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## The DANG

JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

CHAPTER XV.  
JEAN'S STORY.

It was the candlelight that dragged Howland quickly back into consciousness and pain.

He knew that he was no longer in the snow. His fingers dug into damp earth as he made an effort to raise himself, and with that effort it seemed as though a red-hot knife had cleft him from the top of his skull to his chest. The agony of that instant's pain drew a sharp cry from him, and he clutched both hands to his head.

The fingers of Howland's right hand were sticky when he drew them away from his head, and he shivered. The tongue of flame leaping out of the night, the thunderous report, the deluge of fire that had filled his brain, all bore their meaning for him now. It had been a close call, so close that shivering chills ran up and down his spine as he struggled little by little to lift himself to his knees. His enemy's shot had grazed his head.

It seemed an interminable time before he could rise and stand on his feet and reach the candle. Slowly he felt his way along the wall until he came to a low, heavy door barred from the outside, and just beyond this door he found a narrow aperture cut through the decaying logs. It was a yard in length and barely wide enough for him to thrust through an arm. Three more of these narrow slits in his prison walls he found before he came back again to the door.

Near the table on which he replaced the candle was a stool, and he sat down. Carefully he went through his pockets. His belt and revolver were gone. He had been stripped of letters and papers. Not so much as a match had been left him by his captors.

He stopped in his search and listened. Faintly there came to him the ticking of his watch. He felt in his watch pocket. It was empty. Again he listened. This time he was sure that the sound came from his feet, and he lowered the candle until the light of it glistened on something yellow an arm's distance away. It was his watch, and close beside it lay his leather wallet.

What money he had carried in the pocketbook was gone, but his personal cards and half a dozen papers that had contained were gone.

He looked at the time. The hour hand pointed to two. It was possible that he had been unconscious for more than six hours? He had left Jean on the mountain top soon after nightfall—it was not more than a couple of hours he had been Meleese. Seven hours! He had been Meleese. Seven hours! He had been Meleese. Seven hours! He had been Meleese. Seven hours!

His hair was stiff and matted with blood. It had congealed thickly on his cheek and neck and had soaked the top of his coat. He had bled a great deal, so much that he wondered he was alive, and yet during those hours his captors had given him no assistance, had not even bound a cloth about his head.

Did they believe that the shot had killed him, that he was already dead when they flung him into the dungeon? Or was this only one other instance of the cruel brotherhood of those who so often sought his life? The fighting blood rose in him with returning strength. If they had left him a weapon, even the small knife he had taken from his pocket, he would still make an effort to settle a last score or two. But now he was helpless.

There was, however, a ray of hope in the possibility that they believed him dead. If they who had flung him into the dungeon believed this, then he was safe for several hours. No one

could enter his cell until broad day and possibly not until the following night, when a grave could be dug and he carried out with some secrecy. In that time, if he could escape from his prison, he would be well on his way to the Wekusko. He had no doubt that Jean was still a prisoner on the mountain top. The dogs and sledges were there and both riders were where he had concealed them. It would be a hard race—a running fight perhaps—but he would win, and after a time Meleese would come to him, away down at the little hotel on the Saskatchewan.

He rose to his feet, his blood growing warm, his eyes shining in the candle light. The thought of the girl as she had come to him in the night put back into him all of his old fighting strength, all of his unquenched hope and confidence. She had followed him when the dog yelped at his heels, as the first shots had been fired. She had knelt beside him in the snow as he lay bleeding at the feet of his captor. He had heard her voice calling to him; had felt the thrilling touch of her arms, the terror and love of her lips as she thought him dying. She had given herself to him, and she would come to him—his lady of the snow—if he could escape.

He went to the door and shoved against it with his shoulder. It was immovable. Again he thrust his hand and arm through the first of the narrow ventilating apertures. The wood with which his fingers came in contact



JEAN'S STORY.

was rotten from moisture and age, and he found that he could tear out handfuls of it. He fell to work, digging with the force eagerness of an animal. At the rate the soft pulp would give way he could win his freedom long before the earliest risers at the post were awake.

A sound stopped him—a hollow cough from out of the blackness beyond the dungeon wall. It was followed by an instant later by a gleam of light, and Howland darted quickly back to the table. He heard the slipping of a bolt outside the door. The door swung open, and a shaft of light shot into the chamber. For a space Howland was blinded by it, and it was not until the bearer of the lamp had advanced halfway to the table that he recognized his visitor as Jean Croiset.

The Frenchman's face was wild and haggard. His eyes gleamed red and bloodshot as he stared at the engineer.

"Mon Dieu, I had hoped to find you dead," he whispered huskily.

He reached up to hang the big oil lamp he carried to a hook in the log

ceiling, and Howland sat amazed at the expression on his face. Either fear or pain had wrought deep lines in his forehead, and his eyes were

"I had hoped to find you dead, m'sieur," he repeated. "That is why I did not bind your wound and give you water when they turned you over to my care. I wanted you to bleed to death. It would have been easier for both of us."

From under the table he drew forth a second stool and sat down opposite Howland. The two men stared at each other over the sputtering remnant of the candle. Before the engineer had recovered from his astonishment at the sudden appearance of the man whom he believed to be safely imprisoned in the old cabin Croiset's shifting eyes fell on the mass of torn wood under the aperture.

"Too late, m'sieur," he said meaningfully. "They are waiting up there now. It is impossible for you to escape."

"What is it I thought about you?" replied Howland, forcing himself to speak coolly. "How did you manage it?"

"They came up to free me soon after they got you, m'sieur. I am grateful to you for thinking of me, for if you had not told them I might have stayed there and starved like a beast in a trap."

"It was Meleese," said Howland. "I told her."

Jean dropped his head in his hands. "I have just come from Meleese," he whispered softly. "She sends you her love, m'sieur, and tells you not to give up hope. The great God, if it is only known—if she only knew what is about to happen! No one has told her. She is a prisoner in her room, and after that—that that out on the plain—when she came to you and fought like one man to save you—they will not give her freedom until all is over. What time is it, m'sieur?"

"It shall be ready," answered Howland as he read the time.

"The Virgin bear me witness that I wish I might strike ten years off my life and give you freedom," Jean breathed quickly. "I would do it this instant, m'sieur. I would help you to escape if it were in any way possible. But they are in the room at the head of the stairs, waiting. At 6—"

"At 6—what then?" urged Howland.

"My God, man, what makes you look so? What is to happen at 6?"

"I have no time to lose in further talk like this, m'sieur," he said almost harshly. "They know now that it was I who sought for you and for Meleese on the Great North trail. They know that it is I who saved you at Wekusko. Meleese can no more save me than she can save you, and to make my task a little harder, they have made me their messenger, and—"

"Again he stopped, choking for words. His executioner, m'sieur."

"Great God!" Howland gasped.

"First I am to tell you a story, m'sieur," continued Croiset, leveling his reddened eyes to the engineer's.

"It will not be long, and I pray the Virgin to make you understand it as we people of the north understand it. It begins sixteen years ago."

"I shall understand, Jean," whispered Howland. "Go on."

"It was at one of the company's posts that it happened," Jean began, and the story has to do with m'sieur, the factor and his wife.

## THE DANG

JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

CHAPTER XV.  
JEAN'S STORY.

into the post, almost dead of starvation. So it happened that I was like a brother to Meleese and the other three. The years passed, and the desire for vengeance grew in us as we became older until it was the one thing that we most desired in life, even filling the gentle heart of Meleese, whom we sent to school in Montreal when she was eleven, m'sieur. It was three years later, while she was still in Montreal, that I went on one of my wandering searches to a post at the head of the Great Slave, and there, m'sieur—there—"

Croiset had risen. His long arms were stretched high, his head thrown back, his upturned face with a passion that was almost that of prayer.

"M'sieur, I thank the great God of heaven that it was given to Jean Croiset to meet one of those whom we had pledged our lives to find, and I slew him. Meleese—killed him slowly, telling him of what he had done as I choked the life from him—and then, a little at a time, I let the life back into him, forcing him to tell me where I would find his son, the slayer of Meleese's father. After that I closed his eyes in my throat until he was dead, and my dogs dragged his body through 300 miles of snow that the others might look on him and know that he was dead. That was six years ago, m'sieur."

Howland was scarcely breathing.

"And the other, the son," he whispered tensely—"you found him, Croiset? You killed him?"

"What would you have done, m'sieur?" Howland's hands gripped those that guarded the little parcel.

"I would have killed him, Jean."

He spoke slowly, deliberately.

"I would have killed him," he repeated.

"I am glad of that, m'sieur."

Jean was unwrapping the last-mentioned parcel, and the book that was revealed a roll of paper, soiled and yellow along the edges.

"These pages are taken from the daybook at the post where the woman lived," he explained softly, smoothing them under his hands. "Each day the factor of a post keeps a reckoning of incidents as they pass, as I have heard that sea captains do on shipboard. It has been a company law for hundreds of years. We have kept these pages to ourselves, m'sieur. They tell of what happened at our post sixteen years ago this winter."

As he spoke the half breed came to Howland's side, smoothing the first page on the table in front of him, his slim forefinger pointing to the first few lines.

"They came on this day," he said, his breath close to the engineer's ear. "These are their names, m'sieur—the names of the two who destroyed the paradise that our Blessed Lady gave to us many years ago."

In an instant Howland had read the lines. His blood seemed to dry in his veins and his heart to stand still. For

the first time he had seen the name of the woman who had saved him, and his

breast heaved as he read, "On this day there came to our post from the Churchill way John Howland and his son."

With a sharp cry he sprang to his feet, overturning the stool, facing Croiset, his hands clenched, his body bent as if about to spring. Jean stood calmly, his white teeth gleaming. These slowly he stretched out a hand.

"M'sieur John Howland, will you send what happened to the father and mother of the little Meleese sixteen years ago? Will you read and understand why your life was sought on the Great North trail, why you were placed on a case of dynamite in the Wekusko coyote and why, with the coming of this morning's dawn, at 6—"

With the gazed speechlessness of one recovering from a sudden blow Howland turned to the table and bent over the papers that the Frenchman had laid out before him. Five minutes later he raised his head. His face was as white as chalk. Deep lines had set about his mouth. As a sick man might, he lifted his hand and passed it over his face and through his hair. But his eyes were afix. Involuntarily Jean's body gathered itself as if to meet attack.

"I have read it," he said huskily as though the speaking of the words caused him a great effort. "I understand now. My name is John Howland, and my father's name is John Howland. I understand. And you, Jean Croiset—do you believe that I am that John Howland—the John Howland, the son who—"

"M'sieur, it makes no difference what I believe now. I have but one other thing to tell you here and one thing to give to you," replied Jean. "Those who have tried to kill you are the three brothers. Meleese is their sister. Ours is a strange country, m'sieur, governed since the beginning of our time by laws which we have made ourselves. To those who are waiting above no torture is too great for you. They have condemned you to death. This morning, exactly as the minute hand of your watch counts off the hour of 6, you will be shot to death through one of these holes in the dungeon walls. And this is the only thing I have to give you."

He dropped a folded bit of paper on the table. Mechanically Howland

### REACHED FOR IT.

Stunned and speechless, cold with the horror of his death sentence, he smoothed out the note. There were only a few words, apparently written in great haste:

I have been praying for you all night. If God fails to answer my prayers I will still do as I have promised and follow you.

He heard a movement and lifted his eyes. Jean was gone. The door was swinging slowly inward. He heard the wooden bolt slip into place, and after that there was not even the sound of a moccasin foot stealing through the outer darkness.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

### JAPANESE TIDBITS.

Filet of Raw Fish, Whales and Rice

One of the great food delicacies of Japan is sashimi, a filet of raw fish served with soy and condiments. This dish, though highly recommended by both Japanese and European medical authorities, is pronounced queer or unutilized by those not born to the custom of eating it.

When these articles are reminded, however, of their eating live oysters with gusto it occurs to them, says the Oriental Review, that the one is at least more artistic in appearance than the other, though both may be equally palatable and nutritious.

It is likely that very few English people know that the fisher folk along the Devonshire coast are accustomed to eat laver, an edible seaweed, and so think it very odd that the Japanese should use certain seaweeds as an article of diet.

Yam, burdock roots, lily buds, lotus roots and bamboo sprouts are among the Japanese vegetables not enjoyed by occidental peoples, while the chrysalis of the silkworm, rice locusts, the octopus, whales and sea slugs eaten in some parts of China and Japan are sure to shock their fine sensibilities.

And yet the most civilized epicures relish snails and frogs' legs, which are just as odd in their way as those varieties of animal food mentioned above.

Shark's fin soup, edible birds' nest and lima cured eggs are far famed Chinese luxuries, the last item of which is equal to the strongest stimulant cheese in its power over the olfactory nerves.

Chicken All Right.

A Camden lawyer walked into a restaurant the other day prepared to order himself a chicken dinner.

The waitress approached him. He looked at her and said:

"How's chicken?"

"I'm all right," she answered cheerily. "How's yourself?"—Philadelphia Times.

### COMMERCIAL POULTRY.

One Method of Feeding Poultry on Large Scales Described.

In a recent bulletin issued by the bureau of animal industry of the United States department of agriculture the methods and results of feeding poultry on a large commercial scale were described. The investigation of this subject by Alfred E. Lee of the department is believed to be the first attempt to acquire comprehensive and reliable figures on the cost of producing a pound of gain in poultry.

Portable feeding batteries, as shown in the cut are described as follows: This battery is divided into eight coops.

Each coop is divided into two compartments, one for the birds and the other for the feed. The feed is placed in the compartments and the birds are allowed to eat from the feed.

The birds are kept in the coops until they are ready to be taken to the market. The coops are then cleaned and the feed is removed.

The coops are then refilled with feed and the birds are allowed to eat again.

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### COTTON SEED FOR FATTENING CATTLE.

Cotton seed may be fed to steers with good results, although the usual practice now is to feed the cottonseed meal remaining after the oil has been extracted in the mills, says the Breeder's Gazette. The cotton seed has a pronounced laxative effect if fed raw. This may be overcome in part by cooking the seed. In any event the best results are obtained by feeding not over six pounds of seed per head with a heavy feed of corn or Kaffir corn.

In some tests cotton seed has given better results than cottonseed meal, but in more instances the reverse is true. In some Mississippi tests it was found that one pound of cottonseed meal was equal to 1.6 pounds of cotton seed or 1.9 pounds of corn, while one pound of cotton seed yielded 1.2 pounds of corn. Where it is desired to make a large use of cottonseed meal it may be fed for ninety days to the

breeders of live stock to which sometimes subjected in late illustrations by the Harford of Iowa, says the Kansas Farmer. This is a very useful and economical method of fattening. All these tests have been factors, but the early maturing and beef producing qualities are probably the most potent. The illustration shows a typical Harford steer.

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