

THE BACKWOODSMAN

By Acton Seymour

The landlord was not restrained by such considerations.

"That was about as dirty a trick as I ever saw done," he declared. "You did take a man of your size the other day, but you struck him when he wasn't looking. Now, you hit a man a hundred years old. We'll ride you on a rail, Wiggin, if you keep this up." The Indian had struggled to his feet. "It's too bad, Noel. Did he hurt you much?"

"He hurt me here," replied Noel, drawing up his tall form and patting his breast. "For she wait. If I not bring him, she die of shame and sorrow."

"Say, what's the trouble here, anyway?" demanded the landlord. "Now, you needn't flare up at me, Wiggin. You tackle me, and I'll brain you with this chair. What are you battering that old man for?"

"None of your devilish business! If I've got any mail here, give it to me. That's all the business I've got with you."

"There isn't any mail for you," Wiggin turned to leave.

"I say you come," cried Noel, his voice breaking.

But Wiggin hastened down the street. Noel tried to follow, but he staggered, and the landlord ran after him and brought him back to the porch.

"It's too bad, old man," he said soothingly. "You're only an Injun, but don't that to you wa'n't right. You seemed to have business with him about some 'she.' What's the matter?" The landlord displayed the curiosity of the busy-body.

Noel drew himself up. He towered even above George's stalwart figure.

"My talk for him, not you," he said, with dignity. The wrinkles that marked his face were set into deep lines that made his visage grim. He turned, and walked away.

"I wouldn't want to have that Injun after me, even if he is a hundred years old," vouchsafed the landlord. "I'll tell you what it is, son, that devil of a Wiggin has got mixed up with the White Lily. If he's done her dirt, there's trouble ahead for him, and some white folks I know of will be willing to help make it."

The return of the brisk stranger broke in on their conversation. He came with Jepson Wiggin at his heels. The old man was worried and haggard.

"I'd like to see you in private," the stranger informed George crisply. The young man led the way to his room, and the two followed.

When they were closeted, the stranger began without preamble.

"I'm from the main office of the Great Trust Co., Mr. George. You were sent up here on forestry work. You were supposed to be in the woods with our cruisers. Just what authority do you have to make talk with Mr. Jepson, here, on matters you know nothing about?"

"I had no authority," confessed Harry.

The old man began to curse, but the stranger snapped his finger at him, and ordered him to keep still.

"You deserve to be discharged, George, and I have full power to fire you. We make no allowances, understand? You've been here on a spree with the rest of these yahoos, when you—"

"I have been here doing no such thing," cried Harry indignantly.

"You've been loafing here, making talk about matters that you have no license to meddle with. Our company is not what you try to make it out. Jepson has told me how you tried to bribe him. I say, I ought to discharge you. But I'm going to favor you a little. I'm going to allow that you'd been drinking and didn't realize what you were talking about. You get into the woods, where you belong. You stay there, attending to your work, and we'll let the matter drop. Remember that I'm doing you a special favor. Make good, now, and I won't report you."

It was threat, promise, and bribe combined. The insolence of it stung the young man. It was perfectly plain to him that the Great Trust Co. and Wiggin were in collusion. The prompt visit of this stranger to the old man, and their equally prompt visit to squelch the man who had presumed to interfere with the plot, showed him all.

Had George been less indignant, he might have given up, there and then, his vague plans of helping Clare Corran. But his spirit rose under this contempt.

"You're not dealing with a ten-

year-old in this matter," he blurted. "I know perfectly well what the scheme is, and you're talking big to the wrong man — let me tell you that!"

The stranger knew men. He understood that he had to do with no craven.

"George," he said conciliatingly, "you don't understand the thing at all. You think you do, but you have got only a peek in. I can't tell you details. It's none of your business. Our company is going to use every one all right. Now, you travel on. I'll see to it that you never lack for a job while we operate in this country. You're a Great Trust Co. man. Of course, you know how to be loyal."

The whole problem that had been revolving in George's mind for three days was laid before him, now, for instant solution. The bribe was offered without disguise — the threat was behind it. On the one hand, he had a hold on the company — he had stumbled upon their secret by the simple bungling of old Wiggin. On the other hand, was a girl who had given him no right to feel interest in her.

"I'm hired by the Great Trust Co.," he admitted. "I know that. My place is in the woods—I know that, too. But this man Wiggin is ready to sell out the interests of his employer — and that employer is an orphaned girl. If he'll resign as trustee of that estate, and let a man have the job who will take care of her property, I'll go into the woods and keep this thing to myself."

"What kind of a lord-high gull do you think you are, anyway?" demanded the company agent. "Who gave you license to butt in on other folks' business?"

"Any man has got a right to butt in, when he sees the helpless and innocent being done out of their own."

"Are you going to quit being a fool? Are you going to slander your own employers any more?" The agent got up and shook his fists at George. He had been furious ever since Wiggin had told him the story. He had restrained himself as much as possible in the interests of diplomacy. But he saw that this young hot-head was not amenable to diplomacy.

"I'm going to see that Corran's daughter has a square deal."

Harry realized that he had made his choice. Fury impelled him. His temper had been strained for many days. He thirsted for combat. Up in that land of man to man, the primitive passions got hold of him. The thought of slinking away into the woods, in his own interest, made him hate himself because he had entertained it for one moment. He was thinking less of Clare Corran at that moment than he was of his own resentment.

"Take your job and go to the devil with it!" he raged. "I can find honest people to work for!"

"You're discharged," said the stranger. "I was going to make you an offer, but I won't let you blackmail us. You open your head about this matter, and I'll have you in jail for trying to blackmail. You're up against the biggest proposition in this country, just now, youngster. You don't know what it is; but you'll find out quick, if you don't get out of this section as fast as that train will carry you."

"You leave to me — I'll see that he goes," declared Wiggin venomously.

"I'm not taking any orders from any one, just now," announced George. "I'm my own man." He dragged out his wallet, and threw a packet of bills at the agent. "There's your company money. Now, get out of my room, the two of you, or I'll throw you out."

They departed. He stood for a moment in the middle of the room. Then, he threw his arms above his head with a gesture of relief.

"I'm a fool," he said aloud: "but thank God, I can look at myself in the glass without being ashamed of the man I see there."

VIII.

With his mind made up, Harry George was no longer a laggard. He did not underestimate the power of the Great Trust agent, or of Jepson Wiggin. He determined to go to Clare Corran, man-fashion, warn her of Wiggin's contemplated treachery, and then leave the section, seeking employment where he could preserve his self-respect. It was important that he should reach the girl before harm happened to himself, or Wiggin could prejudice her.

He armed himself with the revolver that he had salvaged from his wrecked trunk, hiding it, and followed the man down the stairs. They were talking with the landlord, and did

not see him.

Harry hurried straight to the Corran house. It was on the slope of the valley set in a circle of old black growth trees of virgin spruce. From the porch of the tavern, he had seen portions of the house through the trees. But when he approached, he saw what a peculiar structure it was. One section was of logs. It was here that Cornelius Corran had dwelt, eating from his tin dishes on rough tables with his men, living the life of a woodsman. Harry had been told of his tastes in that respect.

Attached to the rude log walls was a wing that consisted of a cottage, dainty and graceful. The great log house was plain and gloomy, with its deep-set, little panes of glass and its rough walls; the cottage was fresh, vine-embowered, and picturesque. George knew that Clare Corran dwelt there; it had been her father's whim to lodge her thus.

The girl, herself, was on the porch, and rose to meet him.

He did not sit in the chair she proffered. Standing and looking straight into her eyes, he told his story.

"I realize how it must sound, coming from me, a stranger," he said, at the close. "I can only remind you that I am disinterested. I am not an employee of the Great Trust Co., even. I am leaving for Montreal by the first train that will take me there."

She had listened intently. A flush had come into her pale cheeks. Her eyes, narrowed as he talked. Her nostrils dilated from time to time.

"Why do you leave your employment with the company in this quick fashion?" she demanded. "Has it anything to do with what you tell me?"

"Pardon me," he replied. "But my reasons for leaving are strictly personal. I prefer not to discuss that part of the affair."

"Once more, you correct my manners," she cried hotly. "I'm obliged to you, sir."

"I did not mean to be impolite, Miss Corran. But why I left the Great Trust Co. has really nothing to do with the matter."

"It hasn't, hey?" They turned, Jepson Wiggin had hurried up, the soft carpet of tree-fluff hiding the sound of his feet. "He's been discharged, Miss Clare. The company wouldn't have him. He's a meddler, and a liar. He just had this minute to you. He said his leaving didn't have anything to do with your business. He said it, didn't he? I don't know what business he was tellin' you about, but he lied, whatever he said. It was because he was caught buttin' into your business that he was fired."

She waited coldly.

"Now, Mr. Evans is here, and is going to arrest him for blackmail," Wiggin went on. "That's a part of the blackmail, what he's been tellin' you."

"Have you overheard what he has been telling me?" she asked.

"No, but I know what he was sayin'. He was accusin' me."

"Be careful that a guilty conscience does not betray you, Mr. Wiggin," she warned. "You appear to know more about this matter than an innocent man is entitled to know." She turned to Harry. "So you have lost your position because you interested yourself in my behalf?"

He protested again that it was a business that concerned him alone. "I can only assure you that I've told the truth," he added. "Now that Mr. Wiggin is present, I accuse him to his face, in your presence, of proposing to me to sell you out. You are warned, Miss Corran. That's all I can do." He bowed, and stepped down off the porch.

"Will you wait one moment, Mr. George?" she pleaded. She disregarded the presence of Wiggin, who was tramping about, cursing under his breath. "I propose to take action in this matter. I can do nothing—" she paused and called him back to her. She said in tones too low for Wiggin to hear: "I can do nothing to put this man out of his position under the will, unless I have you as a witness for me. And I have no man of business to consult with. Can you not arrange your affairs so that you can stay here a few days? You see that you will be leaving me in sore trouble unless you stay."

"I warn you to have nothing more to do with that liar, Miss Clare," called Wiggin. "I'm the trustee of your estate. I propose to see you protected."

She went to the edge of the piazza, her chin up, disdain in her features.

"Mr. Wiggin," she said, "my father trusted you — trusted you too much. This news that Mr. George has brought is not new to me — it does not surprise me much, for I have read you for a long time. Remember



that I am a woman, and a woman can see where a man is blind. I give you fair warning that I'm going to put you out of your trust. Will you resign? It will be better for you."

"Of course, I won't resign. I don't propose to leave Cornelius Corran's estate to be picked up by the first crook that comes along."

"Then, you're going to fight me, and you'll wish you hadn't tried it," she declared, with spirit. "I own what Cornelius Corran left. I am mistress here. I give you a chance to save yourself from disgrace. I ask you, once more — will you resign quietly?"

"I'll not get out in any such way. I'm going to obey your father's wishes. What's the reason you're disobeying them all of a sudden?"

She flushed. It was a tender spot he had touched on. Perhaps her conscience told her that a strange reason prompted her — an impulse she had never felt before. She advanced on the obstinate old man. There was fire in her eyes.

"Wiggin, I allow no man to dictate to me, now that my father is gone — no man to question my motives. I have good reasons for discharging you. My father could not read. I can. I have watched some of your dealings in the written word, and I know that you are dishonest. I have only been waiting for the right occasion to tell you so. I tell you, now."

"You wait till I get to the probate judge," cried Wiggin. "I'll have you taken care of, Miss Clare. You ain't responsible. You'd better let this thing drop. I know more law than you do. You're going to be sorry."

She turned her back on him, undismayed.

Continued next week.

A Salutary Lesson

An artist, a barrister, and a doctor, motoring from Dijon to Chalon-sur-Saone together, devised a novel method of punishing an unprovoked act of aggression by a peasant who, out of sheer prejudice against motor cars, threw a large stone, which struck the artist on the chest. The occupants of the car pursued and captured their assailant, took him into the car, quietly divested him of his coat, watch, and money, and then, after proceeding at full speed for over 30 miles, set him down on a lonely roadside to walk home in the broiling sun. His clothes and other property they sent back to him subsequently.

As Long as it Lasted

She (whose sliced brassie shot has hit her partner, who has fallen)— "Oh, Laurie, dear—speak; do speak." (Kisses him.) "Don't say I've hurt you badly." (Kisses him again.) "Oh! are you dead are you dead?" (Shower of kisses.) He (to himself)—"You go right on. You can bet your hairpins I'm dead as long as this lasts."

CONQUEST OF THE AIR

Discovery and Progress of Airman's Art has Wonderful Possibilities in Connection with Public Services and Work of Exploration.

The fundamental principles of aerostatics was discovered by Archimedes and formulated as follows: "Every body plunged into a fluid is subjected by this fluid, to a 'pressure' from below to above which is equal to the weight displaced by that body." The first application of this principle was to balloons, care being taken to produce a body whose total weight was less than that of the volume of air it displaced.

But although the principle was thus applied as far back as 1783, it was not until 1854 that the first balloon capable of being steered was produced by Col. Renard, who accomplished a circular flight in what deserved the title of a dirigible. The reason for this was that in order to steer a body floating in a fluid it is absolutely essential that this body should possess an independent speed, to permit it to move in the fluid of its own accord. In 1885 Col. Renard succeeded in obtaining an electric motor of 8 horse-power, weighing only forty kilogrammes a horse-power and capable of great endurance.

To-day mechanicians have succeeded in perfecting motors especially designed for aviation of the almost incredibly light weight of two kilogrammes a horse-power and of such perfect action that they can start in an instant without preliminary preparation. Professor Berget explains clearly and briefly the mechanical difficulty of the problem and the scientific reasons why it took a century to discover how to guide the machine which the brothers Montgolfier launched into the air in 1783.

Next came the problems connected with the resistance of the air, which determine the shape of the envelope for a dirigible balloon. A spherical balloon cannot be propelled. So long ago as the beginning of the nineteenth century Marey-Monge predicted the necessity of adopting a shape, should an attempt be made to propel aerostats, which should have "the head of a cod and the tail of a mackerel."

The applications in civil life of locomotion in the air will be numerous and varied, and it will doubtless be possible to travel by public service or by private vehicles. The special use of the highway of the air which Prof. Berget foresees is by the post office with aeroplane messengers from city to city every hour, the service, interrupted only by heavy storms. The exploration of unknown regions in such difficult countries as Africa, the heart of Asia, Australia and South America, with accurate maps, is one of the important scientific uses to which the new ships may be put. The whole of Central Africa, for example, could be mapped from airships, acting under international sanction, with a ship over Timbuctou and the shores of Lake Tchad, in French territory; Leopoldville, for the Belgian Congo; Dongola and Lake Albert for the English stations.

A woman may have a past, but she usually denies a few years of it.

Boys!
Girls!

See what you can get free for a little of your spare time.

As we told you a few weeks ago—we are after two thousand NEW SUBSCRIBERS—We have not got them yet—We have got a part of them—and until we get the full number of two thousand New Subscribers to THE DISPATCH we are going to give every boy or girl that gets us.....

3 Subscribers, a Boy's Watch
5 Subscribers, a Ladies' Wristlet Watch
6 Subscribers, a Goldfilled Expansion Bracelet or, a .22 cal Stevens-Maynard Jr. Rifle

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