

Ellen Gets Her Man

(P. 5)



FOURTH INSTALMENT
SYNOPSIS: Ellen Mackay, on her way from school at Winnipeg, to join her father at Fort Edson, misses the boat by which she was to travel. Hearing that another boat is to start north in the morning, Ellen goes to the owner, John Benham, and begs him to give her a passage. To her surprise he flatly refuses.

Angry and puzzled, Ellen tells Pat McClatchney, a kindly old storekeeper of her difficulty, and Pat with the help of one of Benham's crew, succeeds in getting Ellen on board as a stowaway. When the vessel is well under way Ellen emerges from her hiding place and faces John Benham, who now cannot help taking her with him.

Twice had her father called him a "Squaw's whelp"—a "half-breed," and somehow this thought was like a dagger thrust in Ellen's heart. It seemed beyond all reason that such a thing could be so, for John Benham's eyes were blue and clear and his hair was richly brown. Yet . . .

She thought of her father, broken and discouraged, and by his own words brought to such a state by the evil machinations of this "half-breed." And now Ellen had taken her stand by her father's side. His battle was to be her battle; his hate was her hate. It was long before she finally slept and when she did so there was the moistness of tears upon her cheeks.

In the week that followed, Ellen Mackay learned the reason for her father's despair and broken pride.

Long hours she spent over the books of the post, hundred lengthy tallies she drew up, studied and destroyed. Her thoughts were driven to an inevitable conclusion. The fur trade at Fort Edson was no longer paying. Where the trade had once been thousands of lynx, bear, beaver, otter, marten and other skins, the present return was but few scanty hundreds.

The shelves of the storehouse were piled high with trade goods that had not been moved for over three years. It was simple to see the season when the decline had started. Three years ago it was.

Ellen probed further. Three years before had been the peak of the seven-year cycle of the rabbits, and all old records showed that when the rabbit tide was at its height, that was the rich year in returns on lynx. Yet the lynx tally three years ago was far below normal.

Ellen went to the fur store room. Ruthlessly she ripped open several bales, and from old experience graded the furs disclosed. They were all far below par, not a prime skin in the whole lot.

Her lips trembled and tears came again to her eyes. How deep the shame of it must cut her father, for in the past Fort Edson had been the boast of the company. From there had come the richest

returns, the finest furs. Rich in the pride of achievement, Angus Mackay had gloried in the reputation of his post. And now he must drink the bitterest dregs.

Ellen went to the door of the trade room and looked out upon the open ground which surrounded the post buildings. A few Indians were there, a very few. And she could remember when, at this time of the year, there would be hundreds. And what were camped there were of the poorest. Dog-ribs and Yellow-knives and Hay-river Indians, notoriously poor and unthrifty. Their tepees were ragged and filthy; their families plainly undernourished; their dogs mere perambulating skeletons. And the scanty furs they brought in for trade would, in the older, better years, hardly have been considered.

An overpowering discouragement flooded Ellen, particularly harsh because she was at a loss to understand this terrible decline.

John Benham was the cause, her father claimed; John Benham who, by nefarious free trading methods, had enticed the Indians from him, who had gleaned the richest and best furs and left to him only the ragged remnants.

Ellen wondered if such a thing were reasonable, that one lone man could move into a territory and in three short years overthrow the reputation and prestige of such a post as Fort Edson. She voiced this wonder to her father just once, and his answering spasm of rage left her trembling and disheartened.

Angus Mackay hated all free traders violently and unswervingly. All his life had been spent in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company. He was of the old school who, though he knew full well that the Hudson Bay Company had parted with its old franchise in 1870 thought in his blind fervour and faithfulness, that any free trader was still a trespasser, a despoiler, and a schemer against the interests of the mother company.

There were many others like him, scattered about in the numerous posts of the north—stern, uncompromising men who had grown old in the service, and to whom the Hudson Bay Company was both life and religion. There was something appealing in this blind faith and support, yet there was something tragic also. These men, men like Angus Mackay, were hurling their frail old bodies against the ponderous, inexorable, titanic advance of progress. It was hopeless, it was tragic, but splendid in its blind fervour.

Ellen turned back into the dusky trading room and read, for the hundredth time it seemed, a brusque, authoritative letter, written on the dignified parchment used in official communications. The message did not mince words. It contained less than a dozen lines. Yet the words of it seemed to toll like a funeral bell. In effect it stated that unless Angus Mackay could, by the following

spring, bring back the production of Fort Edson to something approximating its old-time volume, he would have to be replaced.

Sudden, hot anger gripped Ellen. A year—they gave him—one short year to fight back and recuperate. One year! To this man who had given them a lifetime of faithful, treasureful service. True, the letter hinted also of a pension, a pitiful dole that was more insulting than it was comforting. A pension! The mark of the old and useless. Charity! Pure vitriol on the open wounds of her father.

Ellen lifted her head defiantly. A year! Very well, she would show them what a Mackay could do in a year. She would fight back, fight to the last ounce of strength and will she possessed. And if anyone, John Benham in particular, opposed her, she would bring back the methods of open battle the very earliest days of the fur trade had known. She was in a corner, her back to the wall. Her father's reputation; his life! his welfare were at stake. To win there would be nothing she would not dare.

At that moment Ellen Mackay turned savage. Her face settled into hard, cold lines. The youthfulness of her fled, somehow.

She put away the books and records, locked the storerooms and strode off to the home cabin. As she went she became aware of shouts down upon the beach. From the doorway of the cabin she surveyed the scene below. Several scows and a York boat or two were grounded on the shingle. A crowd of Indians and rivermen were grouped on the shore. Ellen saw her father talking to one of them, a big burly figure who towered above the rest like a giant among pigmies.

Presently these two advanced up the slope towards the post. Angus Mackay with a tolling effort that brought a catch to Ellen's throat and momentary dimness to her eyes; the stranger with a furtive ease which belied the impression of clumsiness his huge bulk gave. Once, when the old factor stumbled, his companion steadied him with one powerful hand and after that helped the old man over the steepest part of the trail. This gesture, slight as it was, brought a warm glow to Ellen, and when the two finally reached the cabin Ellen's eyes were bright and she was smiling.

While they were still some yards away, Ellen felt the impact of the newcomer's gaze. She returned the scrutiny curiously. She saw one of the biggest men she had ever looked upon. His shoulders were tremendously broad, his chest arched like a barrel, his flanks were lean, his legs long and slightly bowed as though protesting under the weight of his huge torso. His arms, bared halfway to the shoulders, were bulged and knotted with muscle. His features were heroic, yet leant and cleanly cut, and dark with the combined effect of exposure and heritage. His eyes were deep and black and, to Ellen's slight discomfort, curiously hard and inscrutable. There seemed no depth to them. They were all surface. Unconsciously Ellen recoiled at their cold, almost arrogant survey. Yet the man was smiling, disclosing two rows of even, white teeth.

"This is Bernard Deteroux, lass," panted the factor. "Bernard—my daughter Ellen."

Deteroux bowed slightly. "I am honored, mam'selle."

Ellen murmured a reply and led the way into the living room. When they had seated themselves old Angus went on with further explanations. "Bernard is one of our men, lass. He is our roving source of supply. His duties are to keep an even balance in the trade goods at our various posts. Tell me, lass—is there anything we are in need of?"

"We have enough of everything, father," said Ellen slowly. "Except perhaps of blankets."

"I will be pleased to oblige mam'selle," broke in Deteroux quickly. "A hundred pairs, perhaps, would be enough?"

"That would be enough, Mr. Deteroux," nodded Ellen.

"Good. You shall have them immediately." He stepped to the open door and in a deep resonant voice shouted an order down the slope. Then he turned back. "The blankets will be at your store-room in five minutes, mam'selle."

A moment later Ellen left the room to assist Gitchee in preparation of the midday meal. She found the old Chippewyan squaw working in the kitchen in a strangely silent mood, and despite Ellen's curious questioning, Gitchee would utter no word. And later when the meal was over with she went out to the storeroom with her father and Deteroux. Ellen saw old Moosac bend a look upon Deteroux of frank, savage hostility. This, reasoned Ellen, was very strange, for her father was plainly overjoyed at the presence of Deteroux, and she knew that both Moosac and Gitchee were very faithful to her father.

For herself, Ellen found it hard to define just how Deteroux affected her. There was an undeniable magnetism about the man. His very size, his rippling strength, and the lithe, easy swiftness of his movements and the gleam of his white teeth were attractive. And he was not unhandsome. Yet his eyes were repelling, and when-

ever Ellen felt them upon her, which was disconcertingly often, she was hard put to it to keep from shivering openly. The man was at once attractive and repulsive.

When the blankets had been properly checked in and receipted for Deteroux and Angus Mackay left again but Ellen stayed at the trading room, once more immersed in the study of her father's predicament, and trying to plan a course of action that might avert the threatened calamity of the following spring.

Here, an hour later, Bernard Deteroux came to her alone.

"You will pardon me, mam'selle," he began swiftly. "But I

have a great affection for your father, and it would be well perhaps, if you and I should talk of a certain injustice which the future portends."

Ellen knew immediately what Deteroux meant. Someway, doubtless through the channels of gossip, or because Angus Mackay had confided in him, this gigantic riverman knew of the threat which hung over the old factor. Though she would not acknowledge it, Ellen realized that the task of rehabilitation she had set herself loomed as well nigh impossible. Therefore she seized upon Deteroux's suggestion with unconscious eagerness.

(Continued Next Issue)

Hugh Royall INSURANCE

FOR EVERY NEED

PHONE 111

ELKIN, N. C.

TRIBUNE ADVERTISING GETS RESULTS!

Good News....
 For Modern Home Makers!
 Our 1937 Special Offer
 On *Hotpoint* Electric Ranges And Water Heaters
 Now Under Way!



Again we offer you the wonderful opportunity of modernizing your kitchen with a new Hotpoint automatic electric range or having a constant supply of hot water with a new Hotpoint Automatic water heater. Low cash payment, liberal allowance for your old stove or heater and thirty months to pay the balance . . . just think how easy we are making it possible for you to have these modern, economical, time saving and convenient appliances.

\$5 CASH

\$10 For Your Old Stove

\$5 For Your Old Water Heater

30 Months to Pay Balance



Everyone, of course, knows that the modern electric range eliminates drudgery from the kitchen; it reduces the time the housewife has to spend in the kitchen; it is insulated and keeps the kitchen practically as cool in the hottest weather as any other room in the house; better cooking results are obtained through its uniform, controlled heat. Housewives, particularly those who do their own work, and those who have a real pride in the cleanliness, modernness and efficiency of their kitchen, can't afford NOT to investigate electric cookery while our special offer is in effect.

DUKE POWER COMPANY

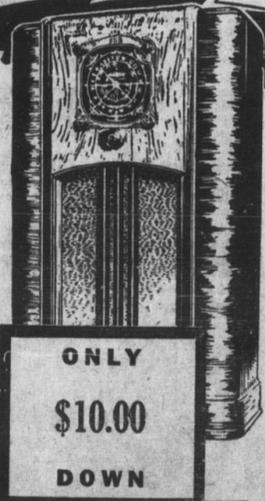
FAST AS LIGHTNING

ZENITH

FOR 1937

GIVES YOU THE EXCLUSIVE "EMDE SPINNER" TUNING METHOD

GETS ANY STATION WITH THE FLICK OF A FINGER . . .



ONLY \$10.00 DOWN

JUST ONE OF A SCORE OF BRILLIANT NEW FEATURES . . .

The "Feel" of tuning a Zenith is entirely different from ordinary radio. Just try tuning any other radio—then come in and tune with the fast finger-tip Lightning Station Finder. There is no comparison! . . . Just as there is no comparison between a Zenith . . . and other radio. We invite you to find this out for yourself. Models from \$29.95 up. Easy Terms.

America's Most Copied Radio
 ALWAYS A YEAR AHEAD

FINSHAW CASH HARDWARE CO.

Phone 143

Elkin, N. C.