

# Ellen gets Her Man

(PAS)



**FIRST INSTALLMENT**  
It was spring in the Three River Country. Over night almost, it seemed, the gentler season had come.

Even the great, molling Athabasca River had softened its voice. When it first broke the ice-ribbed barriers of winter it had howled, and groaned and roared with release of pent-up power, crashing and pounding at the shuddering ice floes. But now, the initial battle over with, it had lowered its voice to a crooning, lisp-murmur, its coppery flood sliding swiftly away to the northward, where, thousands of miles distant, those waters would finally hold rendezvous with the silent Arctic sea.

John Benham, bent over the intricacies of a splice in a mooring line, whistled as he worked. Surging in the depths of his great chest was a wild, haunting happiness, which always came to him when the far, dim trails were open and beckoning. His face, bent eagerly to his work, was lean and brown, with brown, nose, lips and chin cleanly and strongly carved. His eyes, deepest, steady and sparkling grey, were flawless in their clarity. His heavy flannel shirt clung to his wide, sloping shoulders and opened at the front to disclose a bronzed, pillar-like throat. His hands, weaving cunningly at the hemp, were big, strong and nimble. The tremendous virility of the man seemed

to glow from him like some strange and powerful current.

Ellen Mackay, standing there on the crest of the sloping bank, distinctly sensed that current. It almost frightened her, yet it seemed also to awaken a nameless, responsive thrill which speeded the beat of her heart and set her pulses throbbing. And where she had approached in the first place with a surety that verged almost on arrogance, she now hesitated, swayed by a curious timidity.

The man was unconscious of her proximity. The song of the river had covered her light-footed approach. His bared head was bent over his work. Beyond him, about the remains of the noon fire, sprawled the sleeping forms of his men, while still farther on, five great, loaded freight scows tugged at twanging mooring ropes and shifted to and fro as though they also knew the call of spring and were eager to storm the far leagues of the lonely land.

Ellen Mackay coughed, and was suddenly furious with herself to find that it had been a most apologetic cough indeed. The man's eyes lifted with alert swiftness, rested on the slim figure of the girl for a moment of startled wonder, then he rose to his feet with a lithe surge of power which rippled over him like the wind across a sea of grass.

"You—you are John Benham?" Only by the strongest effort of will was Ellen able to keep her tone casual and business-like. The impact of this man's eyes were almost hypnotic. No wonder John Benham, the free-trader, was such a power among the fur gatherers of the North.

"Yes," came the quiet, deep tones. "I am Benham."

"I am Ellen Mackay. I have to leave immediately for Fort Edson. I had planned to go with De Soto's brigade, but I was delayed at Edmonton and De Soto has gone on without me. Pat McClatchney tells me that you leave in the morning. If you will give me passage to Fort Edson I will see that you are well paid for your trouble."

For a moment Benham did not answer. His eyes rested steadily on the girl, unwavering, startlingly clear. Yet he did not look at her as other men had looked. His gaze was speculative, not personal—thoughtful, not amorous. Presently he spoke. "You are

Ellen Mackay. Then your father is Angus Mackay, Hudson Bay factor at Fort Edson?"

"Yes, Angus Mackay is my father."

A queer, hard light grew into being in Benham's eyes and he shook his head slowly. "I'm afraid that makes your request impossible, Miss."

Ellen stiffened, spots of color glowing on her smooth cheeks. "I—I do not understand."

Benham looked at her curiously. "This is your first season in the north for some time, isn't it?" he asked.

"Y—yes, I've been to school at Winnipeg."

"Then it is natural that you would not understand. Should you go north with my brigade your father would disown you. For I am Benham a free trader, the free trader in your father's life. My name is anathema to him. He hates me unforgetably. He curses the very thought of my existence. He even..." Benham bit off further words with a click of his teeth. His great chest arched and his fists clenched to hard, brown knots. Strange fires flashed in his eyes. It was plain that he had just caught himself in time to keep from exploding into open rage. Suddenly he dropped to his knees and bent over his work again. "I'm truly sorry, Miss Mackay," he finished quietly. "But it is impossible."

For a long moment Ellen stood, swayed by many emotions, of which a rising anger was uppermost. This was the most unusual experience in her life. Why, the man had acted almost like a churl. His flat refusal was stunning with its impact, the more so because it had been so unexpected. For, during the past four years, men had vied with one another to jump to Ellen Mackay's bidding. They had gloried in acceding to her slightest request. Her four years at college in Winnipeg had been one long reign over all things masculine. Unconsciously this adulation had spoiled her. She had known no other law but that of her own personal whim. Men, apparently, were just automatons made to be commanded. Yet, this man, this big virile, savage had flatly denied her. Ellen's imperious head lifted, her rounded little chin stiffened, and she turned on her heel and walked away.

Unknown to her, John Benham watched her departure. A look of regret clouded his face, and there was grudging admiration mingled with that regret. It would be a cold man indeed who could not admire Ellen Mackay, and John Benham was not cold.

The city had failed utterly in despoiling the physical birthright of Ellen Mackay. She was sturdy, buoyant, intensely alive. There was no sickly, bouffant languor about her slender and vibrant body. Her stride was free, natural and full of grace. She did not slouch. She stood erect, proudly so, and the rich color in her smooth, olive cheeks had been placed there by a benevolent nature, not by the chemistry of man. Her features were lovely in their regularity and as cleanly etched as a pine ridge against the sunset. Her eyes were level, dark and aglow with the joy and mystery of life. And her hair was truly her crowning glory, a rich blue-black cloud of crisp curls.

The thought of such a girl as this sitting by his side during the long brisk days and mysterious nights of the river voyage ahead, stirred John Benham deeply. But only for a moment did such truant thoughts stay with him. With a hardening of his jaw and a shrug of his shoulders he discarded them. She was the daughter of Angus Mackay, which, in John Benham's eyes, seemed a damning fact beyond any correction. And so he went on with his work, though some of the cheer of his mood had departed.

When Ellen Mackay re-entered Pat McClatchney's little store there at Athabasca Landing, her anger and disappointment were easily apparent to the big, genial storekeeper.

"He—he turned me down—flat," she burst out. "He's a brute."

Kindly old Pat nodded commiseratingly. "Ay," he mumbled. "Ay lass, he is a brute—but rather a magnificent brute at that. I was afraid. Now if ye had gone to him as old Pat suggested and used a wee bit of trickery on him, no doubt he would have been glad to take ye. 'Twas the fact that ye are Angus Mackay's lass that spoiled things, I'll wager."

"It appeared to be," admitted Ellen. "But I don't see why that should have made any difference. If he and my father have disagreed over something it is no reason why he should vent his spleen on me. I never saw such a mannerless clod. And as far as telling him I was someone else besides my true self—I wouldn't think of it. I—I'll admit it looks like my last chance to get north, but I won't lie even for that."

Pat sucked on his malodorous black briar for a time in silence. "Let's get our heads together, lass," he said at last. "I have a wee idea that may be of value."

At first Ellen shook her head in flat denial as Pat unfolded his scheme to her. But the more she thought it over the more the wild daring of the thing intrigued her. In addition, when she had told

Pat, on arriving at Athabasca Landing, that it was imperative that she go north immediately to join her father, she had meant every word of it. Old Angus Mackay was a proud and haughty man and, knowing him as she did, Ellen knew that only the direst necessity could have caused him to write as he had in the letter she had received from him on the day she graduated from college. Her father needed her. Just why, she could only guess at. But he needed her, and the blood of the Mackays had always been thick and clammy. And that was why Ellen put aside her own feelings in the matter and finally agreed to Pat's plan.

"I'll do it," she said thoughtfully. "I'll do it—if you can make the arrangements as you suggest."

There was little in the way of packing for Ellen to do. During her years at college she had not forgotten that the north country was a country of essentials, not frills. A suitcase and a small trunk was all the baggage she had brought, and if it became necessary, she was ready to discard the trunk. So she soon had things in shape, then stretched out for a little rest on the blankets of her bunk.

At first the tumult of her thoughts made even a hint of sleep impossible. She heard old Pat clumping about in the store, and after a bit came the rumble of his voice as he talked for a time with someone. Ellen's thoughts soon came back to John Benham. Her mind was made up to the fact that she disliked him thoroughly. But when she endeavored to isolate the reason for this she failed to get very far. In spite of the unreasonable rancor she felt, she had to admit, in all fairness, that her charge of rudeness on his part was not correct. She had asked him a question and he had given her a straightforward answer. That it had not been the answer she had desired and expected did not constitute rudeness. His words and manner had been respectful, but none the less adamant. And it was this latter fact, though Ellen hardly realized it, which had aroused her.

A masterful man, Ugh! How she loathed masterful men. With a little throb of consternation she remembered that simply by glancing at her he had shattered her self-applomb in a most disturbing manner.

And so John Benham and her father were at loggerheads. Very well, if Angus Mackay hated this free trader, then Angus Mackay's daughter would hate him also. She settled this fact in her mind with a clack of her little white teeth. She felt she could trust her father's judgment in such a matter. She wondered again just what the issue was between her father and John Benham. She mused over this to doze and soon fell asleep.

It was dark when she awoke. Pat McClatchney was shaking her gently by the shoulder.

"Come, lass," the old fellow murmured. "Pierre Buschard is here. He would talk with you." Ellen followed Pat into the store, now dimly lit by the yellow beams of a lamp. Standing just at the edge of the glow was a huge dark figure of a man. As Ellen entered, the stranger tugged off his red woolen cap and stood twisting it between two great paws.

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**NOTICE**

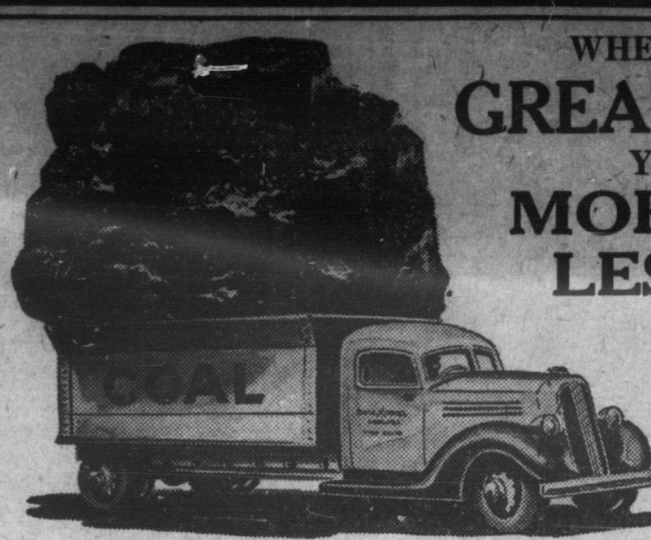
By virtue of the power as substituted trustee in a deed of trust executed by J. R. Pilson and wife Ila Pilson for R. W. Snow, which is recorded in the office of Registrar of Deeds of Surry County in Book 66, page 22, the debt therein secured being due and unpaid, I will sell at public auction for cash at the court house door in Dobson on Saturday the 20th day of February, 1937 at one o'clock P. M. the following real estate lying in Surry County, N. C., adjoining the lands of T. E. Stanley, M. G. Stanley, the Charles Beamer land and others.

First tract, Beginning on a post oak runs East 4 degrees variation 9.47 chains to a rock Beamer's corner, then South 4 1/2 degrees West with Beamer's line 21.91 chains to a rock in M. G. Stanley's line, then West with Stanley's line 41.4 degrees variation 8.77 chains to a rock, then North 23.4 degrees East 22 chains to the beginning, containing 20 acres more or less.

Second tract adjoining the above tract, Beginning on a Spanish oak W. L. Stanley corner runs West on R. J. Stanley line 11.75 chains to a post oak at the road, then North East as said road meanders 14.50 chains to a post oak in Sexton Stanley's line, then South 3.50 chains to the beginning, containing 7 acres more or less.

Third tract, Adjoining the above, Beginning on a post oak at the road, runs North on Sexton Stanley's line 10.67 chains to a Spanish oak, then West 3.85 chains to a black gum, then South 12.72 chains to a post oak, then East to the beginning containing 5 acres more or less. Sale of said lands will be made to satisfy said debt and cost.

This the 16th day of January, 1937.  
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Substituted Trustee.



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