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ALL DRUGGISTS

EVERYWHERE '71

In the Cause of Freedom,

By Arthur W. Marchmont.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year nineteen hundred and seven, by McLeod & Allen, at the Department of Agriculture.

(Continued.)

There was nothing for it but to go back to the forked road. To make matters worse, the railroad again and came pouring down even more violently than before.

Nor was that the worst. We got off the road again, and once more were brought to a standstill by a gate.

"It looks as though we were lost," I said.

"We've about reached the bottom of our troubles, I should think," replied Volna, still chery. But if the chance offered, I should like to put off the rest of the ride till daylight. And, look, there's a light." She pointed to it gleefully, away to our left.

We made our way to it with trouble, and found that it came from the lower window of a small house.

I rapped at the door, and the light was instantly extinguished.

I had to knock again twice, and then a window above was opened, and a woman put her head out.

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Police?" No. We have lost our way and want shelter.

"There's no one in the house but me. How many are you?"

"Two. Myself and my sister. We can pay you well."

She drew her head in for a minute, and then looked out again and said, "Are you sure you're only two? Let's see you."

We stood back that she could do so. "I'll come down," she said.

When she opened the door the light she held revealed to me one of the most forbidding faces I have ever seen on a woman's shoulders.

"You've got horses, have you? You must stall them in the shed."

She handed me a lantern, and Volna came with me. When we had fumbled our way to the shed, and tied the horses up, giving them some hay we found in the place, we went back to the house.

She admitted us without more delay and as soon as we were inside, looked and bolted the door. "A lone woman needs to be careful," she said in explanation, as she led us into a room at the side where a fire was burning.

Two glasses and a spirit bottle were on the table, and a small of rank tobacco smoke hung about the place.

Volna went in first, and the woman, having placed the light upon a table, stood holding the door for us to pass.

"We are much obliged to you," I said, and as I turned to her I caught sight of a man's face peering through the half closed door of a dark room across the passage.

"I'll do my best for you," she answered. "Dry your coats, and I'll be back in a moment." With that she went out and I heard her turn the key softly upon us.

It might mean nothing, but—well, I did not tell Volna.

CHAPTER VIII.

What Happened in the Cottage.

Volna walked up to the wood fire, took off her fur tunic, shook it, and laughed.

"Were you ever as wet before? I never was."

"I wonder if the woman can find you something to put on while the clothes are dried. What do you make of her?"

"She about fits the place," she replied, glancing round the room.

A wooden bench, a couple of wooden armchairs, a square table and a black oak chest of drawers with some unpainted shelving over it for crockery, pots, and pans, constituted the furniture; and for decoration a couple of crude colored prints, scriptural in subject and grimy with age, hung over the fireplace with a piece of broken looking glass on a string between them.

"Rough," I said, in answer to her look.

"It might be dirtier. It is always a good sign when a woman's care can be traced."

"She said she was a lone woman, so she can't have much else to do except look after the place."

Volna smiled. "Didn't you see those?" and she pointed to a pair of men's boots by the chest of drawers. "Probably wood cutter or charcoal burner or something of that sort; often very honest people."

I thought of the man's face I had seen and said nothing.

"Have you your flask?" I took it out. "Good, then I shall warm some water and you must have a hot drink; and in a minute she had cleaned a small saucepan and had the water on the fire."

"I wish when woman would come back," I gumbled. "I want to get your wet clothes off."

"I shouldn't call her," replied Volna.

"Why not?"

"I shouldn't let her know that we know she locked the door."

"Did you notice that?"

"That's deliciously man-like, Bob. Of course we're in a very queer place; but we may as well pretend we see nothing odd and suspect nothing. We're not really blind, however."

"I begin to think Peggy's more wonderful than ever," said I with a chuckle.

The woman came in with a bundle of clothes on her arm; and her manner was very different. She was a hideous creature truly; the upper part of her face seemed with what might have been two knife slashes, and one cheek quite disfigured with marks like those which vitriol leaves. When she spoke or smiled her mouth drew up to the side, disclosing long yellow fangs of teeth.

"Ah, that's right; a hot drink you're making. You're both wet to the skin, aren't you? I've rummaged up some clothes for you. I'll make you as comfortable as I can; but I'm only a poor woman."

"You're a very kind one," said Volna, looking at the clothes she had brought.

"They are only rough, you know; but the best I can manage."

"Water's hot, Bob," cried Volna. "Get me a cloth to wipe these glasses," she said to the woman; and the moment her back was turned Volna slipped the papers from her dress and handed them to me.

We mixed some brandy and water and I insisted upon her drinking some.

"I've set a candle in the room opposite for you," said the woman.

"Call me when you're ready, Peggy," I said to the woman.

I and I went off with the clothes she had brought for me.

I had just completed the change when I heard a stealthy step in the passage. I was listening for it, indeed, and had not shut the door. Some one tried to shut it for me. I stopped that and pulled it wide open. It was the man whose face I had seen before—long, thin, cadaverous and cunning, with close set, ferret eyes.

"Come in," I said, cheerfully.

He started very uneasily and then mumbled: "I thought you didn't know it was open."

All right. I suppose these are your things. I'm much obliged to you."

"They're my best," he answered.

"You're welcome."

Now he had some four inches shorter than I, whereas the clothes were quite long enough for me; and the discrepancy did not escape me or tend to lessen my suspicions.

He stood watching me silently as I finished the change and took out the contents of my pockets. But I was careful not to let him see that I had a weapon.

In the silence I could hear the rain streaming down.

"It's a fearful night," I said; "your wife said you weren't at home."

"Just come in."

"You must be to keep dry."

He pretended not to hear me. "It won't last much longer. How did you come here?"

"We got off the road in the dark and saw a light in your window."

"Strangers here, maybe?" I caught a quick furtive glance with a gleam of considerable interest in the shiny eyes.

"I don't think I've ever been in this particular spot before; but I shall know better when I see it by daylight. Anybody can get lost in the dark."

"Going far?"

"Out for a ride and caught in the storm. Will you see to the horses for me?"

"I have. Couple of good ones. One of them is nearly done up. You've come far?"

At that moment Volna opened the door of the other room and called me. She burst into a merry laugh at the sight of me and I grinned back at her.

"You look as if you were made up as a peasant for theatricals," I said.

"I don't know what you're like. But I'm dry. Think of it, Bob, dry once more."

I carried in my wet things and they were soon steaming by the fire with hers. The man hustled about and put some black bread and vile cheese on the table; while the man stood fidgeting about sheepishly by the door.

"It's all I've got to eat; but I can make you some coffee."

"The very thing," said Volna.

"Fetch the coffee, Ivan," said the woman. The man hesitated, glanced at her, and then shuffled away.

"Come on, Bob, I'm famished," cried Volna, sitting down and cutting some bread.

"Ivan says your horse is done up," said the woman. "You must be a long way from home."

"Further than you think," replied Volna. "We're English."

"You didn't ride from England?" she asked stupidly.

"You dear soul, there's the sea between England and here."

"But you're strangers?"

"Some more bread, Bob?" and as she bent down to cut it she whispered in

French to me: "She's asked that question a dozen times, trying to pump me all the time."

"Strangers?" I said to the woman. "Of course we are. Tourists. Don't know a soul for a mile about here and not a soul knows us. But you needn't be afraid. We can pay you; and I took out a handful of money and tossed a gold piece across to her."

It was worth the money to see the greedy avaricious light that leapt in her eyes. But Volna looked puzzled and a little alarmed at this act of mine.

"What a time that man is getting the coffee," the woman said. "I suppose he can't find it; and she went out of the room."

"Why did you do that?" asked Volna.

"Why not? It was the answer she wanted, and it's quite a relief to be able to tell the truth."

"Do you suspect anything?"

"I think the man is a long time finding such a thing as coffee and I wonder they don't keep it here with the rest of their eatables; and Volna showed that she understood me."

The two came back wrangling; she scolding him for his delay; he protesting he didn't know where she kept things. They were clumsy actors, however.

The woman made some coffee then and set it on the table. "I'm thinking where I'll put you to sleep," she said. "You can have our bed if you like."

I told Volna; "but for your brother, I'll have to make one up somehow. You see we're only poor folks. But we'll manage. Come, Ivan."

I was stirring my coffee and put it to me. "I'll be with you in a minute," the woman said, and she went out.

I was looking at the clock and saw the time of locking the door upon us, they left it ajar.

It was becoming as plain as print.

I set down the cup, untasted, of course, and talked in a fairly loud tone about coffee tasted; and Volna taking her cue from me agreed.

Then we both slipped the two cups into a jug and hid it away, and went on talking unconcernedly. Presently I stole to the door and listened. The two were in the upper part of the house.

Volna, I could see now, was beginning to grow nervous.

"It's all right. We can act much better than they, and there isn't a thing to fear."

Her brow wrinkled. "I think Peggy doesn't want to be left alone, Bob," she said.

"You'll have to make shift with that wooden settle; but you may go to sleep without a thought."

"What do you think they mean to do?"

"They've half done what they meant and we shall soon know the rest. The coffee is drugged of course, and they think we've drunk it. Now, lie down and just go off to sleep. I've dried my last three cigars and am going to smoke one of them."

I settled her on the wooden bench and having lighted my cigar, rummaged about and found an oily rag with which I cleaned my revolver very carefully, reloaded it and kept it at hand.

I then sat down by the fire smoking and thinking and waiting. It was evident enough that we had got into the hands of some very ugly customers. I recalled several strange tales of dark deeds done in these wild and lonely parts of the country; and the circumstances.

They had got from us the fact that we were strangers, and I had purposely made no hesitation in showing that we had plenty of money. That they had tried in their clumsy way to drug us, I had no doubt whatever; and the only question was what they meant to do next.

The fear in the woman's first question whether we were the police, and her statement that the man was not in the house, gave a clue to their character; and the change in manner, the assumption of friendliness, the suggestiveness of sending the man to find the coffee; indeed all these circumstances fitted together too well to leave any doubt that some devilment was on foot.

I did not feel the least alarmed, however. I felt myself more than a match for the two in any rough and tumble that was to come; and was thoroughly on my guard; and had a weapon and knew well enough how to use it. As a matter of fact it was we rather than they who were laying the snare.

Somewhere between half an hour and an hour passed without a sound in the house. I had finished my cigar and tossed it away and was gazing into the flickering embers of the fire, when I heard the stairs creak slightly. A glance showed me that Volna was asleep; a tribute this, indeed, to her trust in me.

I dropped my head as though I, too, were asleep and breathed heavily. I was very curious to know what was to happen.

In a short while the door was pushed open noiselessly and the woman put her head in. I had already set her down for the head of the firm, and the more courageous of the pair of rascals.

(To be Continued.)

W. E. Skillen, of St. Martins, was at the Royal Monday.

YESTERDAY IN PARLIAMENT

Old Age Pension Scheme Discussed at Length---It Will Cost \$40,000,000 per Year---The I. C. R. and the Branch Line Railways.

Ottawa, Feb. 3.—Sir Wilfrid Laurier, answering Mr. Kemp of Toronto, in the house of commons today, said that 1803 miles of Transcontinental railway had been located between Montreal and Winnipeg, four miles remain to be located and a revision of a number of points already located. There are 593 miles under contract for construction. The estimated amount of obligation entered into is \$38,000,000 and disbursements \$21,364,364.

In answer to Mr. Ames, Mr. Oliver said that sixty-nine timber licenses for land in Manitoba and Northwest Territories were issued in 1898-7, covering 1803 square miles. Of these licenses 83 were now.

Mr. Fielding, answering Dr. Sproule, said that the bonds of the Quebec bridge guaranteed by the government had not been sold. Moneys were raised by the company on the pledge of one bonds with the Bank of Montreal at the interest rate of 5 per cent. The amount due the Bank of Montreal by the bridge company for such advances and interest on June 30, 1907, was \$5,561,507.

In answer to Mr. Martin (Queens), Sir Wilfrid Laurier said that the government is appointing a delegate with power to discuss with accredited representatives of the various local governments affected the question of the relative rights and jurisdiction with respect to the fisheries. The government is unaware of any difficulties which should prevent an amicable settlement of rights. The government is not aware that the divided jurisdiction between the federal government and the governments of the provinces has proved detrimental to the interests of the fisheries, but the government appreciates that these interests could proceed on a better and more satisfactory basis with undivided jurisdiction.

In reply to Mr. Emerson, Sir Wilfrid Laurier said that an annual pass was granted at Ottawa in favor of P. S. Archibald as general manager of Elgin & Havelock railway. A trip-pass was given in favor of Mrs. Harris on June 14, 1907. Mrs. Harris is a daughter of Mrs. P. S. Archibald, and on Aug. 22 a trip-pass for Mrs. Archibald, also one on Nov. 14. The trip-passes were given by the general manager at Montreal.

R. A. Pringle (Cornwall), moved for a committee of nine to inquire into scheme or schemes by state aid or otherwise for making provision for the aged and deserving poor with special regard in case of any proposals which they may approve, to their cost and probable financial results and that the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and to examine witnesses on oath and affirmation.

Mr. Pringle said that last session, when he brought the matter up, Sir Wilfrid made a sympathetic speech, as did also the minister of labor. Since that time a bill was introduced in the British parliament. The premier told a labor delegation that an old age pension would bring criminals from the United States.

Sir Richard Cartwright, speaking in the senate, feared that old age pensions would discourage thrift. Those who studied the question did not agree with this. The annuity system which Sir Richard proposed, would only be accepted by the upper strata of the working classes. This was shown by Lord Aberdeen's commission in Britain.

Mr. Pringle quoted Mr. Chaplin's bill which was that every man who reached sixty-five was entitled to receive from five shillings to seven shillings a week of pension, provided he had never been in prison, and that he had never received more than ten shillings a week, and also provided that he made an attempt to keep himself.

Mr. Pringle said that a small pension after seventy years of age, would be better than no pension at all.

Coming down to his resolution, he said that what he proposed was a business proposition. Mr. Emerson went on to refer to the different branches of the I. C. R., showing that the principle was long ago recognized by parliament that the branches should be utilized as feeders of the trunk line.

Sir Charles Tupper took that view in 1883 in parliament. It would make the I. C. R. a more perfect road. He would take the position and make the statement that if the I. C. R. was a private line all the branches would be owned by the I. C. R. and that he had never received doubt difficulties in the way but he was prepared to approach the matter with an open mind. The discussion had shown that there were a variety of opinions on the subject. For instance Ralph Smith wanted the system to be universal. He did not think he could agree to that. His own personal view would be for such a law that would give to those who could not accumulate for themselves in their old age.

In conclusion he accepted the resolution as one of the best ways of getting further information on the subject so that some satisfactory conclusion might be reached.

Mr. Foster said that he studied the conditions in other countries and did not think that the time had arrived for old age pensions in Canada. The session was in its third month and the committee could not do much this session unless its powers were extended to next session.

Mr. Leifursey took a somewhat similar view to that of Mr. Foster.

Mr. Fielding was heartily in sympathy with the motion, which had for its object the immediate consideration and careful inquiry into the question of old age pensions. He asked the house to take a passing glance at what it meant. By the last census there were 270,000 persons of 65 years of age and upwards at \$150 a year which would be about as small a pension as one could suggest that meant \$40,000,000. A few years ago the total taxation of Canada was \$40,000,000. It was now about \$65,000,000 or \$68,000,000. It might be said that all would not require aid but there was much in what Mr. Smith said that all would be entitled if they applied for it. Once a distribution was made then trouble arose. But look at it any way they might it meant an enormous charge on the country.

The motion was adopted.

Mrs. Joseph Robinson, Hallerton, Que., writes: "I had an eating ulcer on my ankle. I took two bottles of Burdock Blood Bitters and it worked like a charm, cleaning out all the impurities from my system and improving my appetite. While taking the B.B.B. internally I used it externally to cleanse the sore, and it helped a lot."

W. E. Skillen, of St. Martins, was at the Royal Monday.

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