. The farm consisted of two hundred acres of irrigable land, of which eighty acres were cleared and cultivated, with twenty acres of apple orchard in bearing, a large well-built log cabin, roomy stables, two barns and a roothouse. This was land and capital enough for any farmer. Hector had sold off the horses and cows, but the farm implements were still in good condition, so that all he had to buy was seed and stock. There were wages indeed to allow for, as the ditches needed constant care, the trees must be pruned and sprayed, the cows, when they came, must be milked. There was work enough for a man and a boy in addition to himself, but these would pay for themselves, and moreover would be company.

Until the snow melted, the chickadees and the woodpeckers were his only company. Then towards the end of March the robin, the crow, the red-eyed vireo and the blue-bird flitted in from the south. About the same time Bill Panns blew in from his ranch in the foothills with a team of Percherons and two good saddle horses.

"Just to keep you from being tempted to buy a tin Lizzie," he gave as excuse for the latter. "This automobiling is a bad habit."

Through the Government experimental farm Donald obtained a thoroughbred bull with the promise of cows from a carload due a little later. The neighbours had chickens in plenty to spare.

Batiste Moreau, a French Canadian from down the Valley, left his own homestead for a job that meant cash, bringing one of his own six boys, so that when the fields were green with clover, and Spring unrolled its carpet of blue anemones, the farm hummed with things to do and being done.

Four years of growth had added not a little to the colour of the place. First there were the lilac on the trees beside the cabin, followed by the splash of pink on the two cherry trees, and then towards the end of May the fragrant blizzard of apple blossoms. Tulips and crocuses appeared alongside the verandah, and on their heels the serried spikes of iris, and swarms of campanula and larkspur, a mob of common garden flowers lured by sunny skies. Up the north side of the cabin the wild clematis transplanted by his father had spread and prospered, and a hedge of juniper round the garden of Alpine flowers was worth going miles to see. The garden itself was overrun with clover, but there were still brave clumps of arnica and shooting stars, with prospect of wild roses.

At first Donald went twice a week to the station to meet the southbound train from Golden, in this

way renewing acquaintances with neighbours and helping to welcome returned men drifting back. As spring raced in, and the care of the ditches piled up on the top of ploughing and seeding, the two journeys dwindled to one, so that the advent of several new families of settlers escaped him. It was therefore with some surprise that he awoke one morning to see the gleam of tents in the irrigation company's land lower down on the bench about a mile away. At first he thought it might be a gang of road-builders, but as he watched he saw a woman come out of one tent, and another woman out of another. Raising his field glasses, he made closer inspection, to find that one of the women was young, on which his inspection became still closer, until he found his interest reciprocated.

"Neighbours, bagosh!" exclaimed Batiste, as he rolled in to breakfast. "Good t'ing we mend de fences."

There was so much to do round the farm that day that further curiosity had to remain unsatisfied. Occasionally they heard the stroke of an axe, but even that was irregular, and the chief excitement of the day was the arrival at the tents of two wagon-loads of furniture, among which a grandfather clock stood out conspicuous.

If there had not been women among the newcomers, Donald would have gone down that evening to make their acquaintance; but he was shy and contented himself with sending Batiste to investigate.

"Crazy wid de 'eat!" said Batiste, on his return. "Dey spend de day cutting down a tree for a flagstaff and digging a 'ole to put de tree h'up again. Boss is a Colonel of de British h'Army and swear he do not'ing till he run up de British flag."

Batiste was evidently right, for all next day was spent in further digging, and by the evening of the third day the Union Jack was flying from the top of a forty-foot pole. In the meantime further wagonloads of furniture had arrived, and the motor car of the irrigation company paid a daily visit.

"If they don't build a house, they can at least use the furniture to barricade themselves against a German attack," said Donald over an evening pipe.

"Why don't you mak' leetle visit?" asked Batiste.

"How can I?" answered Donald. "I haven't been introduced."

Batiste looked slily at the young fellow.

"De young lady—she nice girl wit' golden 'air."

Donald blushed.

"Right again, old man," he admitted. "It's the girl that has me scared. If only she weren't a blonde, I might have faced the music."

Next morning, however, there was no escape. Since the Mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet in the shape of a girl in a red sweater came up to the Mountain.

She was the girl of Donald's dreams, fair hair, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, natural healthy waist, low

heeled shoes and all—and as she slipped through the fence and came up the field with a pail swinging in her hand, his heart went galloping.

In the trenches he had learned that the best way to meet the enemy in close combat was to strike out first, so he braced himself and went down, hat in hand, to meet her.

"Good morning," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"May I have some milk?" she said, reducing him with a smile to one syllable.

"Sure!" he replied, and led the way to the cabin. He opened the door for her, but she sat down on the verandah, fanning her laughter with a burdock leaf. Looking down towards the tents, Donald remembered the watchful elder woman, so taking the hint, he went inside and fetched a can of unsweetened milk from the pantry shelf.

"Drive a nail twice through the top," he said as he handed it to her.

She looked at him in surprise.

"We have that kind already," she said. "I thought you had a cow—look—over there!"

"That's not a cow," said Donald, grinning. "He's a bull."

"Oh!" blushing. "I didn't notice. But it's not like the bulls we have at home. It doesn't seem to mind though I have on a red sweater."

Charming naïveté!

"Well-trained Canadian bulls," he said, "do not chase English girls."

"Oh!" she replied, then hotly, "I'm not English—I'm Scotch."

"They don't chase Scotch girls either."

"Oh, don't they?"

As it dawned upon her that he was chaffing, she flushed again.

"You are Scotch, too," she said, "that is to say, if you are Mr. Macdonald himself."

"No," replied Donald, misunderstanding. "I'm his son Donald—father died three years ago."

"Oh! I didn't mean that," she said, flushing again. "I beg your pardon—I couldn't call you by your first name."

"Here out West we do," exclaimed Donald. "Only old men are called 'Mister.' By the way, no one has told me what your name is. It might be as well for a neighbour to know."

"You haven't found out yet?" she exclaimed. "Well, that's lovely. I thought the whole country would be gossiping about us. How different from the way it would be at home. You couldn't walk two steps without setting all the villagers talking."

"You see, we're busy here," explained Donald.

"Are you?" she said, lifting her eyebrows. "If you don't have cows to milk, whatever do you do?"

"What would you expect us to do?" said Donald, with a smile.

"Well, for one thing," she replied, "if you have all that time on your hands, you might put up a flag. Don't you know you still belong to the British Empire?"

"I ought to," said Donald curtly, "seeing that I fought for it—"

"I beg your pardon—" she broke in.

"But nowadays," he continued, "instead of waving flags the best thing one can do for the British Empire is to grow potatoes and peas and beans and alfalfa—"

"And drink tinned milk," she interrupted with a laugh. "Yes, you argue like a Scotchman. I wish you would come down and talk to father. He needs someone to stand up to him. Won't you come and visit us?"

"Sure," said Donald, "if only you tell me what name to ask for when I ring the bell."

"Dear, dear!" she rippled. "I forgot—Mackenzie—with a small 'k' and an 'M-a-c' in front. My father was a colonel in the Forty-Second—"

"Which battalion?"

"The Sixth—why do you ask?—what was your regiment?"

"The Forty-Second also, but the Canadian one—and I went over in the ranks."

He expected to see her stiffen, but she showed no sign of caste.

"Of course," she replied, "you were a Colonial."

"No," he said, "not a Colonial—a Canadian."

"Arguing again!" she exclaimed. "Well, I'll never get back to breakfast at this rate, and the kettle boiling, to say nothing of father. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

"Everything, except that you haven't told me your name," said Donald, bolder than ever.

"I told you already—Mackenzie."

"Alice or Mary?" he persisted.

"Can't you guess?" she said provokingly.

"I know what I would like it to be," he said.

"Anything to oblige," she replied. Then half repenting, "I'll give you three guesses."

"I just want one," he said, noticing that the brooch holding her cloak held the letter "K": "I'll say it's Kate."

She looked at him surprised—then said stiffly:

"You knew all the time."

"Not on your life," he replied. "It was only a lucky guess."

"If that's so," she replied, sunshine again, "and if I were a Canadian, I'd say, 'Bully for you!'"

She ran down the way she had come. Then, just as she reached the fence, turned and called out:

"Our At Home day is every second Thursday."

Batiste who had been eyeing them from the barn betrayed his interest as they drank their midday tea.

"I suppose de young lady come wid invitation to de dance."

"Every second Thursday," replied Donald.

"Every second T'ursday!" exclaimed Batiste.

"I guess she don't trot fast enough for me. Give me a girl from Montreal. She invite me every day of de week and twice on Sunday."

Donald however did not have to wait till the second Thursday before he met Kate's father, for

that afternoon the Colonel stepped, as it were, out of an illustration in *Punch* and adjusting his monocle approached Donald as he was bringing in the team from work.

"Good afternoon—er—Macdonald, I presume—I understand from my daughter that you were in the Canadian Forty-Second."

Donald saw that the Colonel expected him to salute, but had already decided that his days of saluting were over. Nonchalantly therefore he nodded and answered:

"She was right."

He could see the Colonel's eyes glint, and the voice was sharper at the next question.

"What was your service?"

"Enlisted February, 1915—Third Battle of Yprès—Zollern Redoubt—Vimy Ridge—wounded twice and gassed—discharged unfit for further service July, 1918."

"Any promotion or medals?"

"Sergeant and D. C. M."

"Good."

Donald resented the patronage, but awaited developments.

"Pretty nice place you've got here," continued the Colonel; "how many acres?"

"Two hundred," was the reply. It came as a shock to the newcomer, who had found sixty acres at a hundred dollars an acre as much as he could afford. Then he consoled himself with the thought that this was probably homestead land—anyway it

was not on the regular irrigation block. He was determined however to assert his rank.

"I may want some teaming done at my place," he said. "What do you charge?"

"Fifty dollars a day," said Donald calmly.

"My God!" exclaimed the Colonel, starting back as if shot. "That's prohibitive."

"It's meant to be," replied Donald. "I've just the one team, and it's busy. But Jim Davidson over there will get a man to team for you at eight dollars."

"Humph!" grunted the other. "Even that is highway robbery."

"No, Colonel," said Donald. "It's a living wage, and when you raise a team yourself, you'll know it."

The older man was silenced, and was about to turn away when he remembered he had not yet got the information he had come for.

"Tell me—er—Macdonald—you know the country—where can I get logs to build a log-cabin—er—like yours, only bigger, of course—pretty awful living in tents, don't you know—rough on the women. One fellow there yesterday told me that the trees on my place are not good enough."

"You'd do better with tamarack," said Donald, "and they should be ten inch logs. I know a Swede who could find and cut them for you up Toby Creek, but they should be peeled and left a year to dry and season; they are easier to handle then. You couldn't build it this year and make a job of it."

What you want is a frame house if you are in a hurry."

"Not this year!" exclaimed the other angrily. "Why didn't they tell me that before they sold me the land? I showed the agent my architect's designs, and he said all I wanted was the view—confound him! A frame house!—I'd rather sleep in a tent."

Donald could hardly keep from laughing at the Colonel's fury.

"You'd find it rather cold in winter," he said. "We get it twenty below zero. A frame house can be made to look pretty nice with a coat of paint."

"Paint!" shouted the Colonel, and stamped away, muttering to himself at this discovery.

"By Gar!" said Batiste, who had been listening at a discreet distance. "I guess every second Thursday often enough for de old man."

When the Colonel had gone, Donald half regretted that he had been so glacial in his reception. After all, this was the father of a very attractive neighbour—he might have offered to help. But then he remembered the patronising manner—a manner only too familiar to one who had served overseas.

"No!" said Donald to himself. "He thinks I'm dirt beneath his feet because he is a Colonel and I am only a non-com. Let him do his own work or pay for it to be done, and pay for it sweetly. When these snobs are taught what it costs to be a snob, they may get off their perches."

Donald had never regretted his action in enlisting, nor did he feel that he had anything to boast about. He had done his duty, and there was an end of it. But many a time he had chafed under the fetter of rank, particularly when he had to deal with officers of Imperial regiments. In his own regiment it was different—rank there represented discipline, and his officers had at least a Scotch or Canadian accent. But the drawl of a certain type of English officer roused him to fury, and Colonel Mackenzie, although himself an Edinburgh man, had acquired this supercilious tone of speech.

When the Princess asked Donald what was his taste in poetry, he had turned the question aside with a jest, but there was one poet he passionately admired—Robert Burns—and of all Burns ever wrote, the lines

"The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

Every time Donald read those lines, he wanted to get up and cheer.

As he thought over the situation, Donald therefore realised that his neighbours were a mixed blessing. Kate might be a girl of possibilities, but her father was another story.

Next evening, after a swim in the Lake, Donald rode to the station to see whether the incoming train from Golden had brought him a saddle ordered from Calgary. On the platform, pacing up and down in evident distress, was Kate Mackenzie who, on recognising him, seemed mightily relieved.

"Oh, Mr. D-D-D-onald," she said, "how glad I am that you have come. Do help me out—I've got myself into such a hole."

"Why, sure!" he replied heartily. "What's the trouble?"

"It's this," she replied, thrusting a freight manifest into his hand and pointing to the train standing on the tracks, "a carload, and I don't know what to do."

Judging from the manifest, it seemed to be a consignment of materials for building a house, shipped by a Vancouver lumber firm. In view of the recent explosion from Colonel Mackenzie, the consignment needed explanation.

"Who ordered this?" he asked.

"I did," she answered, "and that's why I want you to help me. You see, father as an army officer is perfectly wonderful, but when it comes to practical life—well—he doesn't come off. You see, he takes so long to make up his mind. He started on plans for the house here two years ago, and hasn't finished planning yet. If we leave it to him, he never will get started, and what is to happen to us in the meanwhile? I knew that something would have to be done, and as luck would have it, there was a fellow passenger on the ship who was an agent for something called 'Ready Sawn Houses,' with a lovely catalogue. Here is the one I chose."

She produced a page illustrated with a bungalow design, showing a house plan of three bedrooms, living room, dining room, bath-room and kitchen, de-

scribed as "Our 'Snug as a Bug' (copyright) Design—price \$3,000."

"Well," she continued, "as soon as we landed, the agent telegraphed to Vancouver. I knew that if I told father he would countermand the order, but I never realised it would come so quick. By good luck he has gone fishing for a few days, but I don't know how to unload it and the man here at the station says it must be unloaded at once, otherwise there will be 'demurrage' or something horrible like that. I don't know how to get any carters, particularly for such a lot of stuff. You see, father spoke so sharply to the men who brought our furniture that they refused to bring anything more—you Canadians are so independent. Whatever am I to do?"

Donald stroked his chin thoughtfully. It was certainly an odd situation. The girl at least was practical and deserved help.

"How long will your father be gone?" he asked.

"He went to some place called Fish Lakes with a Captain Staynes in a motor," she replied. "He said not to expect him back for three days—he needed a rest after putting up the flagstaff."

"I've got it!" cried Donald, slapping his thigh. "Leave this to me—we'll have the house up before he comes back."

"Impossible!" she exclaimed.

"Not a bit of it," he replied. "Just as easy as barn raising."

Jumping on his horse, he waved his hat to her

and galloped off to round up the friends he could rely upon. There were Dick Scott, Peter Grant, Stubby Field, Frank Sturrock, Jock Macleod, Alec Simpson, Charlie Thomas, Alf Williams, Ben Johnson, Bill Dawson and Eddie Potts, not to mention Wallace Burns and Jim Davidson. A couple of returned men up at the livery stable would be glad to lend a hand, and he could count on Batiste.

Several times a boy Donald had taken part in a raising bee, when all the neighbours came in to help some farmer build a barn. His Uncle Hector had been in great form on such occasions, for no one was more skilful in budding corners, and Aunt Mary too was indispensable with her pumpkin pies and apple sass and cider for the feast that followed. The men Donald asked had lent a hand in many a barn-raising in the old days back East, and when he told them of Kate Mackenzie's predicament, they and their womenfolk could not have been kept back with a machine-gun.

By midnight he had his forces enlisted, and at six o'clock next morning ten teams were at the station. At eight o'clock Kate peeped out of her tent to see Stubby Field with the first load of her future home, and by ten o'clock even the furniture pile looked small. The site for the house had already been chosen beside the flagstaff, and the rest of the day was spent in clearing and levelling, while Donald, Jim Davidson and Wallace Burns studied the detailed plans, and the materials were sorted for rapid construction next day.

Mrs. Davidson, Dick Scott's daughter Mary, Mrs. Grant, Ethel and Annie Grant, Mrs. Simpson and Mrs. Johnson had brought along the dishes, kettles, pans and food for such a multitude, thus saving Kate and her mother any further trouble than helping to serve the meals. Mrs. Mackenzie was overcome by anxiety, but Kate was the handiest of them all. She wore a light brown casement cloth uniform with white collars and cuffs, revealing that she had served as a V. A. D. orderly during war time, and with her cheery face she had everyone of the eighteen men at her feet.

"Got my training for this sort of thing in a hospital pantry," she explained, as she served out some soup.

"Can you really nurse?" asked Wallace.

"Just the simpler, commoner ailments," she replied, laughing. "What's the matter with you?"

"Same as all of us," said Wallace, "broken heart."

Then on the second day construction commenced. For the sake of speed, two captains were chosen, each with a team and each working from different ends of the building towards the centre. Jim Davidson and Wallace Burns, as the men with the most powerful voices, were chosen captains, and as they roared out their orders the fun waxed furious—each team straining to get its allotted half done first.

They were so expert and so closely matched that the two sides of the bungalow grew together as if by magic, and when the last man on Jim's side slid

off the roof with a yell of triumph, he was only a minute ahead of the last nail driven by Donald on Wallace Burns' team. Then came the good things prepared by the womenfolk as reward for their labours. They were all uproarious, for Wallace had brought up a case of champagne so that the building should be suitably baptised and, in any case, they were in a jolly mood.

"Let's test the floor," said Kate, who was happiness itself now that the house was built. "There's a piano in that pile of furniture."

In two minutes the piano was uncased and trundled into the house, where Mary Scott started up a fox trot. In three minutes they were all whirling around, even Mrs. Mackenzie yielding to the spirit of the occasion.

Kate was in demand that night, but Donald was the favoured partner and surely he deserved it.

"How can I ever repay you?" she said when at last the party broke up and he said good-bye on the porch of the new-born bungalow.

"Easy enough," he replied; "just be as friendly to your neighbours as you have been these last two days."

"How could I help being friendly?" she replied, and then as she shook hands, added, "I'm so glad we came to Canada."

"If only we had another day," said Donald next morning as he came to clean up the debris round the house, "we could have painted it as well."

"Leave that to father," Kate replied with a

laugh. "We've got to find him work for the next two months."

About noon Donald was helping to strike the tents when he heard the chug-chug of a motor. Mrs. Mackenzie had retired discreetly to her room, pretending a headache, but Kate was unconcerned now that the deed was done.

"That's father," she said. "You had better keep out of sight. This is a family affair."

Donald took cover in some neighbouring bush while Kate knitted quietly on the verandah. As the motor drove up, he could see the Colonel stand up and rub his eyes to convince himself that this was no dream.

In his ignorance of the Old Country Colonel, Donald anticipated a Vesuvius of bad language and grew concerned lest Kate should be a helpless listener. He remembered the variety of epithets used by his own Canadian officers under stress of emotion, lurid enough to shrivel up anyone but a Canadian private. Such profanity was automatic and unconscious, but none the less effective.

Colonel Mackenzie, however, belonged to a different school. All that he said as he surveyed this impudent building was "My word!"

Whereupon Kate rose and placidly remarked:

"Tut, tut! Father! From your temper I presume that you have not caught any fish."

CHAPTER XI

WITHIN a few days Colonel Mackenzie became reconciled to the mushroom bungalow, particularly when he realised that it formed a base for additions and alterations. Although his daughter assumed responsibility for its erection, he suspected a more experienced ring-leader. The result was that Donald had a cool reception when eventually he found time to call, and decided that he would time his future visits when the Colonel was away. As it happened, three days in the week were devoted now to fishing, so that Donald had ample opportunity to improve his acquaintance with Kate and supervise her farming. Kate was more than glad to have his advice, for she realised that the small family fortune was sunk in this venture, and that with an impractical father and an invertebrate mother, everything depended on herself.

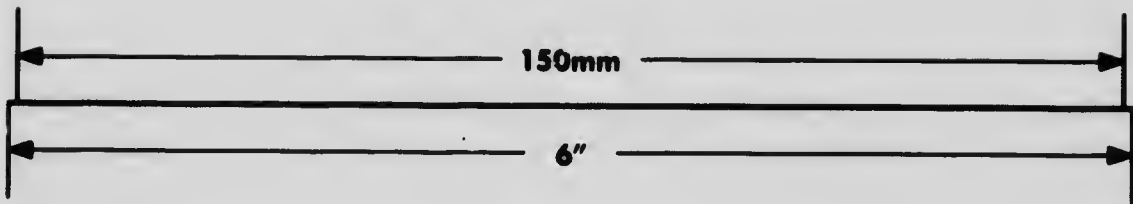
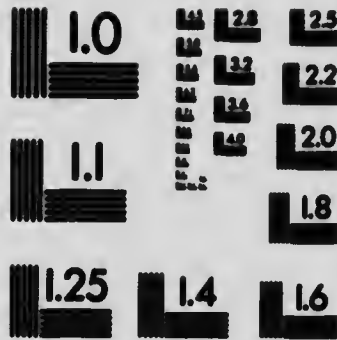
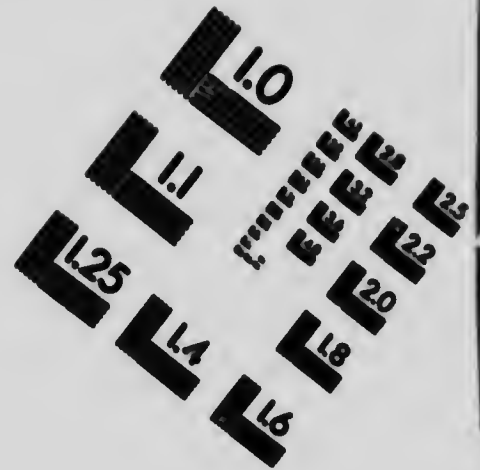
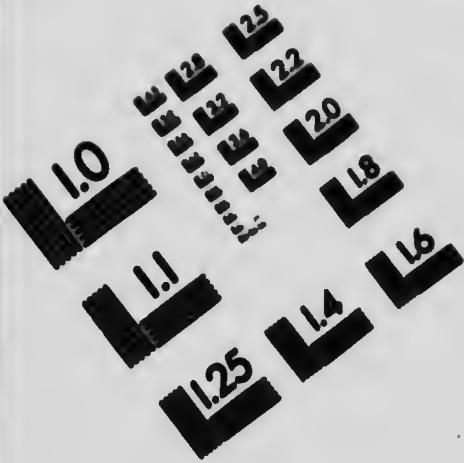
Colonel Mackenzie was a product of the national ambition which has built up the British Empire in India at the cost of the individual Briton. Life in a tropical climate had sapped his energy, and red-hot curries had inflamed his liver. Originally an affectionate parent, he had to send his two children to England while he sweated and drilled and danced and played cricket within twenty degrees of the

equator for the honour and glory of his country; and when he came back to half-pay, he found those children indifferent and his country not noticeably grateful. British Columbia was attracting ex-service men to its orchards and outdoor life, and he had already decided to emigrate when the war broke out. Joining one of the new battalions of the Black Watch, he manœuvred himself into a home post and came through the war himself unscathed, but lost his only son and certainly did not improve his temper. In spite of constant friction, the remaining family still hung together, Kate in particular having a serene self-sufficiency which left her content so long as she got her own way.

This trait was almost the only characteristic she shared with her father, who was self-sufficiency incarnate. When Wallace Burns suggested that Canada was somewhat different from England, the Colonel replied that he was well equipped for Colonial life as he had taken a three months' course in carpentry and had already constructed a dressing table out of a soapbox. He had also mastered a treatise on agriculture entitled "The Back Garden Beautiful" and was quite an authority on electric stoves and toasters. In India he had watched the natives cultivating rice—he intended to grow rice in Canada so as to have plenty of the stuff with his curry, and he proposed among other things to experiment on a large scale with the breeding of quails—his favourite bird. He did not however propose to do much manual work himself. His particular



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22



forte was in handling men, and he would supervise the native labour—

“At four dollars a day and upwards?” interjected Wallace.

“Of course my daughter and my wife will not require to be paid,” said the Colonel, betraying the fact that he did not consider them sufficiently intelligent to “handle men,”—only to do the work of men.

So much Donald discovered during the course of conversation with Wallace, and from that moment decided to help the Colonel's daughter, even though he would not help the Colonel himself. He advised her in the selection of a cow from the Government's belated carload, and in the Colonel's absence gave her lessons in milking.

He found her the men to do the rough work of clearing and breaking and seeding the land with potatoes and clover. He steered her clear of the mistakes that newcomers so often made, showing her how these fir-lands must be sweetened, stirred and enriched before they were ripe for different vegetation. Dismayed at first by the realisation that this preparation meant adding a year to the six years before an orchard could mature, she was reassured by the unlooked-for possibilities of small fruits and ordinary farming. In these conferences her respect for Donald's good sense mightily increased and also—for she was human—her appreciation for his good looks.

As for Donald, every minute of the day Kate more and more possessed him. Every step he took

seemed to sound Kate—Kate—Kate, and the birds—they never sang so sweetly—sang only her name. Was it only coincidence that Kate rhymed with Fate? She was his ideal come to life—sunny hair, sky-blue eyes, cheeks a garden of roses.

She was the ideal, but with a difference which grew clear on closer acquaintance. His dream-girl had a slender, delicate face just like the early portraits of his mother, but Kate had a square-jawed chin suggestive of more incisive character. It meant energy and purpose, qualities that she revealed in an amazing degree. The work that she put in between sunrise and sunset would have done credit to any two men, and Donald grew alarmed lest she should overtax her strength.

"Don't worry," she explained. "This is only so that I can learn things quickly. In a little while I am going to parcel out the work, and then the beloved parents will have to get down to what you call 'brass tacks.' You see, this whole ranch was my plan—father only imagined he thought of it first after I had wrapped the emigration pamphlets inside his copy of *The Times*, so that he thought they were a new kind of Supplement."

"You are a wonderful planner," commented Donald. "Where did you get it all from?"

"Atavism," she replied placidly, "a throw back to the third generation—my great-grandfather was a real man. My father is the spoilt child of a spoilt child, but fortunately I escaped the paternal influence."

"What you say," said Donald, rather shocked. "does not suggest the usual dutiful daughter."

"Do you suppose the usual dutiful daughter would be speaking to you now?" she retorted.

The force of which was self-evident in view of the Colonel's attitude. The remark encouraged him. If she fraternised in spite of her father, it was because she liked him. He ventured on mild flattery.

"You are certainly an exceptional girl," he said.

"Not a bit of it," she replied tartly. "There are a hundred thousand Englishwomen today who would think and act as I do. It was the women of England who won the war. We supplied the munitions that smashed the German army."

"Some of our Canadian girls also went into munition factories," protested Donald.

"I'm glad to hear it," she replied. "But did you ever hear of our Canary Girls?—I mean the girls who worked on high explosives and saw their skins turn yellow in the fumes. Was there anything more heroic in the war than that—for women, to whom their complexion is their glory, to sacrifice it in the cause of their country? When we had our processions in London, you should have seen how the people rose at the sight of these splendid women."

She spoke with fierce enthusiasm, but out of some spirit of devilment Donald was flippant.

"I'm glad you were not a Canary Girl," he said.

"Why not? What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'd rather we lost the war than that you should have lost your rosy cheeks."

"Don't be silly," she replied angrily, but he had an intuition that she would forgive him.

At the same time, he realised that there were unsuspected phases of the girl. The rose he had put out his hand to pull had suddenly pricked him, drawing blood. None the less it was a lovely and desirable rose. She was right to stand up for her sex instead of accepting the old second fiddle. The Colonel, her father, was patently a burden, and why should she not frankly admit it? Kate represented the new spirit of independence—self-determination in the family was as much justified as in the race. If Canada had all the work of the Empire to do while Great Britain went fishing, would it be unpatriotic for Canadians to mention the fact?

From the defence of her attitude, he began to find her face more lovely. The square-jawed chin was an added attraction. It was Scotch, and to a MacDonald anything Scotch was right. It meant generations of fighting forefathers, born and bred on Highland oatmeal and Lowland cattle. It meant perseverance and independence, the spirit that deserved to win.

At times of course there were misgivings.

"If ever she marries me," he thought, "will she want to rule me the same way as she means to rule her father and mother? Does this mean my having to take orders again?"

And what about Kate?

That young lady was too full of new sensations to be able to analyse her feelings. Kate's pleasure was undoubted, for her temperament could only be happy in work, and now she had work enough and to spare. This temperament had given her parents some concern when she first left school just about the time Colonel Mackenzie returned to England. The vacuous life of a London suburb after so busy a boarding school as St. Leonard's fretted her into quick revolt. She had hoped to go to Girton but this they denied her. She longed to be doing something, and yet saw day after day frittered away upon shopping and afternoon calls and tiresome dinners. So far from enjoying her freedom, she longed for the old school walls, not so much because she liked study as because school kept her occupied. She found relief at last in a course of lectures on economics, and horrified her parents by joining a society of armchair Socialists. From that to militant suffragism was only a step and that, they feared, was the stair to Holloway Gaol.

It was not that she really wished to have the vote, but she chafed under the gospel that woman's place was the home, asking whether Heaven intended man's place to be the club. Nor was she content to vegetate as a cheap companion to her mother or unpaid housekeeper to her father. She claimed her right to happiness, and looked for that happiness in work. Her father, who was shocked at her scorn of the leisured classes, was frankly relieved when the outbreak of war transferred her devotion from Bernard

Shaw and Mrs. Pankhurst to *Mrs. Beeton's Cookery Book* and hospital kitchens.

Economics had, however, sowed one fertile seed. It had interested her in Canada, a land where the idler apparently had no place. Kate had always longed to see a wider world than England, and found in emigration one way out. Even at school Canada had loomed pleasantly on the horizon, for her favourite game there was lacrosse, and that was Canadian. She took counsel of the Secretary of a certain League of Colonial Intelligence for Educated Women, and eventually decided on a ranch in British Columbia.

Now her plans were coming to fruition, and the ranch she had dreamed of was definitely taking shape. Her dreams had been only vaguely peopled with men—they were a breed she rather despised—selfish, as a rule, and horrid in their talk, with only a veneer of politeness in the presence of women. Her whole creed was that a woman was as good as a man, probably better—but that was in sophisticated England. Here under pioneering conditions she began to realise that Donald could teach her something, perhaps could do some things better just because he was a man. Donald made the first breach in her prejudices—and he was young and handsome.

Donald may not have realised the depth of his feelings toward Kate, and Kate may have underestimated her interest in Donald, but the neighbours knew all about both of them, though their opinions

varied considerably. How they knew is a state secret. It may be admitted, however, that the air in the Happy Valley is uncommonly clear, and since the armistice the price of field glasses had gone down—besides, Batieste was an incurable gossip. Among the inhabitants of the Valley, as indeed of most valleys throughout the world, there was a highly developed instinct for divining things that happen when a young man and a maid live only a mile apart. People don't have to see things, even through a field glass. They simply surmise, and they are usually right.

Pat Moran's idea was that Kate was one of those mean-dispositioned Scots whose only object was to get work done for nothing. According to Pat, Kate was keeping Donald on the string to save herself paying him (Pat) a decent wage, and as Donald himself was Scotch, it served him right.

Jim Davidson, on the other hand, said she was the kind of girl for whom any man would work his head off, and Donald was only doing what any white man should do. If her father was deadwood, that was not her fault. She had no choice in the matter, any more than Pat Moran could help being an Irishman and a Bolshevistic Sinn Feiner.

Mrs. Grant said that she knew it would happen the moment she set eyes on the pair of them together. Never in all her born days had she seen a likelier match, and though Donald could have done worse than set up with her own Annie, there was no use flying in the face of Providence.

Mrs. Johnson said she was sorry for Donald—he had a heap of trouble in store. As soon as the Colonel found out, he would put a stopper on it. She had known cases like it before, and they all ended the same way. It was only in books that English girls married against the wishes of their families. She had spent a whole year in Brixton, so she knew.

Mary Scott couldn't see anything in that stuck-up thing. Someone ought to stop Donald from ruining his life before it was too late. These English girls didn't know the first thing about canning and preserving, and yet they gave themselves the airs of duchesses. The way she dressed was enough to make a cat laugh.

Donald himself resolved not to lose his head, or expect Kate to respond too soon. He had been long enough in the Old Country to realise the difference between the Canadian and the British, and suspected that she still considered him almost a foreigner. Just as he had got used to English ways, so she would become more Canadian. There was no rival in sight—he had known her only a few weeks—he could afford to wait.

Natural curiosity and a feeling of genuine though repressed gratitude to Donald for having provided her with a roof induced Mrs. Mackenzie to risk her husband's displeasure by returning Donald's call. She chose a day when the Colonel was absent fishing, asking Kate to herald their coming. There were a thousand things to do around the farm that

day, but the news made it impossible for him to do anything but tidy up the cabin. He was fastidious in this respect, like all true woodmen, believing in a clean camp. He remembered also that when his Aunt Mary expected visitors, she would fill the bowls with flowers, so when Kate and Mrs. Mackenzie arrived the living room was gay and fragrant.

To his relief, both Kate and Mrs. Mackenzie were pleased, not to say impressed. The interior of the cabin was so much handsomer than that of their own bungalow that Mrs. Mackenzie frankly envied him. Without appearing unduly inquisitive, Kate sauntered round, inspecting the books and pictures and ornaments, casting her eyes more than once at the portrait of the Princess with its intimate inscription. Donald noted her curiosity but volunteered no information, leaving the approach to Kate herself.

Mrs. Mackenzie, with the portrait of his father as her wedge, opened up two generations of his family history. The revelation of his lawyer father and his officer grandfather destroyed much of the prejudice instilled into her by her husband, with whom she agreed that a neighbour from the ranks of his own regiment was a distinct drawback.

Herself the daughter of an officer, Mrs. Mackenzie had breathed the rarefied atmosphere of garrison life from infancy, and if she was a snob, blame her circumstance. She had been the Colonel's Lady too long to look on a sergeant as much more than a superior servant, the kind of person who might some day retire to be a butler or a janitor, very useful in

his place but impossible outside of it. In Canada, however, things appeared to be different—she herself had lived in a tent without anyone thinking the worse of her, and it might be possible here for a farmer to be almost a gentleman. Kate, however, disturbed her mother's reconstruction of Donald's status. Unable to restrain her curiosity, she asked with reference to the portrait:

"Is Stephanie your sister?"

"My sister!" exclaimed Donald. "Why, no, that is the Princess—Princess Stephanie Sobieska. She gave me that in New York."

"A Princess!" Mrs. Mackenzie rose to investigate. "A very handsome woman," she commented, "one can see that she is above the common—ah! she calls you 'my dear Donald'—then you know her intimately?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that," replied Donald, "but she was pretty friendly—you see, I guided for her in New Brunswick—"

"You guided for her?"

The mercury perceptibly fell.

"Why not?" said Donald, unperturbed. "Three and a half dollars a day."

Mrs. Mackenzie laughed nervously.

Kate came to the rescue.

"I'm sure you were a good guide," she said with a smile.

"The Princess thought so, anyway," he said, rather curtly, she thought.

Then Kate discovered the gramophone and a case

of records. To her surprise the first ones she drew out were Wieniawski's *Souvenir de Moscow* and a *Nocturne* of Chopin, played by Mischa Elman. Then the *Marche Funèbre* and the *Nocturne in G Major* played by de Pachmann, and a *Mazurka* played by Fritz Kreisler. Following these, operatic selections sung by Sembrich—the collection of Polish music and singers which the Princess had made out for Donald in New York. In the next drawer was a *Messe Solonelle* of Palestrina which Donald had heard sung in England by the Westminster Cathedral Choir. Kate put this record on, and in a moment the cabin was flooded with a tide of voices, wave after wave, recurring, merging, reluctant, unforgettable.—one glorious bass voice dominant. Such music, heard in such a cabin, in a Valley so remote from what she thought was civilisation thrilled her. Fused by such magic, soul touched soul.

At the end of the record, Kate turned and looked out of the window, afraid to trust her voice. Mrs. Mackenzie, less deeply moved, broke the silence.

"You must be fond of music, Mr. Macdonald?"

"I wish I understood it better," he replied humbly.

"That's the weak point of being a farmer. You are so busy doing things that you have no time for education—except in winter—and then, unless you go into the city, you have no little opportunity."

"And these books," she said, nodding towards the shelves, "have you read them all?"

"God forbid!" he said with a laugh. "They are

mostly law books—my father's. Give me Zane Grey or Stewart Edward White—fellows who write about life in the open—not musty hair-splitters—or give me stories of travel and exploration like those in the revolving bookcase—don't take me for a highbrow."

"Highbrow? You do use such curious expressions," said Mrs. Mackenzie, puzzled.

"It's Canadian slang for 'bookish,'" explained Kate, now come back to earth. Then turning to Donald, "Do teach me some more of that slang. It's simply ripping!"

The tea Donald offered them opened their eyes. There were lettuce and pineapple sandwiches, there was cinnamon toast with a dash of anchovy, there were toasted marshmallows, done over a candle—and the tea itself was infused as Donald had been taught by an English nurse, with water just brought to boiling point, with leaves from a blend that had cost a dollar a pound in Montreal.

"I didn't know Canadian farmers were so expert," commented Kate.

"We don't make a habit of this," admitted Donald, "but when we do it, we like to do it well."

As they sat there, he saw her look again and again at the Princess's portrait as if for further explanation.

"A little more guessing will do her good," he said to himself, and left her curiosity unsatisfied. If he were to tell her everything at once, she would not feel so tempted to come again. When she did

raise any further question, he would use it as a lever to get her own photograph to put beside it or even in its place—that would depend on the kind she gave him and the value she seemed to place on its being there. Gee whiz! This was as good as dry-fly fishing!

So this ingenuous youth sat down that evening to draw up a regular plan of campaign. He knew his own ignorance of girls, but then the Canadians had known nothing of the Germans and yet had beaten them in the field. Certain things he felt sure would be effective—candies, for instance, particularly in the case of an Old Country girl who did not realise the pitch of perfection to which candy had been brought. Then flowers would be sure to fetch her, especially plants she knew in England—hollyhocks, for instance, and larkspur and roses—that reminded him, he had a catalogue from a Vancouver nursery—he would fill her garden with fragrant memories of his neighbourliness. Books? He wasn't yet quite sure whether she read much or not, and what her tastes were. It was easy to make a break there—he would have to be careful—Aunt Mary had definitely discouraged the attentions of the new minister on account of his gift of a volume of Browning. "I couldn't live up to that level," she had declared to Hector in Donald's hearing; "Tennyson is my limit."

After a dose of *Sordello* in hospital, Donald agreed with Aunt Mary. But Kate might herself be the kind that wrote poetry and ate up Browning

like the Book of Genesis. She might be crazy on "isms" and the dead languages. If only he could get the alfalfa bug into her system, that might cure her—then she would talk pigs and poultry and dairy cows instead of free verse and metaphysics.

Such was his proposed offensive. Now for the defensive.

This was more of a problem as it implied the possibility of concessions. How much ground could he yield and yet maintain his self-respect? Some things he could admit, for the time being at any rate, till she got acclimatised to Canadian ways. This was the *réculer pour mieux sauter* of the military experts, who ought to know. He could at least temporarily admit, for instance, that Canada was too much Americanised, that things were cheaper and better made in England and that there should be Free Trade, that Lloyd George was the greatest statesman at the Peace Conference, that Canadian education was mediæval, that the sleeping-car system was horrible, that the newspapers were poor, and that the houses in winter were overheated. He might even admit that Canadians in their speech were ungrammatical, and if the worst came to the worst, he might himself acquire an English accent. In one of the English magazines he had seen an advertisement of a Correspondence College where a course was announced in "Oxford Culture." He could write for that and learn the proper tone during the winter—quite time enough, for he did not intend to propose till spring. When spring came,

he would choose a bright moonlight night, and with the cumulative effect of the nine months' campaign of candies, flowers, books and tactful admissions of England's superiority, he would win her for his own.

Such was his mature decision, but Nature had less Scotch deliberation. They were strolling one evening on the trail beside the creek, when Kate tripped on a cedar root, caught at him, leaned upon him heavily, her soft loose golden hair brushing against his cheek. In a moment his resolutions of cautious wooing had vanished. A tide of passion swept over him, he clasped her to his heart and kissed her hair again and again.

Struggling to escape, she found him too strong, and then, the same tide sweeping over her, rejoiced in her weakness. He felt the answering pressure, and though he could not reach her lips, she put up her hands and drew his head down against her hair.

Then she whispered:

"Let me go!"

"Not till you have promised to marry me."

"Let me go!"

He hesitated, but her will prevailed. After all she had really admitted her love, so what did words matter? So with a long caress, he gave her her release.

For a time they walked in silence, full of emotion.

Kate spoke first.

"I hardly know you yet. I haven't found out your habits. Perhaps you chew tobacco."

"Not guilty!" said Donald, recovering self-confidence.

"I'm so glad," confessed Kate, with a sigh of relief. "Father said you probably did."

"He must have been misinformed," Donald answered. "In the Canadian army, that was a characteristic not so much of the sergeants as of the honorary colonels. Our particular vice was cigarettes."

"Do you happen to have one handy?" she asked, with a smile.

"Sure!—Virginian or Turkish?"

"Turkish."

After a little.

"It doesn't shock you to see me smoke?"

"Not a bit," said Donald. "The Princess was much worse. She never stopped."

"Always the Princess!" exclaimed Kate. "You talk so much of her, I believe I am getting jealous."

"I know you are," replied Donald coolly. "But you wouldn't be so highstrung if you didn't inhale."

Kate was nettled.

"Tell me about your Princess," she sniffed. "I do love to hear of the Upper Classes."

"I never could quite fathom her," said Donald musingly. "She was a Pole, and sometimes I think she was working me up to enlist in the Polish army and fight for Poland. But though I liked her well enough, nothing doing! I had had all the fighting I wanted, and our own war was over."

"Then you saw her recently?"

"Just before I came out West—that was in February. I went to New York to get my medal back—it's quite a long story—the Princess was acting for the movies."

"Oh, a cinema Princess!" said Kate, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I thought she was real."

"She was real enough to me," replied Donald, and decided to postpone further explanations.

Kate herself changed the subject.

"What do you know about me?" she said deprecatingly. "Do you realise that I am selfish, stubborn, short-tempered, untidy, unbusiness-like and generally the despair of my relations? I never expected to marry—home life isn't in my line."

"That's an awful handicap for a good-looking girl to run against," said Donald, teasingly, "but your cooking suits me all right."

"Don't be . . . —this is a serious matter."

"Then all you want," said Donald, "is discipline—someone whom you will love, honour and obey, to order you about and keep you busy. Believe me, discipline is my strong point, that is to say, if I am the one to give the orders. I should have been born a General."

"At least you do think of other things than peas and beans and potatoes," she said, answering his smile.

"Why, yes," he replied flippantly, "I simply dote on tomatoes."

She took him by the jacket and shook him, saying:

"Don't make fun of me. Do you realise that I have to decide whether I am to live with you all my life?"

"Not at all," replied the incorrigible. "We can always become American citizens and go to Reno for a divorce."

Then catching her by the waist and holding her masterfully:

"Look here," he said. "We've both got to take chances. There's trouble enough ahead of us without our going to meet it. Nature says to you and me, 'You're a pair,' and Nature is a pretty good guide. You're the girl I have been looking for and dreaming about for years and years. Perhaps I'm not the kind of man you expected to marry, but if you tell me what you're looking for, I'll try to live up to it. Anyhow, I've lived a clean life—"

"That's all I really wanted to know," she said, and held up her lips for the first time.

They agreed not to say anything either to her father or to her mother at present, as the objection might naturally be made that the acquaintance was too short.

In the meanwhile they agreed to write to each other every day when the Colonel was at home, making a private post office out of the hollow of an old tree, and this in any case would be their trysting place. Before they parted, Kate let Donald kiss her again.

As he walked back to his cabin, he hummed to himself a tune, not the *Nocturne in G Major* or any

of the tunes he ought to have hummed, but a syncopated ditty, the words of which ran as follows:

"Fancy you fancying me!
I can't tell what you can see,
For it seems like dreams not re-al-ity
That you should like my per-son-al-ity.
I can't quite figure it out,
I can't tell why it should be.
I can fancy anybody fancying you
But fancy you fancying me!"

'After which he sat' down to write the first twenty-four pages of his first letter to Kate.

CHAPTER XII

NEXT day the Colonel returned, and Donald could see Kate only from a distance.

However he had a new excitement in two letters from the East and one from Bill Panns. Of the Eastern letters one was from the Princess and the other from his uncle Hector. The Princess wrote as follows:—

“My dear Donald,

“The Americans are the anti-climax of the human race. They have all the accoutrements of greatness—they have inherited the culture of Europe without the hampering traditions—they have the opportunities of this great New World—they have the schools, universities, museums, galleries, theatres with almost unlimited resources—they have ambition, self-confidence and unquestioned ability. But like the rich man of the Bible, they cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven—‘for they have great possessions.’

“Another thing they cannot do, and that is to persuade a Polish artist to sell her soul to the box office. It is because we believed in ideals that we Poles have emerged a nation after a hundred years of slavery. Fire and sword and oppression could not stay the heart of the White Eagle, nor can the lure of the dollar render me false to what I know is right and

beautiful and true in this art of the screen to which I have given my life.

"Why should she write to me like this?" you will say. Be patient, my dear Donald—this is only my prelude. But the prelude is necessary for you to understand what follows, namely, that I am going to be married tomorrow, and to a man you know. He is an American, but one of those Americans that prove the rule.

"Only one man here has consistently helped me to fight the fight for my ideals, so can you blame me for promising to marry him? In the darkest hour he has come with words of encouragement—and with more than words, with practical assistance, so that in spite of every opposition I have been able to remain true.

"What is more, he has worked hard for Poland—I cannot tell you how much he has done in securing assistance and relief for my poor, struggling, starving, but at last emancipated country. If I have any tears left, they are tears of gratitude.

"Surely you can guess who he is—yes, Hugh Johnson, dearest and best of men, and your own good friend. Do you know what he said when I promised to marry him? He said, 'We will go for our honeymoon to Canada, camping somewhere, and Donald Macdonald shall come with us as guide.'

"Now you *will* come, won't you—dearest Donald? Just desert your farm for a little while, for the sake of old times—yes, and forsake even the fair Canadian girl you must surely have met in your beautiful Valley. I have hard work ahead of me—a hard fight

against the Philistines—and I want a holiday in some mountains like our own Carpathian Tatra—your Canadian Rockies seem to be just right.

"We must be in California by the first of August. I have vowed a pilgrimage to the old haunts of my good fairy and original inspiration, the divine Modjeska, and my company has leased a studio in Los Angeles for the winter. But we have this month of July for Canada, and count upon meeting you at Banff.

"But it is not hotel life that we want—we must be in the open, sitting at night by the campfire, in the forest, by the lakeshore or mountain torrent—heart to heart with nature.

"I have been in correspondence with some guide at Banff named Panns, who says he knows you. He recommends a trip to Kananaskis Lake—a ten-day riding and fishing and camping trip. Is he reliable, or may we have another such experience as that with Indian Pete? We should feel so much relieved if we knew you were coming with us and at hand for any emergency. Then I could fulfil my promise and go on to visit you in your Valley.

"Do not fail us, my dear Donald. We arrive at Banff on the 12th.

"STEPHANIE."

The Princess married to Hugh Johnson! What an amazing turn of the wheel! Donald could imagine the excitement the news would create among the members of the Hoodoo camp. Just about this time they would be making arrangements for the summer, and when the camp itself was held, what a source of entertainment! Donald could call to

mind as if yesterday the scene in which Hugh, perched on his mock throne, told the tale of the Princess at Biskra, a tale which left her morals marked as X—an unknown quantity. And now Hugh was to marry her—of course, they would say, because of her title.

Donald gave Hugh credit for more disinterested spirit. He liked the average American, and Hugh was better than the average American. He was quite the most popular member of the Hoodoo camp, for behind his armour of wit there was a generous heart. A thorough sport, he never "hogged" and never interfered with other men's chances. He treated the guides as friends, knowing sympathetically all about their families and troubles.

Not a handsome man, but with a pleasant face typical of the best in his nation. He had a college education—Donald had heard him talk of Cornell—he came somewhere from Michigan though his practice was in New York. Fond of music, and especially the opera—something of an artist, for he sketched as much as he fished—a catholic reader—he had some common point of interest with everyone in camp.

"After all," thought Donald, "what better man could she have chosen? A title has no attraction for her now. He will make a friend and companion."

With this disposal of the situation, Donald turned to the letter from Hector.

"Dear Donald,

"How's the farm and how's everything? I suppose you are settled down by this time and thinking about the first crop of hay. We have had some nice rains, and the fields are looking fine.

"The Princess was as good as her word and we have started clearing the site for her studio. It is to be bigger than the first plans, as she has decided to put in a dark room and printing plant, so that she won't bring up the company till next spring. The problem of the power plant was solved by Hugh Johnson, who is legal adviser to some financiers interested in paper. He has induced them to put up a pulp and paper mill beside the Falls so that she will get all the power she wants for the studio at a reasonable price.

"This moving picture business began to look good to me, so I asked Hugh Johnson if he would recommend my putting money into the scheme. But he choked me off, saying to put it into pulp and paper. As to this moving picture business, he said, 'The only way to succeed is to have the cunning of a fox, the skin of a chameleon, the faith of an Early Christian Martyr, and the name of a Jew.'

"As my money will some day come to you, I thought it well to tell you of this. Hugh Johnson is sure one lovely gentleman.

"Fishing and hunting parties are booking up to beat the band. This season looks like being a humdinger—just about time after four lean years.

"Love from Aunt Mary and

"Your affectionate uncle,

"HECTOR MACDONALD."

The note from Bill Panns confirmed the request of the Princess that Donald should join the party as guide.

"Business is awful big," he wrote. "We're short-handed and will be glad if you'll come along."

Donald thought over the pros and cons of this invitation. The first haying would be over in less than a week, and Batiste could run the place till he got back. He would dearly love to help out Hugh Johnson and the Princess again, now that he knew more about them both. It was worth while taking some trouble to keep up their interest in Canada. They were bringing money into the country. He might even interest the Princess sufficiently to bring a company of moving-picture actors into the Valley—there was scenery enough and to spare with a good road and a railway suitable for all kinds of stunts—gee whiz!—that was an idea!

But there was the other side of the case, namely, that he would be a fortnight absent from Kate just when they had come to an understanding. She might resent his running away. Then again, if Mrs. Mackenzie and the Colonel knew he was going as a mere guide, would they not continue to look down on him and all the more oppose his paying court to their daughter?

It seemed only fair that Kate herself should have a voice in his decision, so he resolved to consult her. For this, however, he must wait, as the Colonel returned that morning, and when the Colonel was at home, Donald must stay away. In the meanwhile

he wired a provisional acceptance to Bill Panna.

He wished they had given him longer notice. If they were due at Banff on the twelfth, he must be there not later than the evening of the eleventh—that meant Friday's run to Golden, and this was Wednesday evening. He would have to work like the dickens tomorrow so as to leave everything in order. Kate had expected her father to go away again next morning. That would enable them to have a heart to heart conference in the evening.

Early next morning, Donald heard Captain Staynes' motor drive up to the bungalow and depart. Breakfast over, he sauntered down towards the lower fence at the end of the clearing and so down to their private post office. There was a note for him, sure enough, which he eagerly opened and read:

"Dearest Donald,

"Father has suddenly decided to give mother and myself a treat by taking us with him to Lake Louise and possibly Banff. He says he wants to make up for the inconvenience we had to put up with at first, and also that we need a holiday. He did not tell us till late last night, and I had to rush to get my things packed—we are motoring to Golden. I just have time to scribble this note.

"Will be away a fortnight or three weeks. Wish me a good time and be a good boy yourself. With lots of kisses, dearest Donald,

"Ever yours,
KATE."

"P.S. Captain Staynes is going with us.

"P.P.S. I forgot all about the cow. Can you arrange to milk her while we are away?"

So she was gone! Well, at any rate that relieved him of one objection to his own going, lest she should miss him. To Lake Louise and possibly Banff? Possibly then he might meet her there—though not exactly under the circumstances he could wish. However she loved him still—dear little girl—she was the right sort! Not much of a farmer yet, however, or she would not have left the cow forgotten. And who the devil was this Captain Staynes?

It was a hard day's work but a not unhappy day that he put in, clearing up odds and ends of work on the farm, so that Batiste could run it more easily in his absence. All the while he hummed to himself an old song of the trenches.

“Good-bye, Good-bye,
Wipe a tear, baby dear, from your eye,
Though it's hard to part I know
I'll be tickled to death to go.
Don't cryee, don't sighee,
There's a silver lining in the skyee.
Good-bye, old thing.
Cheery oh, Chin Chin,
Napoo, tooriloo, Good-bye!”

On the following morning, after many admonitions to Batiste, Donald himself took the north-bound train, reaching Banff the same evening. The Princess was not due till the day after. In the Calgary paper, however, there was an interview telegraphed from Winnipeg stating that she had planned a fishing and camping trip in the Canadian Rockies, after which she intended “to pay a visit to an old

friend Donald Macdonald at his ranch in the Columbia Valley." There was no mention in this interview that she was on her honeymoon, but it was stated that she was accompanied by a Mr. Hugh Johnson of New York. The wedding evidently was still being kept private.

"Kate is as likely as not to see this," thought Donald, and spent the evening writing her a letter in which he told her of his presence at Banff and explained why he had taken this step.

"Here is your rig-out," said Bill Panns next morning, handing Donald a buckskin shirt, leather chaps with wide flaps and silver buttons, big Stetson hat and bright crimson silk neckerchief.

"Have a heart!" exclaimed Donald. "I'm not a cowboy acting for the movies."

"Never mind. You've got to dress the part. These tourists expect it and it doesn't hurt."

"If Kate sees me in this, she'll throw a fit," thought Donald, consoling himself with the reflection that she was thirty-five miles away, at Lake Louise.

So far as the Princess was concerned, Bill Panns had hit the mark, for when the train drew up and she found Donald arrayed in more than Solomon's glory, she was so delighted that he feared she would fall on his neck and kiss him. Marie, the maid, in spite of an assumed superciliousness, had still romance enough left in her to be thrilled. Hugh Johnson took the costume less seriously, hailing him as Jesse James, Junior.

Bill Panns, attired in equal radiance, was introduced and unfolded his plan. He would go on ahead that day by train to Morley where the horses were waiting, and prepare a camp in advance on the Kananaskis trail. Donald in the meanwhile would be at their service with spare saddles, and they could accustom themselves gradually to the altitude with short rides before starting on the more strenuous trip. The plan was approved, and the Princess drove off with Hugh and Marie to the big hotel.

She looked younger than ever, and the picture of happiness. As usual she was dressed up to the minute, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and black satin coat tied loosely at the neck with a vivid green silk scarf, the skirt fringed in front in Parisian imitation of the moving-picture cowboy with shreds of black silk ribbon. She had evidently been the sensation of the train, for all the passengers were looking at her and talking about her. Donald realised that any attendant light in her retinue could hardly hide under a bushel.

Two hours later Donald rode up with his ponies to the hotel and ascertained to his relief that the Mackenzies were not registered there. The Princess, wearing the familiar grey riding habit, proved herself an admirable horsewoman, and raced him along the Spray Road as far as the bridge, while Hugh and Marie ambled more sedately behind. Stephanie was enraptured with the splendour of the mountains, and Donald himself infected by her gaiety.

At the bridge they rested for a while, and the talk naturally reverted to their last meeting.

"How is Lawson, the press-agent?" asked Donald of the Princess.

"Our mutual friend," she laughed. "The last I heard of him was that he was conducting a propaganda against the Foreign Born. Hugh says that this is because he was afraid of someone starting a pogrom in the United States, in which he might naturally be involved as a victim, but I maintain that he is speaking for the New England Conscience. You see, the old-fashioned Native Born does not realise that newer foreigners, such as myself, are saving America from dulness. The Pilgrim Fathers made excellent pioneers and farmers, and secured a coign of vantage which enabled them to exploit succeeding generations of immigrants, but they left one thing behind them in the Old World. They brought Success with them, but left behind the feeling for beauty. I look upon myself as a missionary to the Bostonians, but missionaries are never popular, and Mr. Lawson is voicing a popular prejudice—no doubt for a consideration."

"And Mr. Griffin?"

"Hugh can tell you better than I can," she replied.

"Griffin," said Hugh, "became the publisher of an Uplift Magazine—he told me he saw more certain money in that than in moving-pictures. He also holds sixty per cent interest in a New Thought Professor whose record of four wives and fifteen

affinities brings large and profitable audiences. With these and with the promotion of a new Evangelist, he has deserted us for the millionaire class."

Marie gave the impression of being somewhat subdued, as indeed she was. She had not yet recovered from the shock of the Princess's sudden marriage to one whom she had imagined her own perquisite. Her world was thrown out of gear, and for the last few days she had been almost polite to the underlings whom the accident of travel had placed at her mercy. Dimly she realised that Hugh had outwitted her, made a fool of her, and her position began to seem the least bit precarious. Such a position might not be easy to duplicate, for it gave her unusual pickings, and in these days Princesses were beginning to pawn their jewelry, telling the reporters that they had always believed in the simple life.

The prospect of the camping trip was also depressing. She remembered the discomforts of New Brunswick, and so far she had never ridden a horse. Donald had come to their rescue before, and was fortunately at hand again. Under the circumstances he was evidently a friend she ought to cultivate.

During the long journey out West, she had drawn some comfort from her reflection in the mirror. Those dark eyes were deadly still, the cheeks were still smooth—any ordinary man would want to kiss

those lips. The ride out to the bridge had further restored her self-confidence. Her Mexican saddle had been easier than she anticipated, and Hugh had considerably not forced the pace. The exhilaration of the mountain air added to her spirits, and as she considered Donald at more leisure, she decided that he offered possibilities to which she had hitherto been blind. On the way back he therefore found himself the target of a concentrated coquetry which must have overwhelmed him had not his heart been held already captive elsewhere. Marie had always envied the vampire rôles in which the Princess played, cherishing the desire to play them some day herself in real life if not on the stage or screen. Here was an unsophisticated youth, heaven-sent Samson to her Delilah. Of course, she meant merely to play with him—no life on a Canadian farm for her!—all she wanted was a nice round *dot* with which to buy herself a husband in dear old Paris.

To save that *dot* she was willing to suffer yet further trials and make many weary pilgrimages, but it would pass the time to break a heart or two by the way.

The honeymooners chose to spend the rest of the day alone, leaving Donald free to add a few sheets to his still unposted letter to Kate. On reading over what he had written the night before, he felt that it was hardly a lover's letter—there were too many excuses and explanations. The addition was there-

fore full of ardent affection—she was his darling, dearest, sweetheart, dainty one, elf, witch and fairy, and he burned up every foot of the thirty-five miles between Banff and Lake Louise with kisses. With a sigh he dropped the letter into the mail box, and spent the rest of the evening writing another.

Next morning was the day of departure. Always an actress, the Princess elected to leave the hotel in full panoply, even though the actual start was to be made from Morley, and Donald therefore headed a brave procession on horseback to the station. With the delays not uncommon where women are concerned, they were late in leaving, so that when they reached the station the eastbound train had already arrived. Donald dismounted hurriedly, to look up into the startled face of Kate Mackenzie and the still more embarrassed face of her mother evidently just arrived from Lake Louise.

"All aboard!" called the conductor.

There was no time for explanation. The Princess, Marie and Hugh rushed unceremoniously towards the observation car, and Donald had barely time to rapid-fire orders to one of Bill Panns' men before swinging himself on to the moving train. As he did so he waved his hat to Kate, who raised a feeble hand in reply. Donald saw her father turn to her, while beside her, twirling his moustache, stood a tall, aquiline individual who could be no other than Captain Staynes.

"Thank heaven we sent the baggage down by the hotel bus," said Hugh as Donald rejoined the party.

THE CONQUERING HERO

215

"By Jiminy, that was a close shave! Don't worry, old man. I've got the checks."

"It is not the checks I'm worrying about," said Donald. "It's a letter that I posted to the wrong address."

CHAPTER XIII

BILL PANNS was waiting for them at Morley with saddle and pack ponies, the rest having gone ahead to prepare a camp. They had a dozen miles to ride over almost level prairie, but the cumulus of Alps showed a rift to the left towards which their trail was pointed, and Donald's depression disappeared in the exultation felt at the approach to this romantic gateway. Although the Indians of the plains must have used this pass for centuries on their raids into the Kootenays, it was only sixty years since the first white man had penetrated its defiles.

Bill led the cavalcade, followed by the Princess, Hugh and Marie, while Donald brought up the rear with Ginger Joe, one of Bill Panns' regular men, whom he helped to herd the three pack-ponies.

For the first time he understood what must have been the feelings of the first explorers when they reached this giant barrier of mountains. After two hundred years of exploration across three thousand miles of waterway and plain in quest of the Western Sea, they faced these rocky terraces and ridges stretching up apparently into a sea of clouds. Even should this prove the apex of a continent, were there three thousand miles of continent beyond to

travel before they attained their goal? And yet, though formidable the rampart, it had the lure as of enchanted territory, tempting the wandering knight further to adventure and storm mysterious battlements.

The first camp was within a stone's throw of the Kananaskis River, and the advance guides had not only pitched the tents but had caught a mess of trout for supper. The Princess and her party had not yet ridden far enough to be saddle-sore, and were exhilarated by the majesty of their surroundings. As evening fell, the silhouette of mountains looming overhead shut off the memory of petty cares.

Sleep came soon, serenely enfolding.

When the Princess retired, Hugh and Donald remained to smoke beside the camp-fire, and for the first time since they had met again, had a heart to heart talk.

"Well, old man," said Hugh, "doesn't this bring old times back again? Who would have thought last year that things would happen as they have—an old bachelor like myself making a marriage like this. What do you make of it?"

"Never too late to mend," said Donald. "I believe in marriage myself."

"Oho! So you have a fish on your line too? Well, well—you have it all ahead of you."

They smoked for a while in silence. Then tapping the ashes out of his pipe, Hugh continued:

"You remember the story I told about Biskra? Donald, old man, do you know I believe I fell in love

with her then. She seemed far away—remote—like a star in the night, solitary but so beautiful. Old-fashioned ideas of morality never gave me a headache—they always suggested humdrum domesticity, and you know we all went to the Hoodoo Camp to escape from that. Believe me, the thought that she was unconventional added to her charm. I'm not a Myrtle Reid hero—only a doggoned human being.

"Well, when we got back from camp to New York, I decided in my cold, calculating, middle-aged way to cultivate her acquaintance, with unexpected consequences. I found her amazingly young in spirit, with a faith in human nature and an artistic sincerity beyond belief in a commercial age like ours. This was too fine a woman to be at the mercy of these Broadway sharks. So I got her to appoint me her lawyer, and cleaned out the worst of the bunch. More than that, the effect of her enthusiasms was to make me myself feel young again, believing things that I hadn't believed since I left College. I became young again in spirit and young in body. I was able to help her quite a bit—though I say it myself—and she found that friends in New York are not to be picked up every day. So the thing gradually grew into our being with each other every day. Neither of us really cares a hoot for convention, and the actual form of marriage might have been dispensed with, but it will save a heap of talk, and simplify the legal arrangements."

"What about her title?" Donald felt inclined to

ask, but refrained lest this might sound like an insinuation that the Princess's rank had also played its part.

Hugh himself volunteered the answer.

"The chief obstacle was her title. I didn't like to be thought a tuft-hunter, and in any case a title always makes me feel inclined to laugh. As luck would have it, she herself decided off her own bat to drop the 'Princess.' As soon as we reach Los Angeles, she will announce the marriage and the new name. In private she will be Mrs. Hugh Johnson—in public plain 'Sobieska'—her ambition being to achieve fame by her own merit and not by any artificial aid. Well, Donald, what's the verdict?"

"You are lucky to get her," said Donald.

"Shake hands on that," said Hugh, and they gave each other a real grip.

It was a still more imposing cavalcade, eighteen horses in all, that rode up the trail into the Pass itself next morning. Bill led as before, a picturesque, romantic figure. Hugh and Stephanie, enjoying the return to youth, and touching hands now and again as lovers do, followed abreast.

Marie in the meanwhile continued her sentimental attack on Donald, who found it hard to escape her. Now he must help her tighten her gaiter-laces or button her gloves. Now she revealed a passion for flowers which she must pick and then be assisted to remount. Now she would have a speck of dust removed from her eye, and now hand her scented coat for him to carry. Now she would call her horse

endearing names, pretending a love of animals, with a judicious terror of possible bears and mountain lions. Now he must tell her the story of his life and be commiserated on his loneliness.

By the time they had reached the midday halting place, Donald realised that the maid meant mischief, and that if he chose to forget the absent Kate, he had a willing accomplice. With her jet-black curls cunningly set over her ears under a jockey-cap of black slashed with red, and her long dark eyelashes and carmined lips, Marie might very well have vanquished a more susceptible cavalier. If the Princess had not been so absorbed, she would have called off this amorous assault, but she had eyes only for Hugh and the amazing mountains.

The assault, it is true, diminished under the stress of Nature, for Marie began to find six hours in the saddle at least two hours too long. By four o'clock she was petulant, by five distinctly snappy, and when at last they reached their camp, it required more than a box of candies to restore her equanimity. Donald in sympathy for sufferings which in earlier days he had himself experienced, brought her spirits back with a dose of brandy, but after supper she disappeared, and Kate's supremacy in Donald's thoughts was removed from danger.

Once more a night of stars and wall of mountains.

Hugh and the Princess talked in low tones apart, Bill Panns and the other guides sat staring into the camp-fire, content with their pipes and the memory

of work well done. Through the still air they could hear the horses cropping, jangling their bells as they hobbled through the surrounding pastures. After a while Ginger Joe went out to see in what direction any were straying, and could be heard singing to himself a cowboy ditty with the refrain after every verse:

Coma ti yi, youpy, youpy ya, youpy yi,
Coma ti yi, youpy, youpy ya.

The words of his song ran like this:

I'm up in the morning afore daylight
And afore I sleep the moon shines bright.

Foot in the stirrup and hand on the horn
Best darned cowboy ever was born.

Oh, it's bacon and beans most every day,
I'd as soon be a-eating prairie hay.

I'll sell my outfit just as soon as I can
I won't punch cattle for no darned man.

With my knees in the saddle and my seat in the sky
I'll quit punching cows in the sweet bye and bye.

The words brought back to Donald the thought of his own case, and he wondered what had induced him to leave his farm for this expedition. Any other guide could have filled his place, for the Princess was so taken up with Hugh that she never would have missed him. He was a fool to have come at all—especially in view of Kate. This Marie girl might get him into an awkward mix-up.

It was, however, too late to get out of it now—he must carry on.

Then as if in an after-thought Ginger Joe broke out again into song with the old refrain, and the words,

Going back to town to draw my money,
Going back home to see my honey.

With a laugh, Donald caught the spirit of the singer, put aside his disturbing thoughts, and turned in to a sound night's sleep.

The sun which had been blazing the last two days, and indeed for many days, rose hotter than ever, and to the heat were added various tests to Marie's temper. Donald was so obviously unresponsive that she sulked, speaking only to be sarcastic. Then the trail began to grow rougher, with fallen trees which had to be manœuvred. The warning "low bridge" became more frequent, and more than once unnoticed branches slashed her face. At one point where the trail skirted a high bank beside the river, the windfall was so tangled that Bill had to hack a new way through. As they stood waiting, the bank suddenly gave way beneath one of the pack ponies, which slid into the river below followed by an avalanche of earth and stones. Marie shrieked, and Donald could only quiet her by leading her mount well into the bush. Fortunately the falling horse landed on its feet in shallow water and picked its way upstream to rejoin them later.

When she recovered her nerve and they came to

a ford, her horse half way across found the water so pleasantly cool that it declined to budge. She suggested that Donald should lift her on to his own saddle, having in view the close proximity such an action entailed. Donald was ungallant enough to solve the problem another way, giving her steed a sounding thwack, which sent it splashing to the shore with Marie clinging on to its much less sympathetic neck. She kept her balance but slew Donald with her looks when he came up to apologise, and it required the very largest box of candies in Bill Pann's store to appease her indignation. The saddlesoreness in the afternoon became torture, and on the top of all a toothache reduced her to hysterics. Gone now were all the cherished dreams of "vamping"—gone even was her capacity to help the Princess change for supper. She lay on a pile of blankets till her tent was set up, and had to be sent to sleep with a glass of grog.

They were now well into the mountains, and the jagged ridge, capped and streaked with snow, which formed the western wall of the Kananaskis Lakes, loomed ever nearer and darker. The pass itself grew wilder and the trail narrower, skirting melancholy evidence of forest fires—here a mile or so of spaces chaotic and ashen, relieved only by the reddish purple of the fire-weed—here an avenue of second growth, with intervals of tall fir and pine and spruce in primeval splendour towering over glades knee-deep in pinegrass. The trail itself was carpeted with decayed and broken wood and vegeta-

tion, inflammable as tinder, and Bill warned those who smoked to be careful.

On the fourth day they were more than six thousand feet above sea level and within sight of glaciers, but the heat seemed more than ever oppressive.

It was therefore with relief that they came to the wider plateau in which was cupped the lower Kananaskis Lake—a tree-fringed sheet of water three or four miles long beyond which the trail was said to climb more precipitously still over a high pass into the Kootenays. The further end of the lake was however their own limit, as the trail to Banff doubled back along the lake shore and then broke off down another valley westward. At this southern limit they encamped in a meadow where mosquitoes held high festival, Donald alone venturing forth to fish, while the others sought refuge in acrid smudges. A little later, however, the Princess joined him, armoured with a veil.

“You must not think I do not appreciate your coming,” she said as she sat down beside him. “I do, for I know you must have made some sacrifice to be here at all. But this is really the first time Hugh and I have had ourselves to ourselves. New York has many distractions, we have so much to talk about, and old age is so near.”

“I was beginning to wonder,” said Donald frankly. “It was not easy for me to get away, and as you see now, any other guide would have done as well. But I am glad to have been of service to you, and all I ask in return is that you should visit

me afterwards in my own Valley. My coming here has made complications—”

“Ah!” she said, with intuition, “there is a girl then—I am glad, and I only hope she is worth while. My dear Donald, if there were no complications in one’s love affairs, life would be so monotonous. When happiness does come at last, it is so much more welcome than if it had come too easily. Is she fair or dark?—of course she is fair—blue eyes like yours always fall in love with golden hair—and a little jealous?—I do not blame her. I could have fallen in love with you myself, if only I had been younger and thought I had a chance.”

“Then you will come?” reiterated Donald.

“Nothing could prevent me,” she answered, and Donald’s heart was lighter than it had been for some time.

“Hugh tells me you know of our decision,” she said, after a minute’s pause.

“You mean your giving up being called ‘Princess’?”

“Yes—you see, Donald,” she continued earnestly, “this title belongs to a dead world, and we have definitely decided to bury it. It acts only as a corroding influence, staining and debasing the life that it touches. Fine men whom I want to make friends are turned to flunkeys, and women into toadies. It hampers me in my art—I am tied with it as in a shroud. A princess cannot, should not do this or that—enough, I have decided to rend my shroud and come back to the living world.

"My world is the world of art—not the world of precedence and patronage. I want to depict and interpret the beautiful in life and in the world around me, and to do that I must be free, not the slave of convention. There is no merit, no glory in a hereditary title. The only fame I want is the name I have made for myself in my art. And even if I do not achieve fame, I can at least bring more appreciation for beauty into this art. For four years now the world has been so full of ugliness and terror. It is in need of a new soul, a new sincerity, new ideals. Let me be one of those who help to bring the world back to beauty!"

He cast his line again out on the water, when suddenly he noticed a white cloud-cumulus rising over a ridge at the northern end of the lake. She saw him start, and her eyes followed his.

"That is the first cloud we have seen since we left Banff," she said. "Does that mean rain?"

"No," he answered quietly. "It means a fire."

"A forest fire? How dreadful! Is another of these lovely woods to be turned to ashes? How strange that we did not see it when we passed. Is it far away?"

"Five or six miles. It must be just about the place where we stopped for lunch."

"Then perhaps we started it," she said, speaking his thought. "But didn't I see Panns pour water on our camp-fire before we left?"

"It may have been a cigarette," replied Donald.

"The least little thing can start trouble in such weather."

"I smoke so many cigarettes and am so careless," she said remorsefully. "Probably it was one of mine. Is the fire moving in this direction?"

"Not yet," said Donald after a careful inspection. "The wind has fallen. But the trail back to Morley may be cut off, and we must travel back over that trail for a while if we go out the way we planned."

He reeled up his line and began to take down his rod. Panns must know of this at once. They might have to move camp at once.

The Princess sat there looking intently at the growing cloud.

"This is typical," she said with a mournful note in her voice, "of what has happened so often in my own life. Some thoughtless act of mine starts a conflagration which sets the train to tragedy. Why is it?"

"Ask me another, Princess," said Donald. "My job is now to see that we all get out of this trouble. I guess I had better talk it over with Bill."

The moment Bill saw the cloud of smoke, he said:

"If the wind swings to the east, it's us for the high pass—we'll never get out by the Spray—this is a regular trap."

"Shall we break camp now?" asked Donald. "We might try to get out while there's time."

"No, it will be dark in an hour—too risky a trail

with all these greenhorns—better trust to luck and get off early in the morning.”

Word was passed round to be ready for an early start, and everybody turned in. But there was no sleep that night. As darkness fell, the white cloud glowed at first like a vast incandescent lamp, then reddened into a sphere of flame which lit up the sky again with unearthly splendour. Across the water was wafted a deepening roar, which may have been partly the echo of a neighbouring waterfall, accentuated in the windless night, but which could not fail also to be identified with the flames licking up the mountainside. It suggested a volcano in eruption, terror circling round on swift red wings.

The smoke gradually veiled the stars. Dawn was delayed, but at three o'clock tents were struck and after a hurried breakfast Bill Panns led the way back along the lake shore. In their eyes the smoke came stinging, blinding, and with the wind sucked up by so vast a fire, flying embers hurtled round. So dense was the smoke that the flames were no longer seen, but the heat grew fiercer and sweat poured down the sides of man and beast. With shouts and oaths the guides urged on the uneasy pack-ponies, while Bill led the pace ahead, calling back from time to time:

“All right—come on ahead!” but evidently anxious.

They had only one more mile to go, and it seemed as if they would make it, for the smoke grew lighter and they could breathe more freely. Then came a

puff of wind, and the pall of smoke descended again more formidable. Suddenly Bill Panns' horse stopped dead, and in spite of spur and lash refused to budge. Its sides were streaming with sweat, its ears pricked forward, and as it pawed the earth it snorted and whinneyed and screamed. The other horses were equally distressed, some instinct telling them of danger.

Bill signalled to Donald to come alongside.

"It's no go," he said bitterly. "We've got to go back. You lead, and I'll guard the rear."

Donald turned to obey, but just at that moment they were all blinded by a terrific flash and roar, while a spruce tree fell in flames across the trail over which they had just passed. Another flash, another roar, and the pack-ponies stampeded down into the lake. Fortunately the riders were able to hold their horses, but the Princess's mount reared wildly, and if she had not been so good a horsewoman, she must have been thrown.

Marie's face was a picture in itself. The perspiration had cut perpendicular furrows down the grime that blackened her face, and the whites of her eyes rolled round in such comical terror that Donald could not help laughing. Then in a moment all thought of tragedy or laughter disappeared in a lashing rain, which stormed down upon them from the clouds accumulated overhead. The pent-up moisture of two months had at last burst through the dam of sunshine, and all unseen through the haze of the forest fire had hurled its circling tides into a con-

centrated maelstrom. Hailstones large as hazel nuts, rain that drove through their clothes, swept into the shelter of an overhanging rock. Then the storm settled down into a steady downpour, sweetening the air beyond belief.

"Thank God for this!" exclaimed Bill. "Nothing else could have put out that fire. It would have swept the valley bare. We may be able now to get out today after all."

With the aid of much lurid language, the pack-ponies were enticed back on to the trail, and after two hours of patience Bill's horse consented to proceed. As they progressed, however, they saw that the instinct of the animals was right. The fire had leapt across the ford below the lake, and was within a few hundred yards of the forks where the trail to the west broke off. Had it not been for this drenching rain, their way would have been barred by a wall of fire, and even as it was, the steam and smoke from the fire-swept zone were almost overpowering.

"It will need a week of rain to put this absolutely out," said Bill as they talked over their experience that evening. "It burns right underground, five or six feet."

He gave them an object lesson on the ease with which a fire could start, using one of the Princess's cigarette ends as an instance. This seemed to be extinguished, but when he placed it on the trail and fanned it with his hat, a black spot gradually grew around until in fifteen minutes it burst into flame.

"You can't be too careful," he said, and the Princess, looking significantly at Donald, agreed.

Donald was the one who suffered physically most from the adventure, as his lungs were still sensitive to smoke from the effects of gassing, and every breath now was causing him pain.

It was Marie, however, whose nerves were most affected. Lack of sleep, recurrence of her toothache, the pyramiding agony of saddlesoreness, the unforgotten plague of mosquitoes, the ruin of her jaunty jockey cap in the storm and the long discomfort of wet clothes, the growing distaste for camp fare and camp accommodation, and the absolute indifference of Donald to her blandishments, added to the terrifying experiences of the day's ride, had set her thoroughly on edge. Donald was the object of her particular fury, for had it not been for Donald the Princess would never have come back to Canada, never have undertaken this idiotic trip. He was a pig-headed, soulless foreigner—a barbarian without any feeling where women were concerned—imagine a man who refused to flirt! She was indeed a woman scorned.

Their camp that night was higher even than on Kananaskis Lake, for the new pass they had entered rose rapidly towards its summit. The night was cold, and tired though she was, Marie could not sleep. One of the horses had found a patch of sweet young grass close to her tent, and the jangle of its bell was maddening. On the top of all, the horse stumbled on her tent rope, and before she

knew, the whole thing had collapsed, smothering her in its folds.

Boiling with rage, she struggled out, only to face Donald grinning widely at her quaint appearance as her night-capped but dishevelled head emerged from under the canvas. This was too much! The epithets that the guides had flung under stress of emotion had not escaped her notice. She now knew Canadian terms of abuse, and she would use them. Pointing at him, therefore, with supreme hatred, she shrieked:

"You s'eeplehead son-of-a-gun!"

CHAPTER XIV

COLONEL MACKENZIE had a wholesome fear of his daughter. When, therefore, he received an anonymous letter telling him of the rumours about Kate and Donald, he decided not to oppose her openly—her contrariety would confirm her in her folly—but to use diplomacy. Donald's suspicion that Captain Staynes might be a rival was ill-founded. The Captain was already safely married, and had he been ten times a bachelor Colonel Mackenzie would never have encouraged his attentions. The last thing the Colonel wanted was the marriage and loss of such a willing horse as his daughter, particularly now that the ranch was so rapidly taking shape with no effort on his part beyond a few casual suggestions.

Although not a lover, Captain Staynes was a man of the world, the very man to consult. The Captain agreed on the calamity of the marriage of an officer's daughter with an ex-sergeant, but blamed the father for its possibility.

"You allow her no distraction," he said. "She has no opportunity of meeting her own class. If she could only contrast this fellow with well-bred people, Kate would soon escape from this tangle. But how can you blame a farmer's drudge from keeping such company?"

They, therefore, decided to make up a party for

Lake Louise, where the environment of wealth would probably effect the desired reaction. Kate fell into the trap, delighted at this opportunity to see a place of whose beauty she had heard so much. She really needed rest and change, her sleep suffering from her responsibilities. Sometimes she had felt tempted to give up, and it was only pride and determination not to be a "quitter" that had held her to it. Nature, however, had its limitations, and when this apple of desire presented itself, who can blame this Eve?

Captain Staynes was good company. He had hunted in India, Africa, Alaska and had fished every known trout stream outside China. Excellent raconteur, he was Othello to Kate's Desdemona—how lucky men were to have such opportunities!—why was she born a woman?

Then Lake Louise itself held her for ransom. Chained at her enchanted window, she could have fancied some high priest in the barbaric ritual of a forgotten rite melting the jewels of ten million queens into this aerial chalice—turquoise, beryl, topaz, amethyst and jade—so that the world could quaff it and be drunk with beauty.

When at last she tore herself away, it was to walk up the trail to the Lakes in the Clouds, where at the outlet to the topmost lake over-looking a precipice she found a tea-house run by some English girls adventuring for a summer living.

"Why didn't I think of this?" she murmured, and then remembered that this was one of the oppor-

tunities recommended by the League of Colonial Intelligence. "No family incubus—no cow to milk—"

Dear old Donald—what a good sport he was to slave away while she was playing butterfly. Well, she would make up for it to him when she got back.

That first day at Lake Louise was heaven reflected, until the evening, and then Kate began to be suspicious. Why was it that in his tales of adventure Captain Staynes always threw some slur upon his guides—they were dirty, or chewed tobacco, or spoke illiterately or were treacherous "squaw men"? And why did he suggest that the Canadian army was ill-disciplined and over-advertised, really not much use after all? They were in Canada in a Canadian hotel, and it was bad form to say such things openly. Then she caught her parents exchanging glances, and in a moment understood. This was all secretly aimed at Donald. They suspected—perhaps they knew.

So that was the reason for this unexpected treat! They were leading her out of temptation. Her father evidently had more brains than she had given him credit for. He had fooled her successfully—but only for a while.

Next morning therefore Kate pretended to be dissatisfied. The elevation, she said, was too high, and she could not sleep. These hordes of American tourists got on her nerves. The beauty of the lake was cloying—like nothing but honey for breakfast, lunch and dinner. She wanted to get back to the ranch.

Captain Staynes calmed her parents by suggesting that they go on to Banff which was five hundred feet lower. It was not quite so exotic there, he argued, and she would fall in love with the swimming-pool. Lake Louise was too sudden a contrast with the Valley.

Banff was, therefore, proposed, and as Kate did not wish to show her hand too soon, she accepted—postponing the move, however, till next morning, as the mail from the Valley would come up that night and she would surely get a letter from Donald.

No letter came, and her anxiety increased. Why had she ever consented to go away so suddenly? Had Donald taken offence, thinking she had run away from him? Did he despise her for neglecting her duties? Had he ever got her own note, and was anybody milking the cow? Had some accident happened, and did he need her?

A thousand such questions strung her nerves up to the moment when she stepped off at Banff next morning and witnessed his amazing appearance in cowboy costume with two women who looked as if they belonged to some circus. What cloud had he dropped from? Why had he sent her no message? Where was he going to now, and what would happen to the ranch in his absence?

During her ride that morning, she asked the guide if he knew any Donald Macdonald, but the answer was negative. Bill Panns had a separate outfit from that of the hotel, and Donald in any case had been a bird of passage. Identification of the two

women at the station was equally unprofitable. Every second tourist at the hotel was in riding costume of varying degree of fashion and eccentricity, and as America in this year of armistice had decided to relax, the resort was full to overflowing. Cavalcades with cowboy guides swarmed in and out of the hotel courtyard, most of them for only a few hours' ride along some mountain road or trail, others with pack-ponies equipped for more strenuous trips. As a rule, the stouter the rider, the gayer the costume, perfectly respectable brokers donning buckskin jackets and vermilion kerchiefs as their tribute to what they supposed was Western taste.

Had Kate mentioned the name of the Princess, she might have been more successful, for that dazzling creature had certainly left her mark. Her evening gown had electrified the hotel dining room, one of the guests asking the headwaiter whether they had the privilege of entertaining a high explosive or the Russian ballet.

For lack of news, Kate began to wonder if by chance her eyes had deceived her—she was certainly overstrung—perhaps Donald was never there at all. Uncertainty made her still more impatient. Telephoning to Lake Louise, she heard from the mail clerk that a letter addressed to Miss Mackenzie had come that morning, but that there had been another Miss Mackenzie there a few days before and it had been sent on to Vancouver. He would try to recover it if it proved to be her letter. What did it

contain? Should she wire to the postmaster at Vancouver to open it and wire her the contents?

"Oh, no! No!" she almost shrieked, recollecting Donald's appalling capacity for endearments. Such a telegram would be a costly joke.

There was nothing to do but intrigue for the return. This move was naturally opposed.

"How can you think of leaving this lovely place?" protested Mrs. Mackenzie.

"This lovely place doesn't milk the cow," replied Kate.

"Well, the swimming pool?" urged Captain Staynes.

"The swimming pool won't irrigate our clover," was the answer.

"Think of the money we are willing to spend on you," exclaimed the Colonel.

"Whose money?" answered Kate. "Our hens are laying eggs worth six cents apiece, and no one to collect them."

They argued themselves angrily to bed, getting up next morning to find that Kate had flown by the early train—no doubt back to the Valley. Mrs. Mackenzie followed by the next one, reaching Golden in time to make connection with the south-bound, thus saving appearances for her daughter. The Colonel, however, refused to budge, justifying his action by the expense of the trainfare for so short a vacation.

It was not till she was entrained for Golden that Kate had obtained a clue to the mystery of Donald.

In the open observation car used in crossing the Great Divide she overheard the name "Princess Sobieska," and at once pricked up her ears, remembering the photograph in Donald's cabin. Two American women who had also got on at Banff were talking.

"Princess or no Princess," one was saying, "I call it perfectly scandalous. But what can you expect of a moving-picture actress? They occupied separate compartments on the train from Montreal, but I distinctly saw them kissing when I opened her door by mistake. He is a lawyer in New York—pretty well fixed, too, they say—and she has had him on the string for quite a while. But say! her reputation! I wonder the Canadian immigration inspectors ever let her through. I guess they're not over-particular with American tourists—glad to get their money."

"Is she as bad as that!" exclaimed the other.

"Worse, my dear, worse! I guess she won't leave much more than a cinder when she's through with him. She had the sense not to stay long at the hotel—might have been asked to leave, you know. She took him on a camping trip—all by her lonesome—with a guide and a tent—you can imagine the rest."

"Isn't it awful!"

So it had been Donald after all that she had seen on the station platform!

And he had gone out guiding for his Princess!

CHAPTER XV

RECOLLECTION of the fire, and the break in the weather, hurried the camping trip to a close. Bill Panns himself was anxious to return, and though he knew the blaze had started through no fault of his own and indeed might have been caused by some other party, he had to report it so that, in case it broke out again, firefighters might be brought up quickly. Camping in the rain is never pleasant, and though everything possible was done to secure their comfort, everyone was glad to see the tower of the great hotel at Banff. Donald was anxious to get back to his farm, but the train service up his valley ran only twice a week, so that he arrived with more than a day to spare. The Princess discovered this and insisted that he should come to Lake Louise as her guest.

"I want to know about your golden girl before I meet her," she said. "This will be your opportunity to tell me, so that I can make her my friend."

Donald blessed Hector now for his advice on clothes. He had brought a dinner jacket with him from the Valley in case of just such an accident, and could therefore accept the invitation without embarrassment.

In the meanwhile he found that the Mackenzies had gone from Banff, Kate and her mother after

only two days' stay, while the Colonel and Captain Staynes were there a week. It somehow relieved him to think that the Captain had not been with her all the time.

Next morning as the westbound train rolled out of the station, the clouds began to lift, and when they arrived at Lake Louise itself, the sunshine on the surface reflected the lightness of his own heart.

His gaiety however was quickly overshadowed. The Princess had retired to her suite at the hotel and Donald was standing in the reception hall when Colonel Mackenzie passed by with Captain Staynes. The Colonel evidently recognised Donald but just as evidently saw right through him, adding to this slight a remark intended for his ears.

"Very mixed crowd they have in these Canadian hotels."

Donald walked over to the register to see if Kate also was at the hotel. She was not, neither was her mother, as Colonel Mackenzie and Captain Staynes were registered in the same room alone.

"I suppose he sent them back to look after the farm while he himself continued to have a good time," conjectured Donald, sympathising with Kate but relieved to think that he might see her as soon as he returned. Captain Staynes appeared to be attached to the Colonel rather than to his daughter.

When Hugh reappeared with the Princess, they elected to sit on the verandah, fascinated by the iridescent glacier and by the play of colour upon the surface of the lake.

"Now that we have this fairy setting," said the Princess to Donald, "let us have your fairy-tale. All that I know so far is that she has golden hair."

Just then Colonel Mackenzie walked along a path in front of them, without however seeing them.

"First of all," said Donald, nodding at the Colonel, "there is her hard-hearted father."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Princess, "very British, I perceive. Is she here also?"

"Apparently not," replied Donald.

"So much the better," said the Princess. "We can twist the lion's tail without annoying the cub. Being the king of beasts, he is very particular as to who shall be permitted his acquaintance, and who shall marry into his family, is he not?"

"I believe you are a witch," said Donald.

"No," she replied, "merely a woman of the world. My dear Donald, this is the oldest of the fairy-tales, and all you have to do is to live happily ever after."

"Fifty years will satisfy me," said Donald.

Then he had to tell her all about the farm, how many acres he had, how many horses, what were his crops, his neighbours, his friends. From that she drew him on to the Mackenzies, laughing heartily at his tale of the building of the mushroom bungalow.

"Why call in a witch," she said, "when you can do your own magic?"

It was not till the evening that the Colonel appeared again upon the scene. Donald was sitting with Hugh near a large open fireplace while the Princess, ravishingly though somewhat scantily

dressed in sleeveless emerald and gold brocade with double skirt and long train of gold, was examining Indian wares at the near-by Curio store. The Colonel coming in with Captain Staynes stood with his back to Hugh and Donald, when suddenly he saw this entrancing vision.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "Where did that spring from? Good thing we sent the ladies home—eh, what? Just watch me do a killing."

"Go slow, old man," said the Captain. "She suggests an expensive acquaintance."

"Expense be hanged," replied the Colonel. "When the cat's away—"

Donald flushed out of concern lest Hugh should take offence. Hugh however was highly amused and whispered, "This is where the play begins. I am sure she heard him."

Mine Host of the hotel was at the Princess's elbow, slightly embarrassed at her costume but ecstatic at the presence of so distinguished a guest. To him the Colonel, suave but firm, "Introduce me."

Mine Host was cornered. "Your Royal Highness," he said, "permit me to have the privilege of introducing—er—a well-known British officer—Colonel Mackenzie."

At the words "Your Royal Highness" used in all simplicity, the Colonel's monocle dropped from his eye. He bowed over Stephanie's extended fingers. No less was the astonishment of Captain Staynes, who had not caught the title.

"Good heavens!" Donald heard him mutter, "has the old sinner gone dotty?"

"Such a pleasure to meet you, Colonel Mackenzie," said the Princess. "I have heard so much of you. Won't you join us at dinner?"

Heard so much of him? The Colonel was still more flustered. "Delighted—most honoured," he said.

"Come along then," and she took his arm, signalling to Hugh and Donald to follow.

Treading as if on air, the Colonel escorted the sleeveless arms, the emerald and green brocade, the short double skirt and the gold train—incarnation and garb of some Royal Personage who knew all about him but whose name he could not guess, along the corridor, up the stairs and through the lounge—conscious of the eyes and whispers that followed him—till at last, half expecting the orchestra to strike up the National Anthem, he entered the dining room of the hotel. There the head waiter had a table waiting for them at the Sargent window, and there he sat down at this wonderful creature's right hand, facing—Donald Macdonald!

If his breath had been taken away by the unexpected rank of his quarry and hostess, how much more was he surprised to find as another guest his rather impossible neighbour of the Valley, and well tailored at that.

"Donald—Colonel Mackenzie—you know each other—Colonel Mackenzie—my husband."

"Sorry I cannot offer you a cocktail, Colonel," she

said, "the law is the law, even at this altitude. Yes," (this to the head waiter) "the chef has my order. Tell him to make it for four instead of three."

Then as the Colonel hummed and ha'd, she opened the conversation.

"I long to meet your daughter, Colonel," she said. "Donald has been telling me all about her. Such a capable girl—running the ranch all by herself. You must feel proud of her."

Donald, absorbed in the view, refused to be caught by the Colonel's eye.

"Quite so—to be sure," agreed the Colonel. "Kate is a wonderful girl."

"And your bungalow—how charming it must be—Donald has told me of that too."

"He has, has he?" rather helplessly. "Yes, very cosy—such a view, don't you know—not quite so fine as this, but such a view."

"I hope to have the pleasure of calling on Mrs. Mackenzie when I visit your Valley—Donald has told me all about Mrs. Mackenzie," continued the Princess.

Donald and Hugh simultaneously kicked each other's shins under the table. From the peculiar sweetness of the Princess's tones, they were confirmed in their belief that she had heard the Colonel boast of "making a killing," and was handing out her punishment.

"Mrs. Mackenzie will be most honoured, I am sure," declared the Colonel, bowing to hide his blushes.

"And now to what is present, namely, food," said the Princess, as the soup was served. "Donald—you are a connoisseur in soup—what is your verdict on this?"

Macdonald a connoisseur in soup! Colonel Mackenzie pinched himself. No, he was not dreaming.

"Pretty fair," said Donald, "but I prefer your own recipe—the dash of mint makes all the difference."

After that the Colonel decided to give up guessing. Perhaps he was mad, perhaps she was mad, perhaps they all were mad—anyway the food was there, and it was good, and they had the best table in the room, and she was certainly the handsomest, the most distinguished looking, the most daringly dressed woman in the room.

The leader of the orchestra then approached the table and asked if there was any special piece they would like to be played.

"Donald—you say," said the Princess.

"Chopin's *Nocturne in G Major*," replied Donald promptly. The Colonel opened his eyes. The orchestra leader, however, shrugged his shoulders.

"That should be played only on the piano," he said, "and we have no Paderewski."

"Well then, Colonel," said the Princess, "do you choose something?"

"Play *After the Ball is Over*," said the Colonel.

The leader of the orchestra however shrugged his shoulders again. "Our instruments," he said, "do not include the barrel-organ."

The Princess laughed, otherwise Colonel Mackenzie would have expressed his annoyance.

"Hugh—it is your turn now," she resumed.

"Humoresque—Dvorák," said Hugh, and delighted to have at last found something suitable, the musician retired.

It was played with excellent taste, and from that the conversation easily turned to music and its modern interpreters. Here the Princess was in her element, monopolising the conversation with reminiscences of the de Reszkes and the players and singers she knew so well in Paris. The dinner she had chosen was to the Colonel's taste, and though he sadly missed the wines, he admitted to himself that he was fortunate.

At no time, however, could he discover the identity of his hostess—she talked of anyone rather than of herself.

At last they rose from the table and made for the door. In the lounge the Colonel offered her a chair, but she shook her head.

"We must leave you, Colonel—we are going upstairs to talk business. So glad to have had this opportunity of making your acquaintance. Au revoir!"

She stepped to the elevator, followed by Hugh and Donald, leaving the Colonel to pursue any further inquisition alone.

In her own private suite, the Princess fell into a chair and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Was not our play delicious!" she exclaimed.

"The moment I heard the Colonel speak about me, I told the hotel manager not to mention my name if he asked to be introduced. Frankly, I did not know how it would turn out, but the 'Royal Highness' gave me my cue."

"I always said you were too good for moving-pictures," said Hugh. "Now I know it."

Left to himself, the Colonel made for the manager's private office.

"Who the deuce is she?" he asked excitedly.

"Ah! Colonel," suavely replied Mine Host, "didn't you know? I thought that was why you wanted to be introduced."

"I thought she was someone else," stammered the Colonel, "sort of demi-mondaine."

"Colonel, you surprise me," said Mine Host severely. "We do not allow such people here. That was the Princess Stephanie Sobieska—reported to be the future Queen of Poland."

"Poland!" exclaimed the Colonel with an expression of deep chagrin. "My good man, if you read *The Times* you would know that Poland has declared for a Republic."

CHAPTER XVI

DONALD went back to Golden alone, Hugh and Stephanie promising to follow three days later, coming by the next train south from Golden. There were still only two trains a week on this Valley branch line, for settlement was still sparse. Donald was glad of this interval, as it would give him time to make up the arrears of work he would probably find accumulated on the farm in his absence, and it would also enable him to prepare a better reception for the Princess.

He left the hotel early, and was relieved to find Colonel Mackenzie was not travelling to Golden on the same train. Some day—he hoped some day soon—he would have it out with the Colonel, but first of all he must have it out with Kate. True to his original plan of campaign, he was bringing her a large box of candies, together with a fur cap and Indian deerskin jacket, as olive branches. With the Princess as his ally and guest, he could deal with the parents easily enough—but Kate was different. Donald indeed feared that he might have to do his wooing all over again. Stephanie was certainly a fine woman, but he wished he had never gone on this camping trip—it threatened to make too many complications.

He did not meet anyone he knew in Golden itself, but on the train up-country Frank Stuart approached him with a smile.

"Hello, Donald," said Frank. "I see you've been getting your name into the papers."

Remembering the paragraph in the *Calgary Herald*, Donald was not surprised.

"You mean about the Princess Stephanie Sobieska?" he said. "That is an old story."

"Old story or not," said Frank, "it caused a run on the *Golden Star*. They're offering a dollar a copy for it up in the Valley."

"*Golden Star*? I haven't seen that one," said Donald.

"Well, you will before you die," said Frank. "You are a nice young thing to go about corrupting the crowned heads of Europe."

What did Frank mean? Was it possible that some garbled story of his going out guiding for the Princess had got into the local papers?

"Got a copy yourself, Frank?" he asked.

"You bet your life I have," was the grinning reply, "but mine is deposited in the safety vault at the Bank. I look upon it as an investment."

It was impossible to get any more definite information out of the fellow, so Donald had to nurse his impatience till he reached his station. There it was evident that the story was well known, for those he met sniggered as they talked to him, and he saw himself being nodded at as one in the public eye. Pretending indifference, he hopped on to the hotel

car, and walked from the hotel itself up the hill in the direction of his farm.

Batiste also was grinning when he arrived, and so was the boy.

"Well, you all seem glad to see me," said Donald, testily, throwing his duffiebag into his room. "What's this mystery story? Where's my copy of the *Golden Star*?"

Batiste produced Donald's mail. There was a letter from Hector, but it was the newspaper he tore open first.

There are very few districts of Canada lacking a local print, one of the first enterprises to be established even in the most remote localities being a handpress and an organ of public gossip, optimism and opinion. Where the community is small, the *Banner* or *Standard* or *Star* naturally omits the stock reports, the cable service and the baseball scores, but owing to the foresight of metropolitan publishers who furnish the so-called "boiler-plates" or the ready-printed "patent insides," where sheets of paper are supplied with one side of four pages already printed and all the local editor has to do is to fill the other four—owing to this foresight, the country reader has presented to him a weekly sheet of miscellaneous news and information gathered from the world's papers, duly seasoned with advertisements of pills, ointments, sure-cures and the like usually procurable at the local stores. Such a country sheet was the *Golden Star*, and by an unlucky chance the editor of the patent inside which

served this and two hundred other country presses had been attracted by the "vampire" story sent out by Jack Lawson, the press-agent, about the Princess Stephanie Sobieska and Donald Macdonald, her guide. The story was five months old, but it had never been contradicted and therefore seemed safe enough to use.

When therefore Donald opened his paper, his eye fell upon and was glued to the fatal story, condensed, it is true, but damnable as ever:

CANADIAN GUIDE AND BROADWAY VAMP

"To the pinewoods of Canada, Donald Macdonald, a well-known guide, returned after distinguished service overseas and conducted last fall a party in search of unusual sport—not fish or game, but subjects for the movies. In this party was the celebrated 'vampire' star, the so-called Princess Stephanie Sobieska. What happened on the trip is hinted at in the following quotation from the *New York Sphere*.

"The Princess?—well, everyone knows her beauty and her record as a breaker of hearts. Did the guide succumb? All we have is circumstantial evidence. The Princess has the medal which Donald won on the bloody fields of Flanders, a medal which almost never comes into the market, so greatly is it cherished, while Donald has landed in New York. What will the Princess do? Will our Canadian Romeo stand among the extras waiting for a glimpse of his unattainable Juliet outside the Studios in the Bronx or will he consume his heart as a

movie fan in the theatres which show the Princess in her 'vampire' rôles? The problem is certainly interesting."

On the front page of the paper containing the local news, the paragraph from the *Calgary Herald* was reprinted, so that his identity was unmistakable.

Donald dashed the paper to the floor. The chances were a thousand to one that Kate had seen this. She would put a false interpretation on his trip to Banff—the trip he had explained in the letter that had probably not reached her. Even if it had reached her, would she believe it, or would she think it was only a blind, and that he really was in the thrall of this supposed vampire? No wonder that Frank Stuart and the people round about had found entertainment in the story. He would have laughed himself if he had read anything like this about Frank Stuart. Why hadn't he wrung that press-agent's neck when he had the chance and killed the story at the same time—no, that would have been too late—the story had already been sent out.

If Kate had read it, she was sure to have written him something about it. He loped down to the tree postoffice.

Yes, a letter was there. He opened it, and sure enough, there was the page from the *Golden Star*, marked—that, and nothing else.

Mortified beyond doubt, otherwise she would have asked at least for an explanation.

Had she received that letter of his or not? Better make sure. He hurried therefore to the station and telegraphed to the mail clerk at Lake Louise:

"Did Miss Mackenzie guest ten days ago collect letter mailed to her from Banff?"

After a sleepless night, he was down at the station early and found the reply:

"Letter forwarded Vancouver reforwarded Banff not collected there wire instructions where Banff should forward."

The "Vancouver" puzzled him but he replied with Kate's address.

If the mail clerk at Banff sent on the letter at once, it would reach her in two or three days. That was little enough in a lifetime but youth is impatient, and within an hour of his sending the second telegram Donald was seething with anxiety that she should have his explanation.

Of course he could write it all out again with a history of Jack Lawson's vamp story, but it could be done so much better by word of mouth. It would be unreasonable of her to refuse a meeting. They were practically engaged, and after what had passed between them, surely she would give him a chance to defend himself.

As soon as Donald got back to his farm, Batiste reminded him that the currants would soon be ripe for picking, and they must knock up some crates.

"Damn the currants!" said Donald, and sought relief by prodigious chopping of wood.

Batiste shook his head and called the boy to help him.

"I guess she stick 'im good and 'ard. Ver' bad place, New York."

About noon Donald remembered the peace offerings, and decided to fall back on his original plan of campaign with the box of candies. He had seen Kate hoeing potatoes during the morning and, as the Colonel was still away, might have sent it to the house, but their private postoffice seemed more appropriate—curiosity would surely bring her there. So while Batiste was taking his midday snooze, Donald stepped down with the be-ribboned box and awaited results.

After ten days' absence there was much to do about the farm, but the unhappy Donald found it hard to concentrate on practical things. He mooned round from one field to another, knocking off the heads of flowers, always drifting down towards the lower fence and with his eyes glued to the roof of the bungalow where dwelt the Not Impossible She. The heat at last drove him lakewards for a swim—work in any case was impossible. Perhaps by the time he came back, she would herself have found the box.

Cooler in mind and body, he leisurely rode back. Up along the creek he came by the trail through the wood below the Mackenzies, past the fateful tree where—yes, she had been there—but the candies had not been taken, only moved. His peace offering had been rejected.

Ruefully he took up the box, on the bottom of which she had pencilled the words: "NOTHING DOING."

"At least she is learning the language," he said to himself.

Since she wouldn't take the candies, he would have one himself. Untying the ribbons, he lifted the lid—and smiled. There had been one particularly tempting chocolate with pineapple on the top in the righthand row. He remembered distinctly seeing it when the girl at the hotel who sold him the box opened it to show how nice the contents were. That was gone—it had been too much for her—certainly a peach of a candy!—probably she thought he would not notice. After all she had a human side.

With this rift of blue sky, he trotted home, wondering what next to do. Something quickly, for day after tomorrow the Colonel would return and postpone the chance of meeting. Kate's obstinacy was getting on his nerves. His conscience was clear, and it was unreasonable to be denied a hearing. Was this what she called British justice? If so, thank heaven he was a Canadian! It was bad enough to be the laughingstock of the whole neighbourhood without her cold shoulder.

On his return to the cabin, Donald therefore penned his ultimatum:

"If you have any sense of fairness, be at our tree tomorrow evening at seven, and let me tell you my side of the story. DONALD."

This he left at their post office, and turned in for another restless night.

It was not merely a medal this time that was stolen. It was his honour and his love, two more vital things. What was this Fate that dogged him, threatening his happiness? Had he not done his duty, been a good son, lived a decent life, fought for his country, acted honourably to friends and neighbours? Had he not suffered enough for any sins he might have committed by being gassed and wounded? However he was no Job to fall upon the ground and moan and groan. Kate was not going to sit in the whirlwind and tell him where he got off. She belonged to earth just as much as he did, as she would find out before he was done with her.

It was just her British arrogance that made her behave like this. These Old Country people thought they were the salt of the earth, the only people whose motives and principles must not be questioned. They sneered at Canadian political graft, when they themselves bought knighthoods for so many thousand dollars. They talked of Canadian profiteers when England reeked with scandals. They talked of virtue, but what about Leicester Square?

Was she worth fretting about? Yes, that was the worst of it, she was. He was slave to her charm and beauty. Life would not be worth living if he lost her love, and how could she love unless he had her good opinion? She was Scotch—thank

God for that!—and obstinate—confound her!—as the Scotch were—as he was himself. It would be a battle of wills, and in that battle his will must win.

So his thoughts tossed restlessly, and so tossed his body.

When morning came and for the thousandth time he reviewed the situation, action of some kind seemed more imperative than ever. The Princess was due on the evening of the next day on the bi-weekly train from Golden, and Donald shuddered to think of the further complications that might ensue unless he came to an understanding with Kate before the arrival. The *Golden Star* was not the kind of paper Stephanie would likely get at Lake Louise, and she would not be aware of the imbroglio arising from that story. She had heard him speak so much of Kate that she would certainly expect to meet her, but what sort of meeting would that be if Kate remained prejudiced against his visitor? Kate might refuse to meet the Princess at all—and when Stephanie discovered the reason, the visit from which they had anticipated so much pleasure would be dust and ashes.

As the long day followed the long night, his fever flickered out. Somehow his brain grew clear, and he approached the meeting place cool and determined to make her hear his story. Let her only come! She could be as obstinate as she liked, but she was not deaf.

There was no sign of her. It was early still, so he sat down on a fallen tree. A lovely evening and

still light. As he looked down the Valley, peacefulness slipped into his heart. In such a country, slander could surely not prevail.

The crack of a dead twig underfoot, and he knew she was coming. She wore the old red sweater. She seemed more beautiful than ever, more desirable. He could not let her go.

As he rose she stopped, half a dozen paces away.

"Well?" she said, forbiddingly.

"Well?" he replied, forcing a smile.

"So you have got back?"

"So have you," he answered.

"I wrote to you that I was going," she said.

"I wrote to you also."

"I did not get your letter," she snapped.

"I got yours," he replied.

"I don't believe what you said, whatever you said."

"Then don't read it."

"Where is it?"

"Somewhere between here and Banff," he replied.

Kate must have felt the failure of her onslaught for she started another line of attack.

"You are quite famous," she said, cuttingly.

"All the Macdonalds are famous," he replied.

"What of the Mackenzies?" she asked incautiously.

"They can always marry a Macdonald," he retorted.

Nothing in Donald irritated her more than his flippancy. She stamped her foot.

"Do you imagine that we are still engaged?" she said.

"I don't imagine—I know it," was his answer.

"After that story in the *Golden Star?*" contemptuously.

"Which story?"

"The story about the medal you gave away."

"If I gave it away," he said, drawing aside his jacket and showing the medal on his breast, "how is it that I have it here?"

Not beaten yet, she came back with:

"I suppose she gave it back to you at Banff—that was your pay for being her guide again."

The suggestion was so unexpected that Donald for the moment had no answer. Then, walking slowly up to her he said:

"It is amazing what a jealous girl will believe."

"Jealous!" She started back. "Do you think I am jealous? Don't you think it is because I am bitterly disillusioned? Didn't you tell me that your life had been clean?—when all the while you were going after women—like that—"

"Stop right there!" he interrupted sharply, "a better woman never lived."

"Aha! there you are!" she exclaimed scornfully. "So I am only second best—but good enough to be your wife—'a poor thing, but mine own'—very gracious of you, I am sure. That letter—some-where between here and Banff—I needn't read it—it would be a waste of time."

She was about to walk away, when Donald stepped ahead of her.

"Let me pass!" she exclaimed.

"Not till you hear my story," he replied firmly.

"You can only keep me by force," she gasped.

"Then I'll keep you by force. There's too much at stake for us to part without the true story being told."

"I will not listen," she said, putting her hands over her ears.

"Then I'll make you," he answered recklessly. He seized her arms but as soon as he got one hand down, up went the other. The only thing to do was to tie both down, so placing her firmly with her back against a young birch tree, he forced her arms behind it and tied her elbows together with a kerchief so that she could not budge.

She was panting with the physical and mental struggle, but did not scream. Donald thought that a good sign, not realising her character and breeding. Brought up in the creed that her person should be sacrosanct, treated with deference just because she was a woman, given a seat, for instance, in a crowded car by right of sex, doors opened for her, heads automatically uncovered—she was profoundly shocked by this bodily compulsion. But what good would screaming do? She was not afraid. She still had her tongue and could taunt him into proper humility. He would learn that bullying a self-respecting girl did not pay.

As she stood there, dishevelled and rather pale, Donald smiled in his f acied triumph, misinterpreting her temper.

"Now," he said, taking his pipe out of his pocket and lighting it deliberately, "now, perhaps, you will listen. Sorry I had to be so rough, but you brought it on yourself. You believe a scurrilous newspaper story without so much as letting me defend myself."

"Some things," she interrupted, "are impossible to defend. Are these the manners of the sergeant's mess?"

The cut drew blood. With a flush he replied:

"Even a sergeant can demand the right of a court-martial. If you had been so slandered, wouldn't you have called on me at least to give you a hearing?"

"Let me go!" she demanded.

"Hullo!" came a voice well-known to Donald, from behind. "What is this? Where is the camera-man?"

He started and looked down the trail to see two figures on horse-back approaching. It was the Princess with Hugh Johnson. Donald lifted his hat shamefacedly.

"Well, well," continued the Princess, riding up and looking from one to the other. "I never expected to see this sort of thing in real life. Is this your golden girl? Donald, introduce me."

Discomfiture almost destroyed his voice.

"K-K-Kate," he stammered, "this is the Princess Sobieska."

Surprise for the moment sidetracked Kate's anger. So this was the notorious woman who had come between them! She did not look so very terrible. With a nervous laugh she bowed acknowledgment. Then with a touch of malice put the question:

"As you know Mr. Maddonal better than I do, perhaps you can tell me whether this is the usual way he handles his lady friends?"

Stephanie, scenting trouble, slipped off her horse and stepped towards Kate.

"My dear girl," she exclaimed, lifting Kate's sleeve, "your wrists are all bruised. Donald! Donald! This is more than a joke. Come here at once and loosen these knots."

Donald humbly obeyed. As he untied the knots, he saw that the Princess was right—Kate's skin was discoloured where he had gripped her. Remorse made him all misery.

What a brute he had been—what a cad! He had not realised his own strength and violence. To think that he could have so abused that sweet and gentle thing, his dream girl! Could she ever forgive him? Was this the end? And would this mean too that he had lost the Princess's friendship? He had never heard her speak so harshly. Was he now to be outside the pale?

Hugh it was that saved the situation.

"You haven't introduced me yet," he said.

"Don't I count?"

Stephanie turned and laughed.

"That depends on how you behave," she said.

"Permit me to introduce my husband—Mr. Hugh Johnson—Kate, the heroine in distress."

Kate's eyes opened wide. Too well she remembered the conversation of those women in the train about the lawyer from New York—every word of it seemed to have been burned into her brain—this was evidently the man.

"Was he your husband, then?" she exclaimed.

"Not only 'was' but 'is,'" replied Stephanie. "We've been married only a fortnight. It's rather soon for us to be divorced, even in America. If you really are the Golden Girl I have heard about, surely Donald has told you about us?"

"She didn't give me a chance," said Donald, so disconsolately that Hugh and Stephanie both smiled. Kate however was reminded of the quarrel, and turned her back on him.

This was clearly a case for intervention, so Stephanie slipped her arm into that of the angry girl.

"If that's so," she said, "I think we ought to have a pow-wow—isn't that what you call it out here in the West? Donald, my dear, where is your cabin? I have come three thousand miles to see it, and must not be disappointed. I came to see you too, my dear"—this to Kate—"Donald told me how beautiful and how splendid you were. He was so anxious that we should be friends. Now is our opportunity to begin. Come along and tell us what has happened. Donald, take my horse and lead the way."

He looked meekly at Kate who nodded a grim assent.

If Kate had had a logical mind, she might have realised the incongruity of going in such friendly fashion up the hill with the woman supposed to have corrupted her Donald, while Donald himself remained the object of her fury. But what woman ever was logical, particularly at the age of twenty-four or thereabouts, in a matter where her heart was concerned? Her indignation was merely transferred from one offence to another, his breach of chivalry—she was in no mood for nice distinctions. It did seem strange to go up to his cabin, and several times she almost decided to excuse herself. But curiosity prevailed and the jealousy she had denied to Donald still raged through every vein of her. If she remained with them, she could see for herself what were their true relations. This lawyer man might be her husband—on the other hand, might not.

Furthermore, she was unconsciously disarmed by the friendliness of the Princess. Stephanie realised instinctively that there was a wall between them and skillfully surmounted it. Her voice was never so musical or sympathetic—her manner gentle and confiding. It was impossible not to believe that every word she said was true.

If Donald had only wooed in such a fashion, Kate would have trusted him in spite of a thousand affidavits. But Donald was less experienced in love than war, and therefore remained suspect.

"Just the loveliest place in the world!" exclaimed Stephanie as they entered the cabin. "Isn't he a dear to give my portrait the place of honour? But surely you should have replaced it with that of your golden girl. Now, Donald, a cup of tea and a cigarette—I left mine at the hotel."

His equanimity to some extent restored, Donald put the kettle on and brought out cigarettes and china. The Princess was right about the portrait. The best thing to do was to change the subject.

"By the way," he asked, "how did you get here? I thought you were at Lake Louise."

"We were this morning," said Stephanie, "but someone said we could hire a motor car at Golden and come up here by road, so Hugh and I decided to start at once and surprise you. I find we must be in Los Angeles a little earlier than we at first planned. We put up at the little hotel below, and after supper, as it was such a lovely evening, got ponies and rode this way on the chance of finding you at home. Now, are you at home?"

"To you, always," replied Donald heartily. "Where is Marie?"

"Marie!" exclaimed Stephanie, all shoulders and open palms, "Marie has deserted me—given notice—gone back to New York for France. I am in the most tragic of situations—I am without a maid."

"No more tragic," remarked Hugh unsympathetically, "than that of ninety-nine women out of a hundred."

"That doesn't help the hundredth to put up her

hair," retorted the Princess. "Men do not understand these things."

"You see the penalty of being married," said Hugh to Donald.

"I am willing to take the risk," ventured Donald, only to collapse again when Kate snapped out:

"I am not."

"Come now, children," intervened Stephanie. "What is this quarrel about? Donald — Kate — tell me."

Kate turned her head and looked out the window. It was for Donald to make the first move. He for his part was too nervous to speak. All he could do was to take the newspaper out of his pocket and point to the fatal column.

"Jesu! Mary!" Stephanie exclaimed. "That miserable story again?—like a fire which one thought extinguished, but springs up in the night in more than ever deadly conflagration. What misery have I set in train through my ignorance of this Continent where young souls are like cinder and a spark may turn a world to ashes! How can I make amends to you, dear, dear Donald, for this poison of a perverted brain? Kate, was this what troubled you?"

"If you refer to the printed story," she said obstinately, rubbing her wrists, "it confirmed what I had heard from other sources."

"Then let me explain," said Stephanie. "My reputation is concerned as well as Donald's."

So she told the real story of Jack Lawson and

the stolen medal. Kate listened at first with polite incredulity, then more earnestly, and at last with genuine dismay. Her pride was crushed to think that perhaps she had been in the wrong and Donald was misjudged. Revulsion of feeling carried her to the very extreme. How ungenerous, how unreasonable, how inconsiderate she had been! No wonder Donald had lost control of himself. If only she could get away and hide herself!

Then the sudden thought came—what sort of a woman was this maid Marie about whom he had asked and who had gone away so suddenly? Could it be that Donald had had an affair with the maid while this lawyer was courting the mistress? On any camping trip, a guide and a maid would be much more naturally thrown into each other's company than a guide and his employer, particularly one of gentle birth. There must have been some special attraction to induce him to leave his farm so suddenly for so long—yes, that must be it! The Princess may not have known—that was why she was defending him so eagerly. She at least was sincere and generous hearted, but Donald had yet to clear himself.

So Kate's jealousy flared up again. She must find out more about this Marie—French, of course, and—well, one knew what these French maids usually were. In the meanwhile she would make another excuse for not being reconciled.

When therefore the Princess had finished, Kate had already chosen her line of action.

"That may be so," she said coldly, "and I admit my mistake, but it does not explain away the bruises on my wrists. Mr. Macdonald"—that "Mr." cut Donald to the quick—"asked me when I came here to be neighbourly. This evening I experienced a kind of neighbourliness that frankly I resent. A man who cannot treat a woman with respect"—how Donald's soul grovelled with shame!—"cannot expect me to remain his neighbour. Princess Sobieska, you say that you have just lost your maid. Will you take me in her place?"

So unexpected a suggestion threw the room into silence. Donald was the first to speak.

"But, Kate!—"

"Miss Mackenzie," she corrected.

"M-M-Miss Mackenzie—as a maid?"

"Why not?" she answered. "Isn't this supposed to be a democratic country, where all men are equal and endowed with the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? Oh! I forgot! You are a Canadian, not an American, and so do not believe in any Declaration of Independence."

"Yes—but—your mother—"

"This is my affair, not my mother's. I've been her unpaid cook and maid and servant as well as farm hand for the last two months without any complaint from her. I presume Marie was paid."

"But your friends—?"

"They would jump at the chance to see America at someone else's expense. I wish I had thought of doing this kind of thing before. As a matter of

fact, in England at the League of Colonial Intelligence, someone did suggest it—she had done something of the kind herself."

Donald might have realised that in Kate's present state of mind arguing only irritated her.

"But your ranch?" he blundered on.

"Oh, damn the ranch!" she almost screamed. "I want to forget it—I want to get away from it—I want to—"

Then the pent up excitement and tension of the last week proved too much for her. She broke down in a flood of tears.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" said Stephanie, running to Kate and putting her arms around her shoulders.

"Of course you shall come with me if you wish. Donald—Hugh—leave us—go outside—and don't come back till I call you."

Hugh offered Donald a cigar as they walked towards the barn.

"Gee Whillikins!" he said. "Aren't women the queerest ever? We'll have to think this over, old man. Got a match handy?"

After a minute or so, he continued:

"Your Golden Girl has a will of her own. That cave-man, strong-arm stuff does not work except with no-account women. Donald, old man, you've got into a muskeg, but if Stephanie means to pull you out, she'll do it—nothing can stop her. Your Golden Girl may seem unreasonable to you, but there are two things you must not forget—climate and elevation. She comes from England, a low, moist

island, to this dry belt three thousand feet above the sea. Women feel a change of that sort even more than men. They are elated and apt to undertake too much, overtax themselves, while all the time their nerves are at concert pitch. Unless you can persuade them to go slow, their nerves and their tempers go sky high—I've seen it happen time and time again. If ever you marry her, take my advice and send her down to the Coast once a year to get some moisture into her system, and some ballast. Otherwise you'll have hell a-popping."

"What you say is certainly true of animals," said Donald, "mares, for instance. And now I come to think of it, I guess I'm more highstrung myself—do more—lose my temper quicker—am more sanguine."

"And more depressed than you need be," interrupted Hugh. "You've got it. Take life more philosophically, and you'll be all right."

Half an hour had passed before Stephanie called to them, and when they returned to the cabin, Kate had gone.

"Everything is arranged," said Stephanie. "She is coming with us to Los Angeles."

"Leaving the ranch?" exclaimed Donald bitterly. "Weren't you able to make her understand?"

"It is you, Donald, that do not understand," she answered. "You must make allowances. That poor girl is one bundle of nerves, and I want you to take a sleeping draught up from the hotel. There is just one question I must put to you, and you must

give me an honest answer. Kate in her talk with me—rather hysterical, I admit—dropped a hint that she suspected you of an intrigue with Marie. Now, tell me on your honour.”

“On my honour, no!”

“Thank heaven for that! For a moment I really was afraid. I did not know what might have happened behind my back—and after all, men are men. It just shows how coloured her thoughts are with too much brooding. She is in the mood to believe the worst. She really loved you, Donald, before this miserable story together with other things she had heard and your unexplained absence upset her faith in you. I always thought the English were phlegmatic, but she worked herself up to such a pitch that she has been quite unable to sleep. Your rough treatment could not have come at a worse time. She had persuaded herself that you were cruel, and this confirmed her prejudice. By the time the explanation came, she was past reasoning—she was pure emotion. I blame myself for it all. It was my folly that made the slander possible. I shall never be happy till I have straightened out this tangle. That is why I am accepting her impulsive offer and taking her with me. I have gained her confidence—half the battle. Leave her to me for a while and do not despair. What is your little lover’s quarrel! For over a hundred years we Poles were held in slavery or exile, but always we maintained the faith ‘Poland is not yet lost.’—Do you keep just such a faith in your heart, Donald—‘Kate is not yet lost’—

and some day you will recover your dream girl."

She spoke with such sincerity that Donald was comforted. Her experience entitled her judgment to respect. He was out of his depth and glad of any helping hand. This was a hand he could trust.

"Right you are, Princess," he said, more cheerfully than she could have thought possible half an hour before. "Let's get back to the hotel and fetch that sleeping draught."

CHAPTER XVII

EVEN though he had not confessed it, Stephanie would have known that Donald was really in love with Kate. She saw, for instance, that Kate's hair was really not golden but only a very light brown—the sun must have been shining through it when he first saw it—also that she would have lost out in any beauty competition—her chin was too square—but she was young and pleasant to look upon. The chin indeed was a disturbing feature. It signified obstinacy, and Kate had made up her mind for as long as any Kate could make up her mind that she had been rather badly treated.

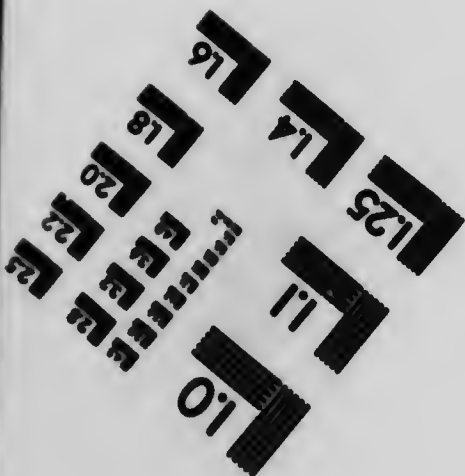
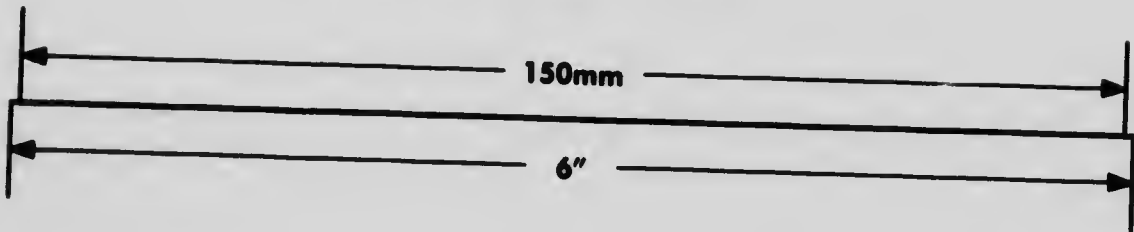
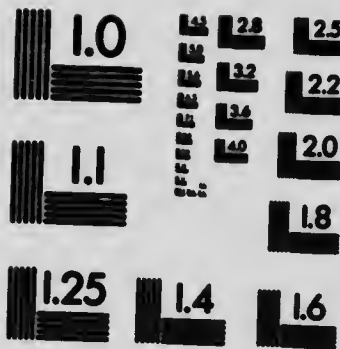
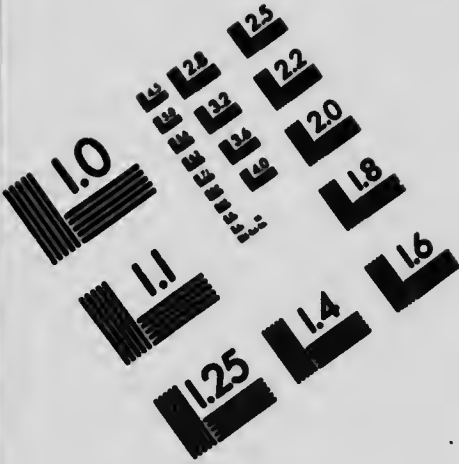
"I have brought it on my own head," Stephanie said to Hugh. "If anything is worse than having no maid at all, it is to have one who is incompetent. This girl for instance clearly knows nothing about the complexion—her own skin is ruined with sunburn and freckles. Being a middle class English-woman, her taste in dress is naturally primitive. Half my time will be spent in making her presentable and teaching her her duties, instead of her devoting her attention to me. Still, I will do it, for Donald's sake, and as a penance for allowing myself to adopt the methods of that Griffin person and his dreadful press-agent."

The arrangement made with Kate was that they were to call at the bungalow in the afternoon to meet her mother, who by that time would be more or less resigned to the situation. Her father would descend from the evening train to receive his ultimatum, and Kate herself would go back with Stephanie to Golden on the following day. Until it was time to call on Mrs. Mackenzie they would, therefore, motor round the lake and visit some of the beauty spots in the Valley. This they did with Donald as cicerone, and though he had not yet recovered from the shock of the day before, it was impossible to be altogether sad in such good company as that of Stephanie when she set out to please, amid scenes which he so dearly loved. They motored up Toby Creek, holding their breaths as they crawled down the miner's road blasted out of the precipice above the canyon. They swung up to Fairmont Hot Springs on the rocky plateau beneath a jagged ridge, they saw vistas of sapphire ranges capped here and there with silver peaks. They fell in love with the serene landscape of lake and mountain, so delicately veiled by the haze of far-off forest fires.

Donald did not accompany them to the Mackenzies but came down next morning to the hotel to bid good-bye. The Colonel was there, stiff and formal, concealing by his hauteur the dent in his armour made by Kate's thunderbolt. If it had been as a lady-in-waiting to an acknowledged Princess that his daughter was departing, he might have felt less



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humiliated. But Stephanie had made it clear that from now on she would allow herself to be known in private life only as Mrs. Hugh Johnson, and that if Kate was to come at all, she must come frankly as her maid—her wage to commence at forty dollars a month and the picking up of such clothes as Stephanie no longer required.

It was not till the car had driven out of sight and the two men had left the hotel along the road up the hill that the Colonel showed signs of thawing.

"Would you mind giving me—er—some advice about the ditches, Macdonald? I suppose I'll have to attend to things myself now, though I'm rather an old bird for this kind of thing."

The tone of the request was so different from that of their first meeting that Donald also relented.

"Glad to do anything for a neighbour," he answered heartily, "and if there's anything else in which I can help you, just say the word."

There were a great many such things, and Donald very soon saw that Kate's departure meant his having to run two places instead of one, so unhandy was the Colonel. In another way, however, Kate's action relieved the tension. By going off as a lady's maid, she had destroyed the barrier of imaginary class between himself and the Mackenzies. The family of a maid could hardly assume airs over the family of a guide.

When he discovered moreover that Donald had a cellar well stocked with old Scotch whiskey, the last obstacle to the Colonel's more intimate acquaintance

disappeared. Prohibition had caught this old soldier napping, and though a certain amount of liquor could be obtained under cover at considerable cost, there was nothing in the Valley to compare with the Hudson's Bay blend cellar'd by Donald's father. Before a fortnight was over, the Colonel was a regular evening visitor.

The Vampire story may have amused the men, but Donald at once became the object of intensest interest to every woman in the Valley, who would have given her eyes to know whether he had succumbed or not. Kate was the only one of them who really was distressed by the possibility, and Kate by this time was well on her way to Los Angeles. To most of the others, the thought that he had fallen a victim to the charms of a Princess was an added attraction. It confirmed their opinion that he was a handsome fellow, else why should she have picked him out when she had all New York to choose from?

The story of the medal also was most romantic. The more tender-hearted of them shed tears of sympathy when they thought of his distraction at its loss. Those who were more sophisticated thought him rather a fool to rush after her when he could probably have bought another to replace it, but still a fool with his heart in the right place.

The knowledge imparted as a secret by Mrs. Grant and duly kept by several hundred confidants that the beautiful Mrs. Johnson who had spent a night at the hotel was the Princess herself—and that the man with her was her latest husband—added a

mystery to the affair which made it all the more exciting. And when it evolved that Kate had gone away as the lady's maid, the telephone wires were red-hot with conjectural vibrations. Fortunate indeed were both Donald and the Mackenzies that a dilatory Government had postponed the laying up the hill of an extension to the system, otherwise they would undoubtedly have been driven crazy by the incessant ringing of party calls.

Mrs. Mackenzie, of course, had an avalanche of visitors, but being wise in her generation retired to her room whenever they came in sight and pleaded a headache. Donald to whom the callers passed a headaché had decided to throw them off the scent by treating the story as a huge joke put in the papers by a newspaper friend, and accepted with ever-increasing good humour the gifts of butter, cheese, fruit, preserves, home-made candies, pen-wipers, socks, mufflers, initialled handkerchiefs, tobacco pouches, pipes, match boxes, slippers, shaving papers of various bright colours, and the like, which they brought with them as friendly excuses for happening to be that way.

"Another week of this," he said to Batiste, "and we'll have enough to stock a church bazaar."

The distraction did him good, for humour is the surest cure ever yet found for a heartache. Had he been left to himself to think over the unlucky trend of events, he might have moped himself into a nervous breakdown, whereas with work and laughter he actually put on weight.

Kate in the meanwhile sent to her mother picture postcards from Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles, though nothing to Donald himself. As a matter of fact she found her time too much occupied for letter-writing. The duties of a maid to a mistress so exacting as Stephanie were no sinecure, and inexperience made the strain harder. Every night she fell into bed on the verge of tears. Stephanie was considerate in a way, but irritated by things omitted and misunderstood.

For her sins Kate had to listen to a cunning chant in praise of Donald, to whom Stephanie ascribed all the virtues and a good many more possessed by sons adored by their mothers. Stephanie herself was so obviously attached to Hugh that the innocence of her affection for Donald was patent. Unconsciously, therefore, Kate's own feelings towards her offending lover began to soften. She longed to have his comforting arms around her in these difficult days.

Hence the tone of the epistle Donald received from her at the end of a month:

"My dear Donald,

"At last I have a respite from this strenuous life and can write to you the letter which has so long been on my conscience. If I had had experience in waiting upon a professional beauty, I might have had more spare time. Now that it is over, I can say with all my heart, 'Never again!'

"I have given in my resignation, and it is 'back to the land' for me. Your Princess would have kept me on for your sake, if I had wanted,

THE CONQUERING HERO

but I had pity on her and I know she is relieved at my departure. She is even grateful to me, for I found a competent successor in whose virtues my own deficiencies may, I hope, be soon forgotten. Tomorrow I shake the dust of Los Angeles off my feet—'some dust, believe me,' as Mr. Johnson says.

"He is really nice, Mr. Johnson I mean, with endless good humour. And he has told me the whole true story of the Princess, the press-agent and yourself, my poor, poor Donald! Your letter of explanation, after many adventures, reached me at last, confirming his version. How can I ever forgive myself for my perversity in refusing to hear your side of the case? Well, you can name your own punishment—I deserve it. But don't be too hard on me, Donald. If you knew how I was suffering then, and what I have suffered in this last month, you would think me punished already pretty severely.

"And yet I have enjoyed visiting these American cities and seeing something of American life—attractive but expensive. I see now the advantage of selling butter and eggs rather than buying them.

"Yes, I am coming back to be a farmer. It is to be the farm now, not the ranch—a business, not a hobby. Everything we have, except father's pension, is sunk in that bungalow and sixty acres—everything, family pride and all. I had no right to run away as I did, but I was furious with you, Donald—I really was—and duty went sky-high.

"I expect to get back by Friday's train. The parents don't know yet, and you needn't tell

them. They might kill the fatted calf for me, and we really can't afford it.

"Ever your loving KATE."

"P.S. I suppose I'll have to marry you after all."

Happy? All the world suddenly was bathed once more in a rosy light. The bungalow, the sight of which he was beginning to hate, became once more an enchanted palace, more wonderful than if it had been built of silver with shingles of gold, because it was associated with his dear, dear Kate. The very smoke that rose from its chimney once more seemed sacred, and the path to its front door was paved with pearls and rubies. From early in the morning to late at night he slaved for the Colonel, who certainly needed the help.

"In a few days now," thought Donald, "I'll have to present myself to the old man as his future son-in-law, and I'd better get on his right side in good time."

Friday came, and with it a horrible uncertainty as to the tie he ought to wear at the station. There were thirty to choose from, not to mention the two that had just arrived from Aunt Mary—one of green and black figured silk, the other with a heather pattern. The heather pattern won the day, and with this tribute to their mutual Scottish ancestry, Donald met Kate at the station.

Donald still believed that marriage was a happy ending, and with so happy an ending in sight, he

might also have imagined himself a conquering hero. No one on the station platform volunteered either to blow the trumpet or to beat the drum, but that may have been because they had not read the postscript to Kate's letter. Her home-coming, it is true, was not very romantic, but he had learned his own lesson of humility too thoroughly to have any desire to crow. Circumstance rather than design had made her his prisoner, and though her capture entitled him to the Order of the Benedict, he knew in his heart how little he deserved it. Also he did not realise—ingenuous ignorance!—the onerous service of the Order, looking on it rather as heavenly bliss than as earthly companionship.

His knees were trembling when the hoot of the locomotive announced the approach of the train with his dear Kate on board. The hoot, to be sure, would have hooted whether Kate was a passenger or not. It was a signal to the engineer's wife to get his supper ready, and also to warn a possible stray cow off the track. But in Donald's state of mind it signified, "I'm coming, I'm coming."

She came, but so changed in outward appearance that if he had not been a lover, he might not have recognized her so quickly. She had invested thirty-five of her forty dollar wage in a new hat, and for the first time in her life was dressed up to the minute. If Donald had known more about women's apparel, he would have shuddered at the expensive tastes she had acquired during her brief sojourn in the Land of Liberty, but he was too happy at her re-

turn to want to do anything but fall on her neck and kiss her.

As a matter of fact, he neither fell on her neck nor kissed her, for in spite of his youth and inexperience, he had an instinct that no well-dressed woman likes to be mussed up in public by any lover however great a right he has to be affectionate. At the moment she was obviously dressed for show rather than for embrace. Her bitterest enemy could not deny that she looked stunning. Stephanie had turned out one more work of art.

"Drive home as quick as you can," said Kate, as she stepped into Donald's rig. "I'm absolutely famishing. Spent my last cent on the way to Golden, so that I couldn't afford even lunch between trains. How is father?"

"Settling down to work fine. He calls me Donald now."

"Dear old father! I shan't have to throw him out after all. How did it happen?"

"Various things helped. The last straw was on Sunday when I took him out fishing. He found that I could give him pointers on dry flies. I believe he thought till then that Canadians fished only with worms. That is why he looked down upon us so."

"I can't understand you men," said Kate, laughing. "You are much more finicky than women. Surely worms are the sensible things to fish with. I would always use them myself."

"Not if you fish with me," said Donald sternly. "One has to draw the line somewhere."

Then, afraid of any further difference, he blurted out:

"I've written to Calgary for the ring."

"Donald!" she said, blushing, "you shouldn't have done that."

"Well, if you like," he replied, "we can cancel the order and get a new mare and a sow in litter and quite a bunch of chickens instead. What do you say?"

"Oh, I wouldn't bother," she answered. "After all, a ring is always an investment."

Just then they saw the Colonel himself sauntering down the road to see if the train had brought up anything. If he was amazed to find Kate sitting in Donald's rig, he was also delighted to have her back again, and jumped up on the back seat like any young boy. Donald must stay to supper, and Donald must do this and that—he was evidently on a very different footing now.

Before they entered the bungalow, Kate whispered:

"We've got to face the music and tell the parents now. Be prepared for squalls."

Colonel and Mrs. Mackenzie were naturally eager to hear of Kate's experiences, but she held them off till she had appeased her hunger. Then she began:

"I can't tell you everything, at least to you men. There are intimate things about the duties of a lady's maid which it is not good for you to know. Poor Princess! I felt sorry for her, especially when I began to realise my own incompetence and how little

I could help her. Marie, her former maid, must have been a wonder. You did not tell me, Donald, that Stephanie is almost fifty—a bride at fifty on her honeymoon!—with a husband who in spite of his being a man of the world, or perhaps because he is a man of the world, always expects her to be as fresh and beautiful in real life as she is on the stage or screen. Of course, he says that this is a union of souls, but she is too wise to believe him, and she keeps her faith in her personal charms. She is almost fifty, but is still beautiful—with the aid of massage and a thousand secrets of which in the course of thirty days I learned probably a hundred. If I could only have known the other nine hundred, I should have been glad to use them, for she is a dear soul, and I really learned to love her. Her fight to please her husband—I don't believe she really cared about herself—was an inspiration to poor, commonplace, unimaginative little Me, with my rotten selfish egotism—oh, I have no illusions about myself now. Donald is the only person left now who thinks me a heroine."

"My dear Kate!" exclaimed Mrs. Mackenzie.

"All right, mother," she went on calmly. "I know him better than you do. He won't ever be disillusioned till we have been married a year or two."

"Married!" Both the Colonel and Mrs. Mackenzie sat bolt upright at the word.

"Yes," replied Kate, "unless Donald wants to back out of it. Speak up, Donald. Now or never."

Donald gave a sheepish grin. Kate was his choice, but he wished that the prelude to their betrothal had been more inspiring. Still, it was as she said—the parents had to be dealt with, now or never.

"If Kate will be my wife," he said, "no one could be more proud or happy than I."

Mrs. Mackenzie looked at the Colonel and the Colonel looked at Mrs. Mackenzie. The latter it was who spoke.

"The matter is too important to be decided off-hand. My husband and I will talk it over and let you know our decision within a few days. In the meanwhile let us continue as if the suggestion had never been made. We all feel grateful to Mr. Macdonald—to Donald—for his many kindnesses, and in any case would like him to remain without embarrassment as a friend."

It was nicely put, and to Donald at least sounded hopeful.

"Thank you, Mrs. Mackenzie," he said simply, and after a discreet interval took the occasion to bid good night.

Next morning when he went down to see if he could help in any way, he found Kate in her old clothes once more in charge, with the Colonel and Mrs. Mackenzie meekly taking orders. There was a different spirit about the place compared with the old days, a spirit which boded better for success. Instead of hiring others to do the work, they were anxious to do things themselves, even though at first they could not do them very well. The monocle

had disappeared from the Colonel's eye—it got lost when he was forking hay, and he saw no reason to replace it. His temper had improved with the health induced by steady exercise and his interest in the life around him had grown by personal contact.

"By Jove!" he admitted to Donald one evening.

"I'm beginning to feel a new man. Is it the climate or the scenery or what?"

"It's yourself," said Donald. "You are working now instead of just giving orders. It's only when a man works that he is really human."

The ring arrived and thereby Donald's bank balance went down a thousand dollars. Kate was no expert in jewelry, but Mrs. Mackenzie was, and that ended her last "but" so far as Donald was concerned. If he could spend money like that, Scotch as he was, he could well afford a wife. In fact, the sooner he had a wife to look after his expenditures in jewelry, the better. Still, as Kate said, this ring was "an investment."

As for Kate herself, she was at last in her element, her family thoroughly tamed, and mistress of all she surveyed. Being of a methodical nature, she used to map out the day's work a week ahead for every member of the household, and what is more, she kept them to it. Donald had a typical vision of his enchantress one morning as he came along past the bungalow after a dip in the lake. Kate was standing in front with a pail in her hand—she had evidently been down to the creek for water. He saw her pick up a small stone and throw it at the

Colonel's bedroom window. A moment later, the old man's head appeared, nightcap and all, still sleepy.

"Six o'clock, father!" rang out Kate's clear young voice, sharp and commanding. "Time to get up and do your chores!"

What, Donald for a moment wondered, would be the part allotted to himself when he became one of the family? Would she expect to "boss" him in the same way as she "bossed" her father and mother? In the recent encounter of wills, he had come out on top, but would future encounters always end so fortunately? Had peace been declared between them or merely an armistice? And if it was peace, was it a Bolshevist peace under cover of which she would undermine the Government that had nominally prevailed?

Donald looked at her again.
She was very fair, and very desirable!
Why go to meet trouble?
Life was a gamble anyway!
He would take the chance!

THE END

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