

The Voice of the Pack

By EDISON MARSHALL

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"We'll rest now," Dan told them at ten o'clock. "The sun is warm enough so that we won't need much of a fire. And we'll try to get five hours' sleep."

"Top long, if we're going to make it out," Lennox objected.

"That leaves a workday of nineteen hours," Dan persisted. "Not any too little. Five hours it will be."

He found where the snow had drifted against a great, dead log, leaving the white covering only a foot in depth on the lee side. He began to scrape the snow away, then hacked at the log with his ax until he had procured a piece of comparatively dry wood from its center. They all stood breathless while he lighted the little pile of kindling and heaped it with green wood—the only wood procurable. But it didn't burn freely. It smoked fitfully, threatening to die out, and emitting very little heat.

But they didn't particularly care. The sun was warm above, as always in the mountain winters of southern Oregon. Snowbird and Dan cleared spaces beside the fire and slept. Lennox, who had rested on the journey, lay on his sled and with his uninjured arm tried to hack enough wood from the saplings that Dan had cut to keep the fire burning.

At three they got up, still tired and aching in their bones from exposure. Twenty-four hours had passed since they had tasted food, and their unpleasurized systems complained. There is no better engine in the wide world than the human body. It will stand more neglect and abuse than the finest steel motors ever made by the hands of craftsmen. A man may fast many days if he lies quietly in one place and keeps warm. But fasting is a deadly proposition while pulling sledges over the snow.

Dan was less hopeful now. His face told what his words did not. The lines cleft deeper about his lips and eyes; and Snowbird's heart ached when he tried to encourage her with a smile. It was a wan, strange smile that couldn't quite hide the first sickness of despair.

The shadows quickly lengthened—simply leaping over the snow from the fast-falling sun. The twilight deepened, the snow turned gray, and then, in a vague way, the journey began to partake of a quality of unreality. It was not that the cold and the snow and their hunger were not entirely real, or that the wilderness was no longer naked to their eyes. It was just that their whole effort seemed like some dreadful, unburdened journey in a dream—a stumbling advance under difficulties too many and real to be true.

The first sign was the far-off cry of the wolf pack. It was very faint, simply a stir in the eardrums, yet it was entirely clear. That clear, cold mountain air was a perfect telephone system, conveying a message distinctly, no matter how faintly. There were no tall buildings or cities to disturb the ether waves. And all three of them knew at the same instant it was not exactly the cry they had heard before.

They couldn't have told just why, even if they had wished to talk about it. In some dim way, it had lost the strange quality of despair it had held before. It was as if the pack were running with renewed life, that each wolf was calling to another with a dreadful sort of exultation. It was an excited cry, too—not the long, sad song they had learned to listen for. It sounded immediately behind them.

They couldn't help but listen. No human ears could have shut out the sound. But none of them pretended that they had heard. And this was the worst sign of all. Each one of the three was hoping against hope in his very heart; and at the same time, hoping that the others did not understand.

For a long time, as the darkness deepened about them, the forests were still. Perhaps, Dan thought, he had been mistaken after all. His shoulders straightened. Then the chorus blared again.

The man looked back at the girl, smiling into her eyes. Lennox lay as if asleep, the lines of his dark face curiously pronounced. And the girl, because she was of the mountains, body and soul, answered Dan's smile. Then they knew that all of them knew the truth. Not even an inexperienced ear could have any delusions about the pack song now. It was that oldest of wilderness songs, the hunting-cry—that frenzied song of blood-lust that the wolf pack utters when it is running on the trail of game. It had found the track of living flesh at last.

"There's no use stopping, or trying to climb a tree," Dan told them simply. "In the first place, Lennox can't do it. In the second, we've got to take a chance for cold and hunger can get up a tree where the wolf pack can't." He spoke wholly without emotion. Once more he lightened the traces of the sled.

"I've heard that sometimes the pack will chase a man for days without attacking," Lennox told them. "It all depends on how long they've gone

without food. Keep on and try to forget 'em. Maybe we can keep 'em bluffed."

But as the hours passed, it became increasingly difficult to forget the wolf pack. It was only a matter of turning the head and peering for an instant into the shadows to catch a glimpse of one of the creatures. Their usual fear of men, always their first emotion, had given way wholly to a hunting cunning; an effort to procure their own lives. In the desperation of their hunger they could not remember such things as the fear of men. They spread out farther, and at last Dan looked up to find one of the gray beasts waiting, like a shadow himself, in the shadow of a tree not one hundred feet from the sled. Snowbird whipped out her pistol.

"Don't dare!" Dan's voice cracked out to her. He didn't speak loudly; yet the words came so sharp and commanding, so like pistol fire itself, that they penetrated into her consciousness and choked back the nervous reflexes that in an instant might have lost them one of their three precious shells. She caught herself with a sob. Dan shouted at the wolf, and it melted into the shadows.

"You won't do it again, Snowbird?" he asked her very humbly. But his meaning was clear. He was not as skilled with a pistol as she; but if her nerves were breaking, the gun must be taken from her hands. The three shells must be saved to the moment of utmost need.

"No," she told him, looking straight into his eyes. "I won't do it again."

He believed her. He knew that she spoke the truth. He met her eyes with a half smile. Then, wholly without warning, Fate played its last trump.

Again the wilderness reminded them of its might, and their brave spirits were almost broken by the utter remorselessness of the blow. The girl went on her face with a crack of wood.



"Maybe We Can Keep Them Bluffed."

Her snow shoe had, been cracked by her fall of the day before, when running to the fire, and whether she struck some other obstruction in the snow, or whether the cracked wood had simply given way under her weight, mattered not even enough for them to investigate. As in all great disasters, only the result remained. The result in this case was that her snowshoe, without which she could not walk at all in the snow, was irreparably broken.

"Fate has stacked the cards against us," Lennox told them, after the first moment's horror from the broken snowshoe.

But no one answered him. The girl, white-faced, kept her wide eyes on Dan. He seemed to be peering into the shadows beside the trail, as if he were watching for the gray forms that now and then glided from tree to tree. In reality, he was not looking for wolves. He was gazing down into his own soul, measuring his own spirit for the trial that lay before him.

The girl, unable to step with the broken snowshoe, rested her weight on one foot and hobbled like a bird with broken wings across to him. No sight of all this terrible journey had been more dreadful in her father's eyes than this. It seemed to split open the strong heart of the man. She touched her hand to his arm.

"I'm sorry, Dan," she told him. "You tried so hard—"

Just one little sound broke from his throat—a strange, deep gasp that could not be suppressed. Then he caught her hand in his and kissed it—again and again. "Do you think I care about that?" he asked her. "I only wish I could have done more—and what I have done doesn't count. Just as in my fight with Cranston, nothing

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counts because I didn't win. It's just fat. Snowbird. It's no one's fault, but maybe, in this world, nothing is ever anyone's fault." For in the twilight of those winter woods, in the shadow of death itself, perhaps he was catching glimmerings of eternal truths that are hidden from all but the most far-seeing eyes.

"And this is the end?" she asked him. She spoke very bravely.

"No!" His hand tightened on hers. "No, so long as an ounce of strength remains. To fight—never to give up—may God give me spirit for it till I die."

And this was no mere prayer. His eyes raised to the starry sky as he spoke.

"But, son," Lennox asked him rather quietly, "what can you do? The wolves aren't going to wait a great deal longer, and we can't go on."

"There's one thing more—one more trial to make," Dan answered. "I thought about it at first, but it was too long a chance to try if there was any other way. And I suppose you thought of it too."

"Overtaking Cranston?"

"Of course. And it sounds like a crazy dream. But listen, both of you. If we have got to die, up here in the snow—and it looks like we had—what is the thing you want done worst before we go?"

Lennox's hands clasped, and he leaned forward on the sled. "Pay Cranston!" he said.

"Yes!" Dan's voice rang. "Cranston's never going to be paid unless we do it. There will be no signs of incendiary at the house, and no proofs. They'll find our bodies in the snow, and we'll just be a mystery, with no one made to pay. The evidence in my pocket will be taken by Cranston, some time this winter. If I don't make him pay, he never will pay. And that's one reason why I'm going to try to carry out this plan I've got."

"The second reason is that it's the one hope we have left. I take it that none of us are deceived on that point. And no man can die tamely—if he is a man—while there's a chance. I mean a young man, like me—not one who is old and tired. It sounds perfectly silly to talk about finding Cranston's winter quarters, and then, with my bare hands, conquering him, taking his food and his blankets and his snowshoes and his rifle, to fight away these wolves, and bringing 'em back here."

"You wouldn't be barehanded," the girl reminded him. "You could have the pistol."

He didn't even seem to hear her. "I've been thinking about it. It's a long, long chance—much worse than the chance we had of getting out by straight walking. I think we could have made it, if the wolves had kept off and the snowshoe hadn't broken. It would have nearly killed us, but I believe we could have got out. That's why I didn't try this other way first. A man with his bare hands hasn't much of a chance against another with a rifle, and I don't want you to be too hopeful. And of course, the hardest problem is finding his camp."

"But I do feel sure of one thing: that he is back to his old trapping line on the North Fork—somewhere south of here—and his camp is somewhere on the river. I think he would have gone there so that he could cut off any attempt I might make to get through with those letters. My plan is to start back at an angle that will carry me between the North Fork and our old house. Somewhere in there I'll find his tracks, the tracks he made when he first came over to burn up the house. I suppose he was careful to mix 'em up after once he arrived here, but the first part of the way he likely walked straight toward the house from his camp. Somewhere, if I go that way, I'll cross his trail—with in 10 miles at least. Then I'll back-track him to his camp."

"And never come back!" the girl cried.

"Maybe not. But at least everything that can be done will be done. Nothing will be left. No regrets. We will have made the last trial. I'm not going to waste any time, Snowbird. The sooner we get your fire built the better."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Make Love and Live Long.

The act of love-making has a direct influence on the heart and blood, says a medical correspondent. It stimulates the working capacity of the former organ, and keeps it up to concert pitch. As a result, the blood circulates with greater strength, and every part of the body is accordingly strengthened. Love-making, moreover, has a very decided influence in stimulating the working of the liver. Patent medicines would have to go out of business to a considerable extent if the world were more generally given to the art of making love with genuine feeling. Perhaps the most striking proof of the immunity of lovers from one form of ill, viz., colds and chills, is afforded by the fact that a pair of Cupid's devotees will sit on a damp bench for hours and take no harm.

It is just as wise to watch your windings as it is to wind your watch.

HomeTown Helps

BEAUTY COMES WITH GROWTH

American Towns, if They Are Well Planned, Will Develop Along Proper Artistic Lines.

We see American towns in the process of growth, and the slow transition from hastily erected "shacks," a one-story general store, a blacksmith shop (these are still needed), a garage nowadays, a church and a schoolhouse, into a flourishing community not always attractive. There is a period when there are no shade trees, when streets are dusty or muddy and unpaved, where there is an unfinished appearance about everything. It is not so many years since a large number of the towns and villages of Indiana had an unkempt, untrimmed look. Seen from trains in passing, they looked uninviting. As a matter of fact, the residents had other things to think of than beauty. They were building their homes, making their living by arduous labor, sending their children to school and sacrificing many desirable things for the sake of the necessities. This is the history of all towns.

The conditions are different now. Indiana is full of beautiful towns and small cities that were the "gopher prairies" of years ago. Beautiful homes, handsome lawns, paved and shaded streets, substantial business houses, attractive public buildings, including libraries, and a general air of prosperity distinguish them. The same people live there who were there at the beginning. When they and their children came to the point where beauty and luxury could be added to the necessities of living, they reached out and provided them. It is the way with American towns.—Indianapolis Star.

ASSIST IN BUILDING HOMES

Associations Through the Country Teach Thrift and at the Same Time Make Good Citizens.

Pointing out that a man who owns his own home probably will be a good citizen, C. Clinton James, president of the Building Associations' council for the District of Columbia, issued a statement showing what building associations in the district are doing to encourage home owning and thrift.

While complete figures are not available, it is estimated that the total assets of building associations in Washington will be more than \$28,000,000, he announced.

"The building associations throughout the country are teaching thrift and trying to educate the public to own their own homes," Mr. James stated. "The motto of the United States League of Local Building and Loan Associations is 'The American Home—The Safeguard of American Liberties.'"

"The building associations have assisted very largely in solving the housing question by assisting persons of limited means to finance the buying of their home, but the demand for loans has been much greater than the funds available," it is asserted.

While building associations are not as necessary in smaller towns as in the cities, the same idea expressed in community spirit will work out to the desired result in the end.

Give a Hand.

In every community there are successful men—men of experience, men of means. In every community there are young men who might make a success of life. They have it in them; all they lack is some one to give a hand. It may not be money they need, perhaps only an interested friend. Somebody helps whenever a young man gets started right in anything. Somewhere every successful man got a start by some one's help. To keep the world moving on an upward slope the process must be made perpetual. Each man, once started, should become a starter of others. And who starts another gets himself along at a more rapid gait. There is that in helping another that reflects no credit alone to the agent, but a bent of mind, an outlook on life, a generosity of soul, that wins a way forward for himself also.—Thrift Magazine.

Set Out Hedge Plants.

There are few homes that could not be made more attractive by a frame setting of hedge plants, not necessarily a tall-growing hedge that would enclose the grounds, but a low-growing one to mark the boundary of the home grounds and add a certain amount of privacy.

Trees Benefit Community.

Nothing that costs so little adds so much to the appearance of a community as do tree-lined streets. Comfort and beauty alike are served, and there is cash in a shady walk wherever homes are for sale.

Begin to Recognize Truth.

Far-seeing business men have come to realize that it is the country that makes the cities and not the cities that make the country.

Plant Shrubs Now.

Now is a good time to plan for some flowers and shrubs around the house. They are worth the little extra care they make.

Mrs. Robert O. Reynolds

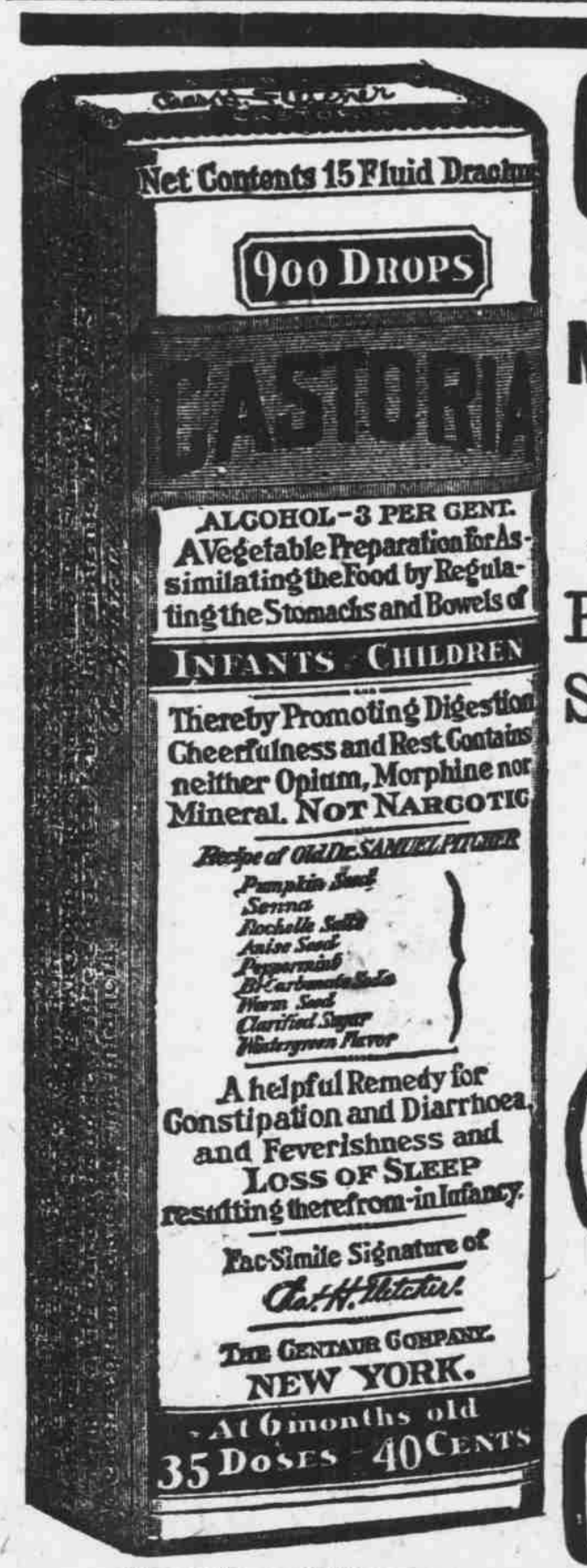


"I have actually gained twenty-five pounds and I just think Tanlac is the grandest medicine in the world," said Mrs. Robert O. Reynolds, 127 North Denver St., Kansas City, Mo. "For ten long years I suffered from a very bad form of rheumatism, stomach and nervous troubles. My appetite was very poor. What little I did eat soured on my stomach and I suffered the most severe pains in my back, hips and shoulders. My rheumatism was so bad that I could not raise my hands to comb my hair and my arms hurt me to my finger tips. I became so weak and run down that I lost all my energy and life had become almost a burden. I tried many things but nothing helped me."

"I had only taken my first bottle of Tanlac when I noticed my appetite was improving and I could sleep better at night. I have taken three bottles and the way it has helped me and built me up is really astonishing. I can eat anything and everything without the slightest disagreeable after-effects. I sleep just fine at night and am in better health than I have been for years. I am glad to give this statement, hoping that any who are suffering as I did may experience the same wonderful results, which I believe they will if they give Tanlac a fair trial."

Tanlac is sold by leading druggists everywhere.—Adv.

There is a limit to everything, but lots of men never realize it until it is too late. Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.—Coleridge.



Got Skin Disease? Purify Your Blood

A great part of the maddening and mortifying skin troubles that plague humanity are due solely to disorders of the blood. Relief from these can be had only by removing from your blood stream the impurities that cause the itching.

For this you must take an internal blood remedy. Outside applications have no effect on the cause of the torture. Their relief is shortlived. You must

USED 50 YEARS S.S.S. FOR SKIN TROUBLES AT ALL DRUGGISTS. Get S.S.S. from your druggist today, and after starting with it write us a history of your case, addressing Chief Medical Advisor, 837 Swift Laboratory, Atlanta, Georgia.

Makes Hard Work Harder

A bad back makes a day's work twice as hard. Backache usually comes from weak kidneys, and if headaches, dizziness or urinary disorders are added, don't wait—get help before the kidney disease takes a grip—before drops, gravel or Bright's disease sets in. Doan's Kidney Pills have brought new life and new strength to thousands of working men and women. Used and recommended the world over. Ask your neighbor!

A North Carolina Case

Junius Peterson, contractor, 114 Hancock St., Smithfield, N. C., says: "My back was so lame and sore I could hardly get up when I was down and sharp cutting, knifing pains would catch me in my back. The kidney secretions were scanty and I often had to get up at night to pass them. I began taking Doan's Kidney Pills. Several boxes of Doan's fixed me up fine."

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