

THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edson Marshall
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PART ONE The Awakening CHAPTER I Groping in the Dark

THE convict gang had a pleasant place to work today. Their road building had taken them some miles from the scattered outskirts of Walla Walla, among fields green with growing barley.

The convicts themselves were in a genial mood, easily moved to wide grins; and with a single exception they looked much like any other road gang. Curiously enough, whenever the warden's thought dwelt upon the inmates of his prison, there was always one wind-tanned, vivid face, one brawny, towering form that seemed to demand individual consideration. The man who was listed on the records as Ben Kinney was distinctly an individual.

"That's the queerest case we ever had here at Walla Walla," Sprigley told his fellow guards, as they watched the man's pick swing in the air. "Sometimes I wonder whether he ought to be here or not. Look at that face—he hasn't any more of a criminal face than I have."

The other guard, Howard, scanned his companion's face with mock care. "Now let me tell you how they happened to catch him. Maybe you heard—he and Dago Frank were in the act of breaking into the Western-Danish Newk. They were in the alley, in the act of jimmying a window, and all at once Kinney straightened up as if something had hit him and let the jimmy fall with a thump to the pavement. He put his hands to his head, like a man with a headache. And the next instant a cop came running from the mouth of the alley."

"Kinney was heeled, but he didn't even pull his gun. Now let me tell you another queer thing. You know, the chief has started a system here to keep track of all the prisoners. He has them all fill out a card. Well, when this man Kinney turned in his card, he had written 'Ben' on it, but the rest was absolutely blank. "Mr. Mitchell thought at first that the man couldn't write. It turned out, though, that he can write—an intelligent hand, and spell good too. Then Mitchell decided he was just sulking, but I'm confident I know the answer. The reason he didn't fill out that card was because he couldn't remember."

"He couldn't remember where or when he was born, or who were his folks, or where he had come from, or how he had spent his life. Amnesia—that's what the doctors call it—amnesia following some sort of a mental trouble. In the end you'll see that I'm right."

There had been quite a northern migration lately, these late spring days. The last of the waterfowl had passed by now, but the northern migration was not yet done. Ben thought about them as birds of passage, and the thought amused him. And at the sight of a small, stooped figure advancing toward him up the railroad right-of-way he paused, leaning on his pick.

Because Ben had paused, for the first time in an hour, his two guards looked up to see what had attracted his attention. They saw what seemed to them a white-haired old wanderer of sixty years or more; but at first they were wholly at a loss to explain Ben's fascinated look of growing interest.

As he paused to scrutinize the convict gang neither hesitated nor fear, one of which had occasionally been detected, became manifest in his face. Both guards were held and amazed by the apparent fact that at the first

scrutiny of the man's outline, his carriage and his droop, wrinkled face, the prisoner Kinney was moved and stirred as if confronted by the risen dead.

The old man himself halted, returning Kinney's stare. Kinney's mind seemed to be reaching, groping for some astonishing truth that eluded him. The old man ran, in great strides, toward him. "My God, aren't you Ben Darby?" he demanded.

The convict answered him as from a great distance, his voice cool and calm and with an infinite certainty. "Of course," he said. "Of course I'm Darby."

For the moment that chance meeting thrilled all the spectators with the sense of monumental drama. The convicts stared; Howard, the second guard, started absurdly, rather guiltily, when the old man whirled toward him.

"What are you doing with Ben Darby in a convict gang?" the old wanderer demanded.

"What am I doing?" Howard's astonishment gave way to sightousness.

"The very fact that you know the name refers to you, not someone else, shows that that blunted memory of yours has begun to function in some degree. Now think. What do you know about 'Wolf Darby'?"

Ben tried in vain to find an answer. A whole world of meaning lingered just beyond the reach of his groping mind; but always it eluded him. Forest suddenly spoke to old Ezra Melville; and the latter put a small, cardboard box into his hands.

"I want you to see what I have here," Forest told Ben. "They were your own possessions once—you sent them yourself to Abner Darby, your late father—and I want you to see if you remember them."

Evidently this was the climax in the examination. Forest opened the box, taking therefrom a roll of white cotton. This he slowly unrolled, revealing two small, ribboned ornaments of gold or bronze.

Ben's starting eyes fastened on them. No doubt he recognized them. "The Victoria Cross, of course," he said slowly, brokenly. "I won it, didn't I, the day—that day at Vore—the day my men were trapped?"

His words faltered then. The wheels of his memory, starting into motion, were stilled once more. Again the great darkness dropped over him. Yet to Forest the experiment was an unqualified success.

The alienist from Seattle conducted the examination. "You don't remember this man?" Forest asked him quietly, indicating Ezra Melville.

Again Ben's eyes studied the droop, gray face. "With the vaguest kind of memory. I know I've seen him before—often. I can't tell anything else."

"He's a good friend of your family. I should say he was a very good friend, to take the trouble and time he has, in your behalf."

Ben nodded. The explanation was beyond him. Forest leaned forward. "You remember the Baskatchewan River?"

Ben straightened, but the dim images in his mind were not clear enough for him to answer in the affirmative. "I'm afraid not."

Melville leaned forward in his chair. "Ask him if he remembers winning the canoe race at Lodge Pole—or, the time he shot the Athabaska Rapids."

Ben turned brightly to him, but slowly shook his head. "I can't remember ever hearing of them before."

"I think you would, in time," Forest remarked. "They must have been interesting experiences. Now what do these mean to you?—Thomas Tier—Abner Darby—Edith Darby—MacLean's College—"

Abner Darby! It was curious what a flood of tenderness swept through Ben as, whispering, he repeated the name. Since his own was Darby, Abner Darby was, in all probability, his father; but his reasoning intelligence, rather than his memory, told him so.

The name of Edith Darby conjured up in his mind a childhood playmate—a girl with towzled yellow curls and chubby, confiding little hands. . . . But these dim memory-pictures went no further; there were no later visions of Edith as a young woman, blossoming with virgin beauty. The third name of the three, MacLean's College, called up no memories whatever.

"They'll strengthen in time, I'm sure," Forest told him. "Put them out of your mind, for now. Let it be blank." The alienist again leaned toward him, his eyes searching. There ensued an instant's pause, possessing a certain quality of suspense. Then Forest spoke quickly, sharply. "Wolf Darby?"

In response a curious tremor passed over Ben's frame, giving in some degree the effect of a violent start. "Wolf Darby," he repeated hesitantly. "Why do you call me that?"

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LOCAL MENTION

The condition of Mr. Smoot Lytle is reported today as slightly improved.

Marriage License has been issued to Jesse Helms and Miss Zettie Russell, both of Concord.

Mr. R. K. Black is confined to his home on North Spring street on account of illness.

The condition of Mrs. J. L. Hartsell, who has been ill for the past week, is reported today as slightly improved.

Strict muddling cotton on the local market is quoted at 25 1/2 cents per pound today; cotton seed at 72-cents per bushel.

Ten cases were docketed in police court this morning. Seven of the defendants were charged with intoxication and the other three were charged with assaults.

Mr. Addison Crowell, formerly of Nos. 6 and 8 townships, moved his family to Concord last Thursday. He occupies the W. W. Johnson on North street, which he recently purchased.

The girls of the Laura Sunderland School wish to express their appreciation to the Woman's Club, Rotarians and Kiwanians for the cars sent for them that they might attend Dr. Barker's lecture Wednesday afternoon.

No new cases of disease were reported to Dr. S. E. Buchanan, county health officer, this morning. One physician of this city stated Saturday night that health conditions here generally are good.

Mr. R. D. Goodman, county farm agent, has returned from Kellogg, where he attended a meeting of agents from all parts of the state. The meeting was very interesting and helpful, Mr. Goodman stated.

Stimpson, star center on Trinity's football team for the past three years, has been elected captain of the 1923 team. For the past two years he has been chosen all-state center on several teams.

William Archie, 4-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Sherrill, of No. 2 township, died yesterday afternoon at 1:45 o'clock. Funeral services were held this afternoon at 2 o'clock and interment was made in the cemetery at Fairview, where the funeral services were held.

Just one week until Christmas. If you have any shopping to be done now is the time to do it. If you have packages to be mailed now is the time to mail them. There will be just five shopping days after today, and Christmas Day will be here before you know it.

We begin today the publication of a most fascinating serial story, "The Sky Line of Spruce." This is a story of romance and adventure in the wilds of the Caribon Range in British Columbia. Be sure to read the opening chapter, which will be found on page two today.

Hugh Gray, football for the past several years head coach at Davidson, Saturday resigned, and announced that he will enter business. The athletic authorities at Davidson have not yet announced his successor. Jack Black, of the Pioneer Mill neighborhood, is mentioned as a possible successor to Coach Gray.

Messrs. Robert L. and Homer Phillips, of Rowan County, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Phillips, of Albemarle, and Mr. Melville Phillips, of Charlotte, are here today to attend a dinner at the home of Mrs. Andrew J. Wineoff, the occasion being the 73rd birthday of Mrs. Wineoff. Several other guests were also present at the dinner.

Mr. George W. Watts, who last week was appointed superintendent of the county home by the county commissioners, will probably take charge of the home about January 1st. Mr. J. L. Towell, who has been superintendent of the home for the past several years, has not yet announced what business he will enter.

Billy, the young son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Y. Morrison, is reported today as critically ill. The child became so ill yesterday that hope for his recovery was almost abandoned, but he rallied later in the day, and is some better today. The condition of his sister, Myrtle Young, who has also been ill, is reported today as improved.

Concord people showed great interest in Charlotte yesterday when reports of the fire there began to drift into this city. One report stated that a large portion of the business section of Charlotte had been destroyed; another report declared the American Trust Company's home had been destroyed, and another confined the fire to the Academy of Music building, which was burned.

PARKS-BELK CO.

Beginning Today Our Store Will Be Open Evenings Until 9 O'clock.

Store Open Evenings Beginning Today Until Xmas.

Big Before Christmas Sale Now Going On

ONLY FIVE MORE DAYS OF OUR BIG CHRISTMAS SALE!

This is your chance to save money on Xmas presents. Every day we add new specials in each department for this Big Sale, besides those which we are already offering. So do not wait until the last days before Xmas to do your shopping but come now and get your choice. "See Window Display."

A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Read over the list below, it will help you decide. We have presents to suit every one—Gifts of Real Value—

- For Women: Stationery, Handkerchiefs, Work Baskets, White Comb and Brush, Collar and Cuff Sets, Manicuring Sets, Beads, Pins, Pocket Books, Cut Sets, Face Powder, Toilet Water, Toilet Articles of all kinds, Umbrellas.
- For Men: Hosiery, Gloves, And many Others not mentioned here. Small Gifts For Men: Give These—they will be Appreciated—Silk Hose, Wool Hose, Belts, Wool Scarfs, Silk Scarfs, Neck Ties, Collars, Cuff Buttons, Shirts, Underwear, Hand Bags, Kid Gloves, Suspenders, Hose Supporters, Sweaters.

All these on sale during Xmas Sale. For the Whole Family: Buy During Christmas for they will be higher—Blankets, Sheets, Bed Spreads, Towels, Rugs, Shades, Table Linen, Linen Napkins, Linen Towels, Hosiery, Bibles, Window Curtains, Pillows, Brooms. Only a few articles mentioned here, but many to select from during this sale.

FIVE MORE SHOPPING DAYS—OPEN EVENINGS UNTIL 9 O'CLOCK 'ALL THIS WEEK

PARKS-BELK CO.

Concord's Christmas Store

KLAN THREAT TO GOVERNOR.

Unsigned Letter to McGray Says Bulletin is Waiting For Him.

LaPorte, Ind., Dec. 18.—A letter purporting to come from the Secretary of the Ku Klux Klan at Gary, threatening the life of Governor McGray, was turned over to Federal and State authorities for investigation. The letter said: "As Secretary of the Ku Klux Klan, I have been instructed to write to you to advise you before hand not to interfere with the activities of our order. We are here to say and laws have no meaning for us. We understand that you have already expressed your dis-

approval of our organization, but do not go any further, for if you do a bullet is waiting for you. We do not intend to let anything or anybody stand in our way. With 10,000,000 members we will sweep the country and Governors had better be prepared for the worst, for we mean business. Instead of criticizing us, you ought to be glad to join our ranks. Remember, the eyes of the Ku Klux Klan are on you." The letter bore no signature. Governor McGray expressed himself as not in sympathy with the organization at the time it obtained a charter in this State.

Are Cannon Willer. Manager: "What are you trying to give me? Why, the root of the tree is as old as the pyramids." Playwright: "What of it? The pyramids haven't lost any of their popularity, have they?" There will be a play given at Waco High School building Thursday night, December 21st, at 7:30 o'clock. The play is entitled "The Hood" and is to be given by the High School pupils. Mr. W. H. Fowler, of Knoxville last week killed an eleven month pig hog that weighed 450 pounds.

HARDING WILL SUPPORT BONUS FOR SOLDIERS

Favors Bonus if Feasible Means of Financing Burden Can Be Found. Cincinnati, Dec. 17.—Assurance that President Harding would support a bonus for ex-service men, providing a feasible means of financing the bonus can be found, was given ex-service men by Colonel C. R. Forbes, director of the veterans' conference of national and state executives of the veterans of foreign wars, here today.

This means that the bonus bill is liable to be passed at the coming session of Congress, Colonel Tillinghast L. Houston, New York, national commander of the veterans of foreign war, said after the meeting. Colonel Forbes called President Harding by long distance telephone shortly before going into the conference, and in the course of his address referred to the conversation with the President. "I called him up because it was suggested to me that the bonus might be touched upon," he said. "I wish you knew the pulse of President Harding. I wish you knew his innermost thoughts. I wish you knew how he loves the ex-service men."

"Harding is not opposed to a bonus. He will never be opposed to a bonus if they will provide a means for financing it. All sorts of legislation have been sought; all sorts of means have been mentioned, and the most simple means of these that has been brought to my attention is the sales tax to meet this obligation."

"If Congress had brought to the President the solution of the financial problem of this additional financial responsibility he would have signed the bill. I believe the sales tax is the means whereby this obligation may be paid and the sales tax is the answer to the problem of paying the bill."

ASHEVILLE AT ONE TIME A LARGE LAKE

Engineers Find Evidence That Hill Was Once Bottom of Large Expanse of Water.

Asheville plateau was in past ages at found at the crest of Battery Park hill point to the fact that the entire Asheville plateau was in past ages at the bottom of a huge lake, covering the French Broad valley, it was learned from engineers today. A series of water-worn boulders at least three feet thick and covering an area of around 200 square feet, was found at the crest of the hill, give rise to the theory that it was at one time entirely under water.

The boulders were found while drills were being used in an effort to see if rock would be found when the property is excavated and several feet of earth covers the waterworn rock. After the drills passed through the strata of rock, only soft sand and clay was encountered, and it has been stated that the hill can easily be excavated.

Colonel V. S. Lusk, a pioneer resident of Asheville, has in several articles, pointed to the indications that point to a huge lake or sea having at one time covered this section.

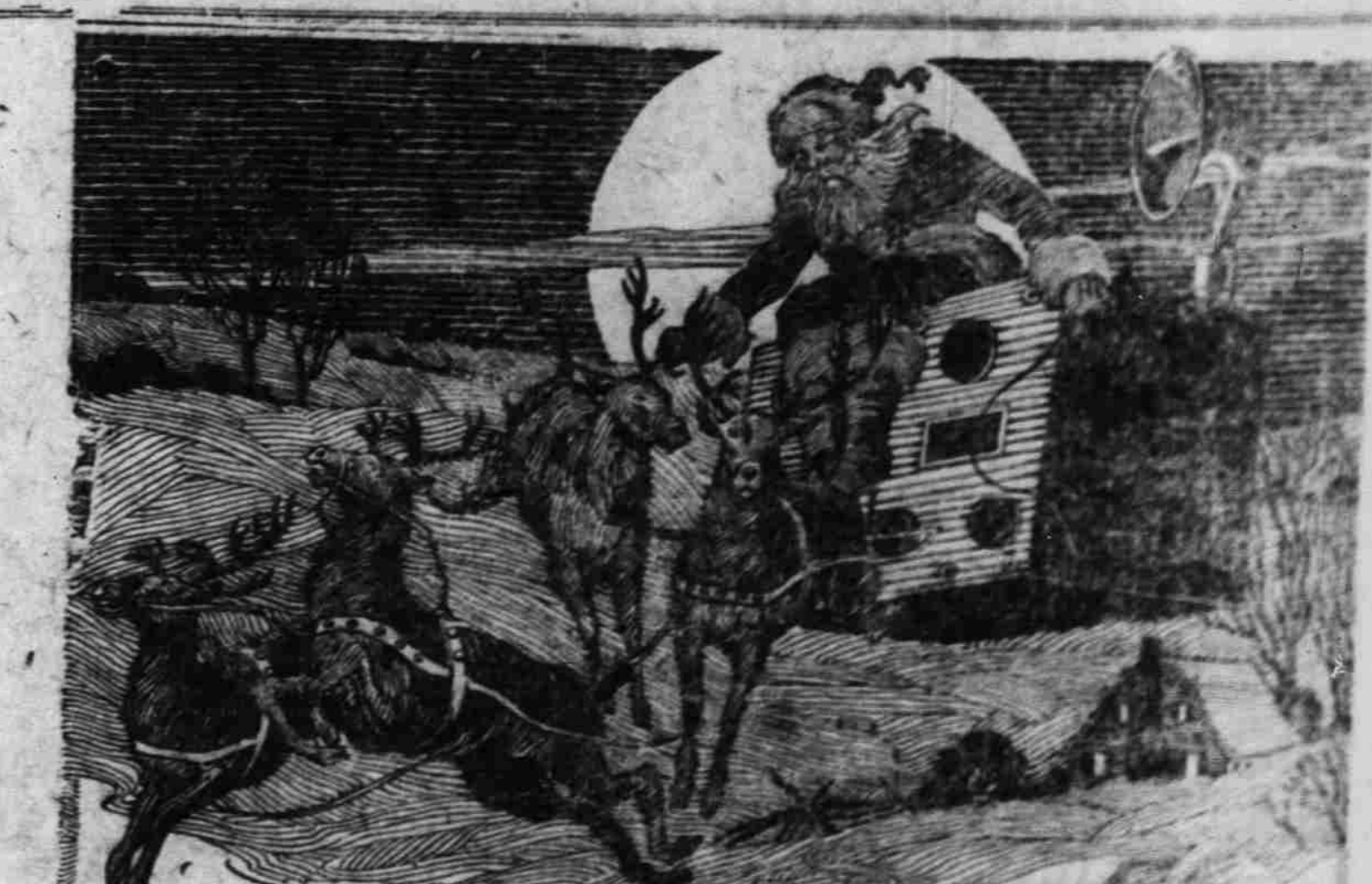
SIMMONS ACCUSED OF INSULTING MR. SMOOT

North Carolina Senator Tells Utah Member That His Charges Are Not True.

Washington, Dec. 16.—There was a brief display of verbal fireworks in the Senate chamber today during which Senator Smoot, republican, Utah, accused Senator Simmons, democrat, North Carolina, of having insulted him "at least 20 or more times," and the North Carolina senator declared Senator Smoot had made a statement he knows is not true. "A statement he knows is not true. The flare-up occurred during debate over the effect on prices of the recently enacted tariff law and, while quiet heated, ended with both senators agreeing to let the record speak for itself. Senator Simmons attempted to question the Utah senator who after answering several questions said the injuries were designed to embarrass him. Senator Simmons denied he had any intention of embarrassing Senator Smoot, who, he added, was "too omnipotent to embarrass."

TODAY'S EVENTS

Monday, December 18, 1922. Today begins the last week for your Christmas shopping. Former President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson today observe their seventh wedding anniversary. An International Congress on Health Education meets in Paris today to continue in session through the week. The American Radio Exposition, for which preparations have been making for nearly a year, will be opened this week in New York City. St. Anne de Beaupre basilica will be reconstructed next summers, it was learned from the Redeemptorist fathers. The new church should be completed by the spring of 1924. The old church ruins have now been removed.



The Best Gift for Christmas 1922. When you start thinking of a gift for your brother or your son—think of our holiday bargains in Radio sets and supplies. Every part of this popular instrument we sell can be relied on to give faultless service. Our prices are the most reasonable you will find. Concord Telephone Co.