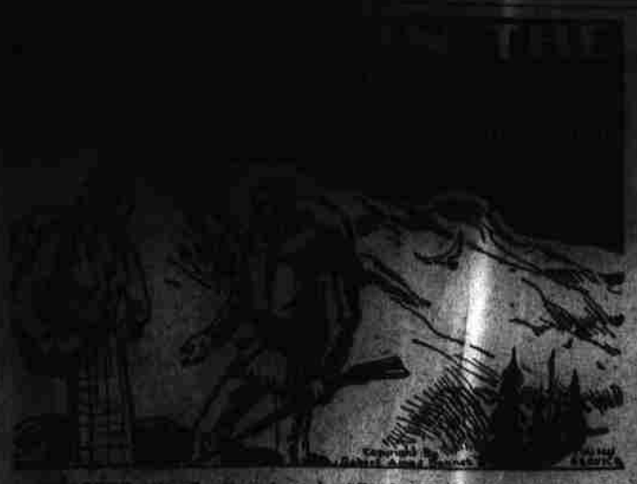


CHAPTER VII—Continued.

—11—

Instead of taking out his waterproof match case Garth took up his paddle. "The rule is never burn your last match until you have to."

Huxby dipped his own paddle. "Come on, Mr. Ramill. By his own account, three hours more will rid us of him and his insolence."

"Wait," said Lilith. She pointed to the bank where the pleasant green of young spruces showed among the weathered white trunks of fire-killed birch trees. "If we have so much time we'll land there and clean up."

"But—with the post so near, my dear, Lilith!" Huxby protested. "That fellow Tobin had any amount of soap."

"All the more reason. I'll not have even a common navvy see me in this condition. The rags can't be helped. But the dirt!—" Out burst her suppressed loathing for the grease and grime that marched herself and the men. "Mud! slime! rancid fat! spoiled meat! Alan Garth, I know that I have to go in dressed like a squaw. But this—this filth!"

He surged the canoe around shoreward with a powerful sweep of his paddle.

"Not necessary, Miss Ramill. A scouring with hardwood ashes and sand will do the work of soap. We can go in sweet."

They landed where an ice jam of some spring break-up had gouged through the muskeg mud at the end of the ridge and left a clear beach of glacial sand and gravel. Up over the ten-foot cut bank, Garth started a fire with one of his two remaining matches.

No cleaning could be done until the fires burned out. When Mr. Ramill took off the spits of cooked meat, all squatted down as usual to share the meal. Garth smiled his thanks as he took the slab of hot meat handed to him by the millionaire. The smile hardened.

A sudden change had fallen upon his three companions. He could easily guess the cause. They realized that this was the last meal they were to share as fellow voyageurs with him.

The moment they stepped from the canoe onto the wharf at the emergency refueling post, their forced companionship with him in the lost valley and on all the long trip would be at an end. Instead of a trio dependent upon their opponent for food and guidance—for life itself—they would be a trio not only independent of, but hostile to him and his interests.

That was at least true of the two men. And even Lilith betrayed in her look and manner a vivid consciousness of the impending change of relationship. As for Huxby, the cold gloating in his stare showed how he was anticipating the robbery and ruin of the man who had so far outplayed them.

Mr. Ramill had reacted in his own way. His temporary friendliness had disappeared. He was again the bland, adroit investor in mines who so generously presented worthy prospectors with a thousand, and in return took over claims worth many thousands. Huxby had been a hopeless case. But Garth had fancied there were possibilities in the older pirate.

Lilith Ramill, however, was the real disappointment. Though she had done nothing so far as Garth could tell, to disprove her declared hatred of him, she had seemed more and more to show a spirit of fair play. It had led him into thinking she possessed a true spirit of sportsmanship.

By the time Garth finished his own half-spoiled meat, he managed also to swallow his bitterness. After all, what else could he have expected? The girl was the daughter of Surten Ramill—the selfish spoiled daughter of an unscrupulous business sharper.

He broke in upon her rubbing of the begrimed diamond: "May I ask you for the salt and tea bags, Miss Ramill? They're as good as yours now. But I can refill them when we return to the valley."

She stared at him wide-eyed. "You—you're going back for them. Why not? You have shown all that southern glacier."

Garth had gone blank. Huxby stared with all their eyes. Mr. Ramill chuckled. "Yes, my dear—the boys will be going back to the valley for spring."

Lilith set down her extension. Then Garth. "Dad promised I do. You promised it from the beginning. I am neither proud nor a liar."

"Good guess," he broke in. "It has taken a bit longer than I expected to get you out. But in my light birch-bark, I fancy I can make the head of canoe water before the freeze-up. After that, frost and snow will make no difference. I'll have a pair of webs—snowshoes."

The millionaire spoke in place of his wild-eyed daughter: "But, man, the cold?"

Garth smiled. "Have you forgotten I told you that I wintered with the Eskimos at Coronation Gulf?"

"They have dog teams."

"Some of those teams were reared from wolf pups. I might experiment. There are several wolf families in the valley."

"You're stark mad! If you think you can—"

Mr. Ramill paused. He listened to what Huxby was muttering in his ear. His frown smoothed out, and he again favored Garth with the smile that did not go up as high as his shrewd eyes.

"Oh, well, my boy, if you're bound to risk your life in foolhardy adventuring, that's none of our business."

"Quite so," Garth agreed. "If our sixty-forty deal had not fallen through, it would have been your business to do the legal assessment work on the claim. But as things stand, I may as well put in the winter doing the work myself. The metal I sled out with my wolf team should pay enough to buy me a fair-sized freight plane."

The millionaire beamed. "Yes—ah—true!"

Garth smiled back at him. "By the way, I meant to let you discover for yourselves at Fort Smith the happy surprise I've had all along for you. But since you're so pleased already over my prospects, I'll let you into the secret right now."

"Secret—at Fort Smith?"

"Yes. I forwarded my papers by the southbound Bellanca before I had the pleasure of meeting you and Miss Ramill. My claim has been on record for the past four weeks or so."

Huxby glared with a sudden change from gloating to cold rage: "You lie! You were going out in your canoe."

He was on his feet almost as soon as Garth. His fists swung in blows driven by all the force of his furious anger. Garth sidestepped both, and clipped in a hook to the jaw. Huxby dropped as if hit by a sledge. Yet it was not a complete knockout. After three or four seconds, he sat up, blinking like a dazed owl.

Garth had stepped back. He said: "Apologize, or get up and take what is coming to you."

Huxby stopped blinking. The daze cleared from his eyes. They took on their usual calculating look. He felt the beard on his sore jaw, and replied with cold deliberation: "I withdraw the term."

Arrogant as was the tone, the words were an unqualified apology. Garth turned to Lilith, who stood gazing at him with a peculiar hard glow in her blue eyes. He spoke as if nothing had happened:

"Some of the ashes are now cool enough for you to use, Miss Ramill. Rub them on as a mud paste till the potash cuts the grease, then scour with sand, and rinse. Better take your ashes in the blanket, and use it for protection while you do your laundering. The skeets and bulldog flies are swarming. You'll find a bit of sand beach just under that clump of spruce."

Without a word of thanks, she dragged the blanket to the edge of the nearest outburnt fire and began brushing the fluffy gray wood ashes upon it with a spruce spray. Her father had been gazing thoughtfully at Garth. He took up his empty foxskin bag.

"Come on, Vivian. This is washday. Take Lilith's bag and get your potash."

The wolfskin knapsack, with its platinum alloy treasure, had been left attached to the mooring line of the canoe. There was no bag for Garth. He made one by opening the front of his buckskin shirt and hand-ladling wood ashes inside.

Lilith went over beyond the spruce thicket with her blanket-bagged ashes. Garth led Mr. Ramill and Huxby to the strip of sand below the beached canoe. There he showed them how to cheat the buzzing insect pests. Instead of stripping for his laundry work, he muddled his ashes and plastered the paste all over his body and on the inside and outside of his clothes.

He rubbed in the mess and gave the weak solution of potash lye time to act. After that came the rinsing. He waded out and sat down in the water up to his neck. Thus protected from the swarms of stingers, he stripped off one garment at a time, washed it clean of ashes, and tossed it upon the edge of the beach. Before coming out, he took a luxurious swim in the clear river water.

First Ramill and then Huxby rather gingerly copied Garth's method. Like him, both wound up with a swim. Neither, however, ventured far out into the vast slow flood of the Mackenzie.

With the landing came the comedy. The others ended their bathing before Garth. He tread water to watch them. Both had wrung out their clothes and flung them well up the beach. The moment they splattered ashore, the waiting swarms of blood-suckers buzzed to the feast.

Huxby cursed, snatched up his half-dry rags, and dashed back in, to dress under water. Mr. Ramill, however, had no desire to put on wet clothes. He beat at the vizzing pests with his tattered union suit. It enabled him to get into the leather trousers and coat without being stung more than half a hundred times.

Garth's mirth was mixed with admiration for the mine investor's nerve. Along with this he felt a glow of satisfaction over the results of what his rigorous training had done for the once-soft millionaire. Though still heavy-set, the portly gentleman had become something of an athlete in appearance. His flabby muscles had been hardened; his loose jowls were now firm. His paunch had disappeared.

"My word, sir," Garth sang out, "you look fit for the football squad. That should be worth more to you than a dozen platinum claims. At least, you might toss me my buckskins."

Mellowed by the bath and swim to a temporary return of friendliness, the millionaire chuckled and came down the beach to fling the sodden garments out to their owner. His loitering afterwards may have been for Huxby. Yet he went back to the dead fires with Garth, when the engineer muttered something about having dropped his penknife.

As the two disappeared over the top of the ice-gouged bank, Huxby sprang to open the wolfskin knap-

Garth Side-Stepped Both, and Clipped in a Hook to the Jaw.

sack. From it he snatched out a piece of rancid bear-cub fat, a clip of pistol cartridges, and his "lost" automatic.

With swift, purposeful movements, he rubbed the fat on the rusty pistol and began working the mechanism. It jammed repeatedly. But as the sun-melted fat soaked the rust, the action became normal.

Still quick yet unhurried, he loaded the clip into the hollow butt and slid back the outer barrel to throw a cartridge into the breech.

As was of course to be expected Lilith Ramill had not returned from her own dip and wood-ashes laundering. Garth sat down beside the tin cup and little aluminum pot to mend a rip in his buckskin trousers.

Still in a friendly mood, but with shrewd calculation in his eyes, Mr. Ramill stretched out on his back in the long grass beside Garth.

"Well, young man, it appears that the game is played out. The joke on us is that you had the cards stacked. A cold deck, and no stakes up."

Garth differed: "Why not put it according to the facts, sir? I offered a square deal—a straight business proposition. The placer was in on that. Had I not sent out my papers for record, I would have had no legal claim to offer in my bargaining."

"Why—er— But when I refused your terms, and you refused mine, you said you preferred to play out the game."

"My game," Garth qualified; "not yours. It was you and Huxby who thought you had the cards stacked to win."

"But—your game? You had the placer clinched. Why not have said so at once, or at least there at the lake when you turned the tables on us? I might have accepted your terms. At least we could have flown out together, instead of going through all these weeks of privation and hardship."

The last words won an amused glance from Garth.

"Hardship—privation? You must know several fellow millionaires who call it prime sport to spend a month in the bush."

"Sport!"

"Oh, well, if you can't see that side of it, just recall yourself as you were when I had to hoist you out of the monoplane cabin."

That held the millionaire for a long moment. Then—

"Admitting how much I've benefited from your health cure, Doctor Garth, your methods have done my future son-in-law no good. As for my daughter, to drag a delicately nurtured lady into the dirt and privations and dangers of your raw wilds—"

"Delicate!" Garth cut in. "Do you know of anyone more hard? The point in her case is that she was only a brittle, harsh alloy. Now she's at least partly tempered into true steel. I had hopes of still better results from the both of you. But hate and treachery blacken the blood."

At the bitter statement, the millionaire flushed with anger. He started to turn over on his side to frown at Garth. The movement drew Garth's glance. Above a clump of wild currants, less than ten paces distant, he glimpsed the top of Huxby's hat and the outthrust muzzle of the automatic.

As Garth ducked forward, the pistol blared. Garth pitched down on his face. At the same instant, startled by the shot, Mr. Ramill jerked up on his elbow. The long grass had hidden him. Huxby could not have known that his partner was lying so close beside Garth.

In the excitement of the moment, he must have thought he had missed his kill and that Garth was bounding up again. He instantly pulled the trigger a second time. Knocked over by the shock of the bullet, the millionaire sprawled across the flaccid body of Garth.

Even as the roar of the second shot dinned in his ears, the killer saw what he had done. The pistol dropped from his paralyzed hand.

Before he could recover his wits, Lilith burst screaming from the spruce thicket. Half clad, wet hair flying, she dashed forward to fling herself down on her bare knees beside her father. Under the partly washed off coat of mosquito dope, his face was the same sallow gray as Garth's.

She looked up, her eyes black with horror. Huxby had risen to his feet. He was advancing, once more cool. She flung out a forbidding hand.

"Stop! Keep away! You—murderer!"

His lips tightened. "You're mad, darling—clear off your head. I shot to save your father, not at him. No, listen—you must listen to me! The d—d roughneck attacked your father—with the knife—had him down. At my first shot he dodged. I thought I missed. Your father sprang up just as I fired again. It's the truth."

"Truth!" she cried—"truth! You've killed them—both!"

Huxby advanced with wary quickness. But at sight of the two men he had shot, he thrust his coat-hidden pistol into its sheath. All the back of Garth's sideward turned head was a crimson blotch. What need of wasting powder on a man shot through the head?

Mr. Ramill's wound gave him no less satisfaction, though for an exactly opposite reason. The bullet had struck high up on the shoulder blade, between neck and arm. Huxby pulled the thickset body from under Lilith and opened the front of the leather coat. The steel-jacketed bullet had drilled clean through and come out below the collarbone.

"Look!" he shouted his relief. "Your father—he's not killed, only knocked out. The wound's not serious, so high up through the chest. Same way one of my classmates was shot by a hold-up. Take hold. We'll get him into the canoe and make a quick run down across to the refueling post. That fellow Tobin will have a medical kit."

The pulling of her father from under her had let the girl down upon the body of Garth. Huxby's eager assurance roused her from the semi-swoon. She struggled partly up, to peer at her father, her hands braced upon Garth's lax side.

Even as she gazed, the gray of her father's face became less ghastly. But in place of the smile of relief for which Huxby looked, she sprang up to flare at him in another outburst of denunciation:

"Murderer! Liar! There's his knife where I left it. He did not have it! Liar! Sneak! He did not attack Dad. But you—you crawled up and shot him—without warning!"

Huxby dropped his mask.

"What of it? The d—d wood louse lied first. He thought it funny to keep mum about having recorded his claim—to play your father and me all this time. Great joke that. Only it back-fired on him. I'm the only pilot who can find the valley. No one can say that the claim we file on is the same as the one he recorded."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Lafayette Loved Dogs

The great Lafayette, one of the most famous magicians of the last century, so loved his dog, Beauty, that a portrait of the dog adorned all his checks and theater contracts. A picture of the dog hung outside his London home with the inscription, "The more I see of men, the more I love my dog."

The New Year Is Here

TOM MURDOCK was a thief. For a year and a half he had lived well, mingled in good society, and occasionally baffled the police with a "little job."

He wasn't greedy. He took just enough to keep himself in comfort and to permit the privilege of certain charities.

To Tom Murdock the appeal of his profession was not profit but the ever-present danger. He reveled in that.

Until the Morrison's New Year's eve ball. He had gone, not to welcome in the New Year, but because of the opportunity the revelry would afford for a rich haul.

It was by merest chance he met the girl. He might have gone on all evening, dancing with fat old dowagers who gratefully called him "a dear boy," and sizing up their jewels at his convenience. But one of these "prospects" introduced him to her niece. "She's been wanting to meet you, dear boy! I've told her all about you, and she says you are the man she's looking for."

He knew, the moment they met, that he belonged to her.

"I'm full of good resolutions tonight," he told her, "all because I've met you."

"I don't take much stock in New Year's resolutions myself," she answered, "but I did make one—not to wear many jewels tonight. There

"I Am Full of Good Resolutions Tonight," He Told Her.

have been too many robberies lately."

"I don't think you need worry. I'm sure no more will happen."

The hour of midnight found them in the conservatory. "Wait," he pleaded as she started up.

"But shouldn't we join in 'Auld Lang Syne' to see the New Year in?"

"Not this time. This year we're seeing in a whole new life." He held her hand and looked deep into her eyes. "I'm not much of a bargain, but I want you to know that I'm going to make you proud of me. So proud I hope, that you'll marry me. Because I'm in love with you."

"This is so sudden!" she cried, and they both laughed at the trite answer.

"Nonsense!" he insisted. "Why, I met you away back last year." He kissed her and she did not resist.

But later when they returned to the ball room a man stepped up and touched his arm. "Jig's up," the man said quietly. "You're under arrest."

"I? Isn't there some mistake?"

"Not a chance. We've got you with the goods this time. Might as well come quietly."

"Of course. Mind if I say good-by to the lady? I promise I'll come right back. I won't be out of your sight, you know, and you can shoot if I try to get away."

"Here she comes now. Tell her anything you like."

She joined them. "Oh, here you are. I thought you were right behind me. Why, Captain Barry! What's the matter?"

"You know him?" asked Tom in surprise.

"Yes, we're old friends. But why—?"

"My dear, it's going to take longer, maybe a lot longer than I thought. I can't ask you to wait—but may I at least write you now and then?"

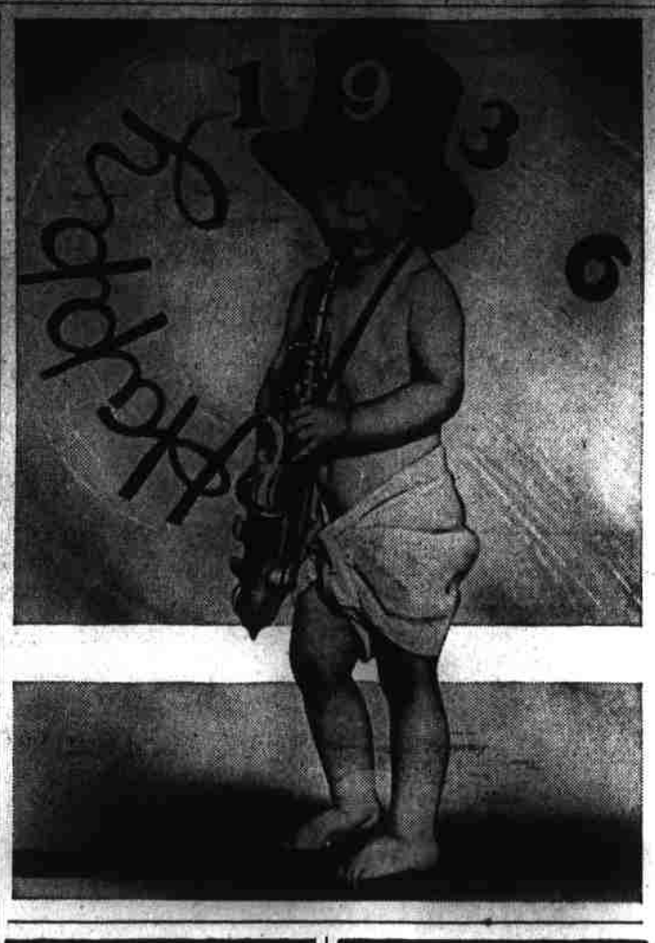
"You're going away?" He nodded. "Of course, write to me. Here's my address." She wrote nervously, crumpled the first card, and gave him the second. "I'll write to you, too," she promised. "I—I think I love you, Tom." She turned and fled.

"Well, let's get going." The two men crossed the dance floor, got their wraps, and went out together into the cold night.

"I'd like to ask one favor, captain," Tom said. "Please don't tell her. I couldn't stand for her to know."

"Me tell?" He thought of a crumpled calling card, slipped into his hand, that he had read while putting on his coat. "Don't tell him I was the detective who tipped you off he'd be here tonight."

"Not me," the captain promised. "That's my New Year's resolution."



NEW YEAR BELLS

IN EVERY town and village
The bells do ring,
O'er woods and grass and tillage,
Hey ding a ding,
Ringing for joy to start the week again,
And call all Christian men
To pray and praise and sing.

Then pull your ropes with vigor,
And watch your ways
To thread with strictest rigor
The noisy maze;
Keep in your heart the fire of youth alight,
That he who rings aright
May ring in happy days.

And we who hear the bells ring
With all their might,
As they do say the angels sing
Both day and night,
Praise we the men who built our belfries high
That music from the sky
Might sound for our delight.

—Stewart Wilson in "The Queen."

BEGINNINGS AGAIN

By Maria Leonard, Dean of Women, University of Illinois

"I WOULD love to live my life again," said my dear little old lady friend of ninety-four years, during the last of my regular visits to her, as she died within the month. "Live almost a century again," said I, almost catching my breath at the thought. "Yes," said she, "for I love life, I love it dearly."

Living our lives again—we cannot do, but we can make a brave new start at the beginning of each year. New Year's day is inventory day, when with mental reserve we should take physical, mental and spiritual stock of ourselves. At this time of cataloguing we must not let discouragement nor conceit look over our shoulders and overshadow us, for either brings our balance wrong.

Life's purposes are measured eternally, not by our goal. Our improvement, not our result, marks our progress.

Our Cheerful Cherub knew the secret when he said:

One gave his only coat away,
And his heart was like warm gold,
Another drew his fur coat close
But his heart grew still more cold.

"One true measure of success," one modern philosopher said, "is the ratio between what we might have been and what we might have done, on the one hand, and what we are and what we are doing on the other."

Let us watch ourselves throughout the (new) year at our daily work, whatever it be, to see that our initiative does not lose its creative spark, and degenerate into mere routine, for this is the reason why the world is mediocre and gray. Benjamin Franklin advises—"If you have two loaves of bread, one under each arm, sell one and buy a hyacinth for your soul."

In a word, this coming New Year is a chance to begin again. "Expect everything, and some of it will happen."

THE NEWSBOY'S GREETING

By FRANCES GRINSTEAD

IT WAS a frosty morning in the days of Franklin stoves. The paper carrier, a small boy wrapped in a red and black striped muffler, his nose and eyes showing beneath a cast-off plush cap of his father's and wearing a nondescript coat once big brother's, slipped in the door of the hardware store with an armful of newspapers. He blew his cold breath in the chill air and held his hands to the rapidly heating stove.

Only then did he muster nerve to fish in the coat pocket hanging near his knees, and to proffer, with the morning paper, a New Year's card elaborately printed in two or

He Glanced Over His Spectacles as If in Surprise.

three colors of ink, and decorated with a variety of borders, rules and sizes and styles of type.

This he offered shyly, with a retreating motion toward the door. The hardware dealer glanced over his spectacles, looked at the greeting as if surprised, and exclaimed: "Well, well, Henry, but this is nice. Thank you—and here's a dime."

Henry left the stove's increasing warmth with more haste than usual, in order to make his New Year's call upon Miss Mattie, milliner and dealer in thread, needles and buttons. With her and with others on his route—from the mayor to the grocer and blacksmith—he left the daily paper and a copy of the annual work of art from his editor's printshop, conveying in lines that rippled with eloquence the paper carrier's hope that his patrons would wax prosperous and maintain a state of general good health "throughout the glad New Year."

Each of his customers would express an agreeable surprise and a gratifying knowledge of what was expected, responding with gifts that ranged from the hardware man's dime to the mayor's fifty cents.

Among the samples of work done which printing offices so seldom throw away, there must rest many examples of the carrier boy's card of thirty to fifty years ago. It was a widespread custom.

Under the dusty eaves of one printshop has lain a carrier's card that will soon round out its century of aging yellowness. The 120 lines of the "poem" it bears deal with the fleeting character of Time, present the merits of Henry Clay over William Henry Harrison, and end with this verse:

The Ladies Fair! God bless them all,
Will raise the swelling lay
And help us onward roll the ball—
The ball for Henry Clay.
Thus when you revel in your hall,
Midst mirth and laugh and joy,
At how you nobly "rolled the ball,"
Think of the Carrier Boy.