

THE BACKWOODSMAN

By Acton Seymour

"Excuse me, Miss Clare," said Bill Kyle, stopping forward, his hat in his hand. "I'm disinterested in this thing." He refused to be frozen by Harry George's accusing stare. "The stranger, here, name o' George — Great Trust Co.'s new man up this way — ain't to blame. I'm fair, and I want to see fair usage. But, for some reason, Blinn seems to think the stranger is tryin' to cut him with you, and—"

But George broke in, his ire breaking bounds.

"I am a stranger here, Miss Corran, as this man says. And, as a stranger, it seems to me that I have met nothing but fools and prize fighters, so far. This man attacked me without cause."

"Hit you when you wa'n't lookin'," cried a man in the crowd. "If Wiggin is your beau, Miss Clare, you'll have to be ashamed of him, after this!"

Sudden passion painted the scarlet on her cheeks. But, before she could speak, George came close to her horse.

"It is shameful — shameful!" he protested. "I beg you to believe that I'm not responsible for this insult to you."

"You needn't try to lie it off on to me," shouted young Wiggin.

"You was the one that claimed she was your gal," cried the habbier. "And t'other feller was tryin' to shut you up!"

There was uproar, but she checked it by raising her hand. The spirit of command was in her.

"I heard enough, myself, to understand where the fault lies." She did not raise her voice. But in the hush, she was heard to the farthest limits of the crowd. Jepson Wiggin had squirmed through the press, and was trying to speak to her.

"Blinn was excited, Miss Clare," he pleaded. "He didn't mean all that." But she ignored the father. She fixed her gaze on the son.

"This isn't the first time you have banded my name in public, Blinn Wiggin. You have been making a boast of me along the border. Don't you dare to speak, now! I know what I am talking about. I have not said anything, before; but I tell you to your face, now, that a boast from you is an insult to an honest girl. I know about you. I haven't any father, now, to protect me from insult. I haven't brother or lover to take my part."

Tears sparkled in her eyes, but her voice did not break.

"I can protect myself, though. And for you, or any other cur that lies about me, I have—this!"

Before Wiggin or the rest of them realized what she was about to do, she lifted her whip, and brought it down across his upturned face. He leaped back, a weal blossoming across his pale cheek from eye to eye. Then, she whirled her horse, and galloped away, men tumbling out of her course. "By the jumped-up beeswax, old Corn Corran didn't take all his grit to tophet with him," declared a voice in the crowd.

George drove himself forward toward Wiggin, elbowing men to right and left. He was no longer in the mood of one lacking subject for quarrel. His fingers itched to get at the adversary who had brought him into such shameful situation. He was not thinking about the blow whose badge he wore on his face. Even in the whirl of his thoughts, he realized that he had now become the champion of the girl who had been insulted, and who had been forced to be her own protector.

Jepson Wiggin saw him coming, and flung himself on his son, pushing him farther into the crowd.

"Keep him off! Keep him off!" cried the father. "Hold 'em apart. There mustn't be trouble here. It will disgrace us to have trouble."

"That cur has got an account to settle with me," raged Harry, struggling with the men who seized him. The commands of the magnate of the village had summoned volunteers.

"I'm sure there must be a misunderstanding, Mr. George — do I get the name right — Mr. George, I believe? Of the Great Trust Co.?" He was nervous. He was apologetic. And, underneath the eagerness of his appeal as mediator, there was something that stirred the wonder of the young man, excited as he was. It was as though Wiggin were trying to convey a hint to him; trying to signify that there was a mutual understanding.

"I shall see you again as soon as possible," the old man went on. "We can arrange the matter. I'm sure we can." Again, he spoke with significance. He reached down, and took George's hand and shook it. Then he turned away. His son had begun to cry threats and further insults.

"I have just this much to say to you, sir," said George. The hot blood of his youth rose in him. He wanted to declare himself before them all.

He took one step toward young Wiggin, and wagged a monitory forefinger. "The trouble between us will be squared when the time comes. But you keep the woman out of it; you yapping hound!"

He forced his way through the crowd, got a pitcher of cool water in the tavern washroom, and went to his room. He had got a look at his face in a mirror in the office. He suddenly realized that he was not a pleasant object for the eye to rest upon.

VI.

By what he saw from his window and what he heard after night fell, George decided that the "funeral parade" was far from closing the obsequies of Cornelius Corran. That part of the programme had merely started the event off in good shape.

In the evening, there were fireworks. The bands played with a drunken persistency and a lack of harmony that nearly drove the young man frantic. Revel roared in the single street. Hoarse mirth was broken in upon by the howls of fighters. It was plain that a wild night was to be devoted to the memory of the lord of Toban.

George drew down the ragged shade of his one window. He tried to occupy his mind with a cheap novel that he had picked up in the office on his way back to his room from supper.

A discreet tap on his door startled him. He opened to the visitor, thinking Romeo Bragg had come to consult about a start in the morning.

Jepson Wiggin stepped in, and closed the door behind him. "I watched my chance to come up," he said. "I'm sure no one saw me. It's a busy gang of ruffians out there, Mr. George."

The young man accounted for this air of mystery by the ready supposition that the father of Blinn Wiggin would not like to be seen in company with his son's sworn foe.

The gaunt old man eased himself upon a chair, scrutinizing his host keenly.

"I'm sorry you got mixed up with my son in that way. But you came to town at a bad time. Too much liquor all around! Blinn wouldn't have done it if he'd been sober. But I know you won't blame me! It's a matter entirely outside of business, eh, Mr. George? A young fool's performance mustn't get in the way of more serious things. Eh?"

His shrewd eyes were boring the young man. He acted like one who was treading carefully up to the door of a subject, waiting to be assured that he might enter.

"I'll not let your son interfere with my business, you can be certain of that! You advise him to keep away from me."

"I'm done with him," protested the old man. "It's just as though he wasn't my son at all! I haven't been able to do anything with him. He had his chance, and he's fooled it away! You've got eyes, and you've got ears! If any one, after this, tells you that I'm playing to arrange the thing through any hitch-up between Blinn and the girl, you're in a position to know better, eh? I've got that much reason for being glad that the thing did happen, bad as it was. But they can't fool you, after this — you saw enough to know that's all off. He had his chance. He fooled it away, I say!"

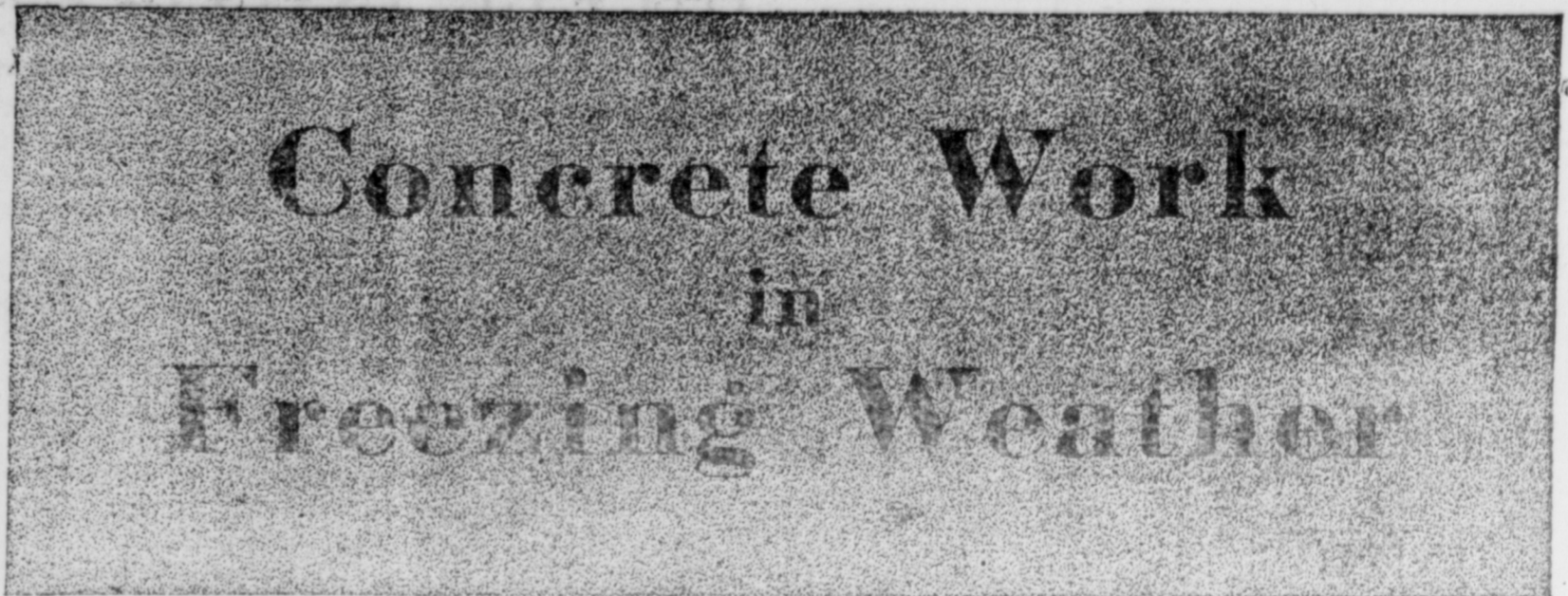
George stared at him, understanding only a part.

"So you see we can do business. I haven't got any interests anywhere else."

He sat and looked at the young man for several minutes; he seemed to be waiting for him to speak.

"You're not suspicious of me, after what you saw, are you?" inquired Wiggin. "You can see my interests don't lie that way, now!"

It was on George's tongue to declare that he had not the least idea what all this meant, but he suddenly decided to meet craft with craft. He had discovered that ingenuousness did not work well in this north country. Every man's hand seemed raised against him. He resolved that he would take a hand in the game of guile himself, for self-protection, if for nothing else.



Concrete Work in Freezing Weather

HEATING WATER.

A simple and easily-made vessel for heating water is shown in the accompanying drawing. (See Fig. 1.) A coil is made of one-inch pipe with the ends fastened in the barrel and made water-tight. A small fire built under the coil will heat the water rapidly and will keep it in circulation, thus keeping all the water heated.

For this purpose it is wise to use a length of malleable iron gas-pipe, because it is easily bent into the required coil. This is done by taking a log or fence-post about the size of the coil and bending the pipe around it. This method prevents the pipe

pipes, and will soon thaw out and become heated.

In very cold weather, the cement may be heated by laying the bags on top of the sand, but this is not absolutely necessary, as the cement itself must be kept dry until used, whether the weather be hot or cold.

TEMPERATURE REQUIRED.

Materials should not be heated to too high a temperature. A good way to judge the proper amount of heat is to make them just hot enough to be comfortable to touch. Care should be taken not to use any frozen lumps of sand.

PROTECTING CONCRETE IN POSITION.

After the concrete has been placed in "forms" it should be protected so as to keep the heat in as long as possible. This is more essential in thin structures than in massive walls and foundations; for the latter will hold their own heat longer on account of their thickness.

Wooden "forms" are non-conductors, and will retain the heat in the concrete up to a certain point, but the concrete should be protected on top by a covering of canvas or

heavy paper, with a layer of ten or twelve inches of manure on top of this. Straw will also answer the purpose. If manure is used, care should be taken to prevent it from coming in contact with the concrete, as it will discolor it, and possibly even seep through sufficiently to weaken the structure.

PROTECTING THIN STRUCTURES.

In the case of thin walls where extra cold weather calls for addition-

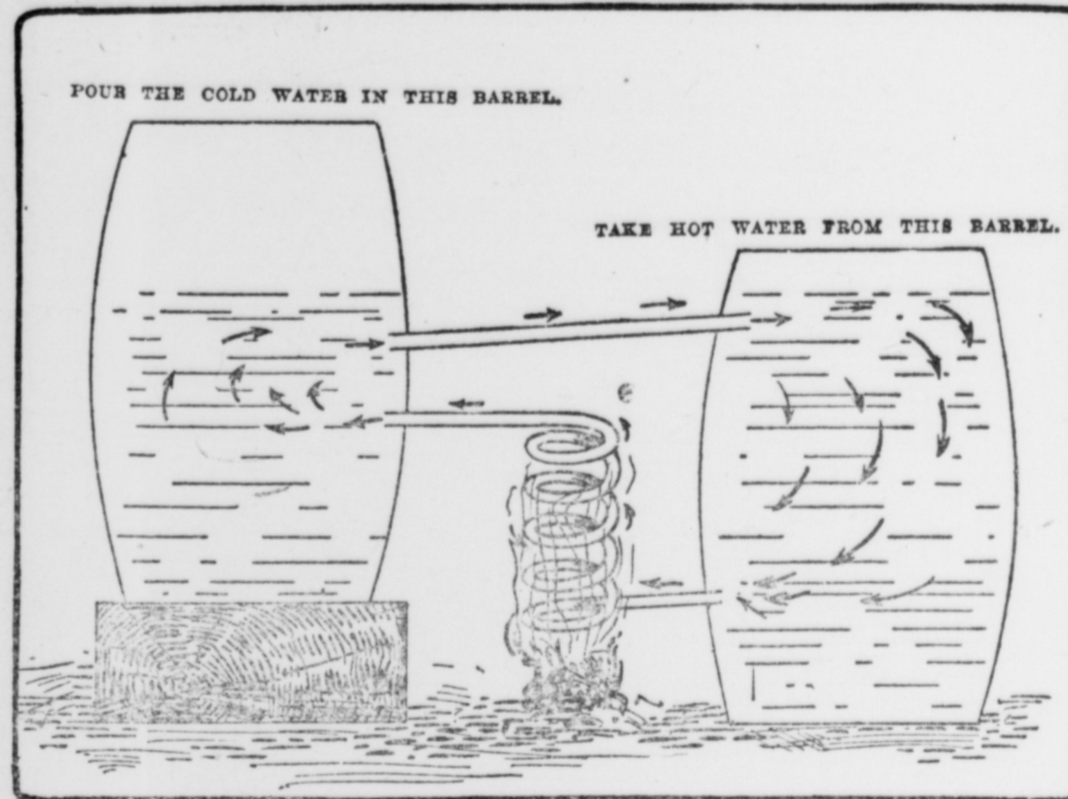


FIG. 2. SHOWING TWO-BARREL METHOD OF HEATING WATER.

PREPARATION OF MATERIALS.

Concrete will, on its own account, develop a certain amount of heat in

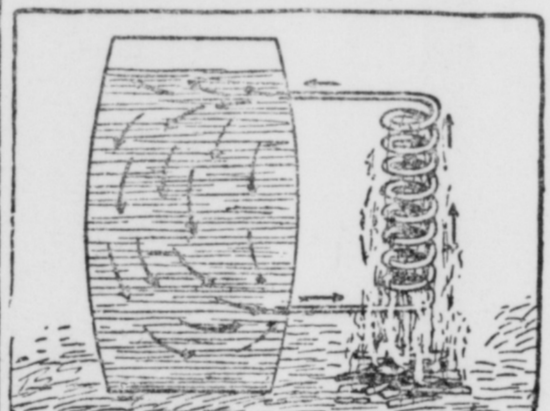


FIG. 1. SHOWING SIMPLE METHOD OF WATER HEATING.

the "setting" process. But in cold weather, some outside assistance, in the form of artificial heat, is necessary. The best way to develop this artificial heat is to warm the materials before mixing. This shortens the time that it takes the concrete to "set" and lengthens the time necessary to bring it to the freezing point. Bear in mind that the less water used, the quicker concrete "sets." Therefore, it is advisable to use as little water as possible in the mixing during cold weather.

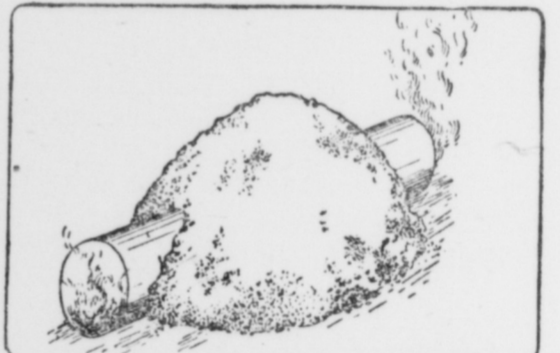


FIG. 3. SHOWING HOW MATERIALS MAY BE HEATED BY MEANS OF A FIRE IN AN OLD STOVE-PIPE.

HEATING SAND AND STONE.

Sand and stone may be very easily heated by making use of two pieces of stove pipe, one piece for the sand and the other for the stone. The pipes are laid on the ground in such a position as to allow the wind to make a good draft. The fire is then built in one end. The flames pass through, heating the whole pipe, and as fresh fuel is added, the cinders are pushed along the pipe and gradually work out at the other end. The sand and stone should be piled on top of the stove

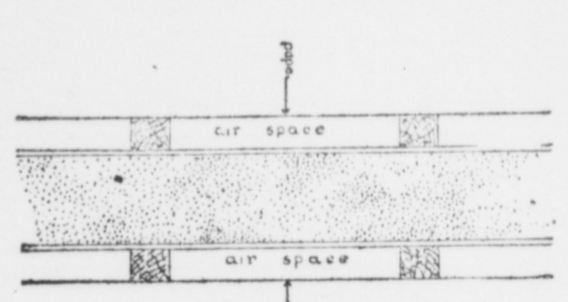


FIG. 4. PAPER TACKED TO WOODEN SUPPORTS TO PROTECT CONCRETE FROM FROST.

al protection, heavy paper should be nailed to the vertical posts of the forms, (see Figure 4.) thus leaving an enclosed air space between each pair of posts. These air spaces will have about fifteen degrees higher temperature than the outside air. The "forms" should always be left on longer in cold weather, as it takes longer for the concrete to harden.

There is no reason why concrete cannot be used with complete success in cold weather if these simple precautions be followed.

"You know what people I represent, Mr. Wiggin," he returned. "You probably know why I'm up here. You've got the advantage of me in that. You've got to talk a little plainer."

"I know a man was coming," said Wiggin. "Of course, I knew it couldn't be same one that made the other trade. He's marked in this section! But I've looked for some line from the big folks — a little something from you, in the way of credentials."

"My folks do not put things on paper — when those things can be arranged by word of mouth," declared George, hating himself for this deception, but firmly resolved to uncover any more plots against himself, if he were able.

"An excellent plan," affirmed Wiggin, "even if it does put other parties

in the way of guessing a bit." He fondled his long nose, and studied the face of the Great Trust Co.'s man. "You received some instructions, I suppose?"

"I did."

"I don't like to beat about the bush," said the old man. "I know your folks understand how I stood with Corran. And, of course, you know. I have been his right-hand man ever since he started in business — he couldn't read or write, as you've heard."

George did not betray by a flicker of the eyelids, even, that the information was new.

"I'm going to tell you very frankly that I've hoped that my son would get the girl," continued Wiggin. "There's no chance of that. I've helped Corran steal half the lands he owned. I'll say

this — if he hadn't stolen them, some one else would have done it. That's the style up here. He could have made a fair division with me and still left the girl enough. But that will — I drew it myself for him — left me just where I've always been — his agent. I'm sole trustee, too. Now, just what kind of a proposition have your folks sent to me? The other man said the proposition would come along just as soon as Corran dropped out."

Continued next week.

Japan's Budget

The main features of Japan's Budget, which balances at 529,000,000 yen (\$264,500,000), are the reduction and reform of taxes, the increase of the salaries of Government officials, economy in administrative expenses, and the increase of the sinking fund.