

The Lawless Godliness of Billy

Smoke By James Oliver Curwood

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK E. SCHOONOVER

BILLY SMOKE

gave his skillet of bacon a vicious swing, spat forth an oath that came from his soul, straightened to his feet like a springboard and faced Lord Percival Algernon Jones. Then he said:

"You slab-faced glass-eyed son of a whisky-jack—if you say another word I'll massage your face until it won't be fit for decent company! D'you understand? I've had enough of your sacred lordship's lip. I've toted you an' your damnage an' that squab-faced vally of yours for seven days, an' you ain't given me or the Indian a square look! I've been a reg'lar slavey; an' I've even cleaned your pipe—which I ain't done for no other man alive! You've been more trouble than ten kids an' a dozen wimmin. I've carried that cussed tin bin-w-w-w-tub o' yours when I was b'illin' inside ready to bust, an' the best you've done is to stare at us through that windowplate at your right eye, as though th' Indian an' me ain't nothin' but a couple o' funny-looking bugs. I ain't opened my lips—not once. But you ain't back home now. You're in the woods. You're two hundred miles from nowhere an' headed for the Arctic Ocean. You're plumb on my nerves—an' if you and that pippin-faced slave who shaves you an' washes yer face ain't a little more human there's no accountin' for what I'll do. Understand?"

Lord Percival Algernon Jones, tall, lank and bony, stared for a moment as if he had not heard correctly. He was a distinguished character, was Lord Percival. He represented a large British syndicate and great capital. He had shot lions in Africa and elephants in India—from a safe distance. He had traveled over the world, and never could he remember of having put his thin, white, bony hands to any sort of plebeian exertion. Also, so far back as he could remember he could recall nothing of the sort just spoken to him by honest Billy Smoke, his guide. In moments of unusual stress His Lordship always adjusted his eyeglass. There was a sort of mesmerism in his glassy stare. It gave one the uncomfortable sensation of being some sort of a biological specimen under a microscope; in fact, Lord Percival regarded most people as queer specimens of animal and insect life. He could scarcely find a reason for the existence of men like Billy Smoke, who wanted to be chums with all mankind. So he stared, twisting one of his long, sandy mustaches, and said finally:

"Why, you confounded, impertinent rascal!"

For seven days Billy Smoke had been choking back his vials of wrath. "Rascal!" he shouted. "Mother of sweet mercy, hold me! Rascal!—an' I've done your dirty swipin' work for a whole week! Billy Smoke washin' another man's socks! Think of it! I've tended you like an angel, I have. I've put up with yo' for your family's sake, an' I've

stood that fat loller of a vally when ev'ry time he filled my eyes I got a pain in the stummick! I've took the hint that me n' the Indian wasn't good enough to eat at first table—an' never said a word. I've biled yur blessed tea five times a day an' been cussed ev'ry time. I've done for you just about what I'd 'a' done for King George himself; an' half a dozen times I've lugged you ashore so you wouldn't git them precious feet o' yours wet. There ain't no man livin' can say I've taken half the sass from him that I've taken from you; but when yo' say I've got to wash the vally's socks along with yours you've hamstrung the workin' hoss. Me n' the Indian are goin' to take a rest. If you want any supper—you go git it!"

Lord Percival Algernon Jones had a way of his own of settling with men on a level with Billy Smoke. So he advanced in three measured and dignified steps, and before Billy could quite make out what was coming he tweaked that astonished individual's nose.

"You impertinent rascal! —" he began.

"You —"

His Lordship never quite understood just what happened after that. With a wild yell, Billy grabbed His Lordship's head between his two hands and the campfire suddenly took the form of a small volcano in action. Seven days of insult, seven days of degradation, seven days of mental misery that had almost turned his hair gray, formed the concentrated essence of what Billy Smoke did to Lord Percival Algernon Jones. He was too generous to use his fists; but the palms of his hands were as hard as rock. And James, the valet—a side-whiskered gentleman of overfed and overred flesh—stood at helpless attention a dozen paces away, looking in stony horror upon the end of the world.

It might have been two minutes or two hours later that Lord Percival gazed up from the foot of a large birch in sickly consciousness of what had happened. As a matter of fact it was very close to two minutes. Billy Smoke was standing over him. His Lordship fumbled for his eyeglass, which had escaped ruin by a miracle. He adjusted it to the usual eye; but finding that the vision of that eye was somewhat impaired he transferred it to the other.

"James," he commanded, "throw this rascal into the drink!"

Force of habit was strong in James. He made a movement—a single step in the direction of Billy Smoke. It is probable that a human thought would have found its way into the automaton's head before he had taken a second step—but the remaining eleven steps Billy covered himself.

There was no anger in his voice now. It was joy, pure, undiluted joy; and even the creases in the Indian's leathery face grew deeper as Billy Smoke caught James

by his splendid growth of side-whiskers. This time it was Lord Percival Algernon Jones who looked on. He made no movement. He was transfixed. He saw what had happened to himself, and the blue blood of many generations turned cold in his veins. Billy Smoke could have told him that what had happened to himself was not a circumstance to what was happening to James Augustus Dobbs; but he was too busy. And James had something coming to him as a sort of coup de grace that His Lordship had escaped.

He was half dead when Billy dragged him by the scruff of the neck to the edge of the stream on which they had camped and sent him plunging down into three feet of mud and water.

Billy Smoke then came back and accosted His Lordship.

"I hope you ain't got no hard feelings, Percy," he said affably. "It had to come. Discipline has got to be maintained even in the woods. If I hadn't given you an' the vally this little hint you might 'a' irritated the Indian some



But Still He Stood, Awaiting Orders as He Had Awaited Them for Thirty Years

day—and then there'd 'a' been a massacre. Shake, old squaw!"

His Lordship refused to shake, however.

"This—this is bloody mutiny!" he gasped.

"It's worse 'a' that," agreed Billy cheerfully, loading his pipe. "It's downright piracy—that's what it is, Percy. Because me n' the Indian came in now for our share of that exclusive canned stuff we've been totin' for you an' James, an' we've got a standin' invite to help smoke up them high-toned cigarettes o' yours with the stiff-necked greaser lady on the box. So you might as well smile, Percy. An' now, dam' ye, shake!"

Billy Smoke thrust down a big, hardfisted paw. It was an honest-looking hand, was Billy Smoke's. It was calloused and knotted from many years of toilsome life in the wilderness. It was such a hand as other men of honest heart liked to

grip in friendship, a hand that wouldn't strike in the dark or behind one's back. For a moment it hung right under Lord Percival Algernon Jones' nose, and His Lordship inspected it critically through his eyeglass. As he looked he observed a slow change working through it. The tendons of the fingers and wrist seemed to swell, and the fingers began to move toward the palm like a shutting clam.

"Shake!" pleaded Billy.

His Lordship lifted a white and bloodless hand, and Billy gave it a squeeze that made the bones crack. Then he jerked Lord Percival to his feet with a suddenness that sent his eyeglass dangling—and, to that outraged gentleman's horror and consternation, he calmly tweaked his nose.

"I'm an American, Percy," he explained; "an' there ain't no Britisher alive can pull an American's nose an' live to tell the story—unless he's a lord. That's why you're livin' now. If it had been James —"

Billy Smoke turned and his eyes lit up with joy. Ten paces away stood James at loyal attention. Mud and water dripped from his wilted side-whiskers. His red nose and round face were smeared, and poetically he "dripped at every pore"; but still he stood, awaiting orders as he had awaited them for thirty years, his arms half-akimbo, his padded chest thrown out like a pigeon's, his fat thumbs projecting from his hips, staring unseeing beyond Billy Smoke to his fallen lord and muster.

"Glory be!" gasped Billy admiringly. "James, you've given me an ideal. I'm an outraged American citizen—that's what I am; but I can't take it out on Percy because he's a lord. So I'm goin' to take it out on you, James. Do you hear? I'm goin' to take it out on you. I'm goin' to give you a glorious wallopin' ev'ry mornin' of your life so long as we remain friends. A reg'lar stars-an'-stripes wallopin', James. Do you hear?"

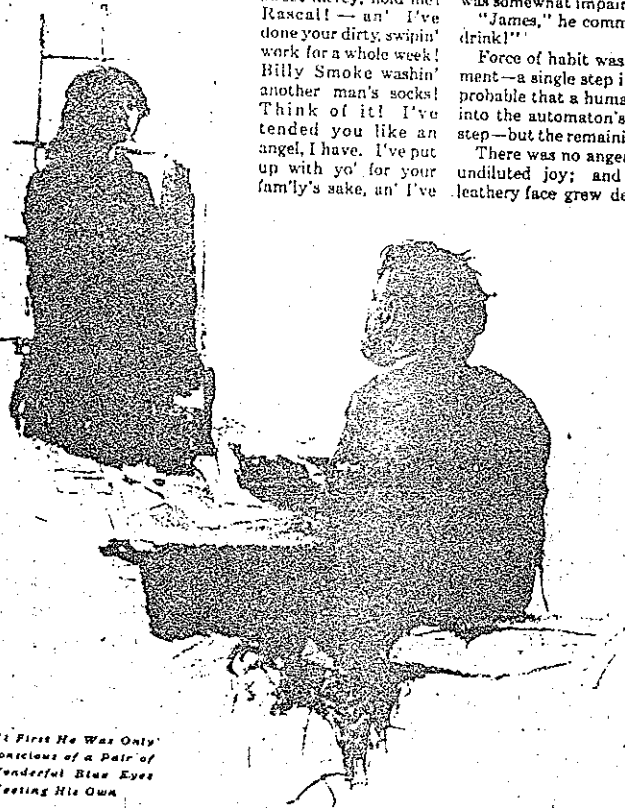
James made no visible sign of life.

"Do you hear?" roared Billy Smoke.

"Hi' ears you, sir," said James coldly.

11

BILLY was not a man long to harbor had feelings. He possessed a disposition that made him a wholesome man to know and one not easily forgotten. He loved the mere routine of eating, drinking and working, and had a well-developed sense of humor. Down in the big cities, at their desks in stuffy offices, amid the bustle and crush of the life that was turning their hair gray, men sat back at times and dreamed of Billy Smoke and his campfires up among the sweet-smelling balsams and cedars. Until now Billy had never guided the man who was not glad to grip his hand in brotherhood. Above all else, though heart and soul of the big Canadian forests, Billy was an American. He could have stood for Lord Percival Algernon Jones; his insulting superiority and his idiosyncrasies, because there



At First He Was Only Conscious of a Pair of Wonderful Blue Eyes Meeting His Own

know when you died. I've already killed eight men with this weapon, an' it's good for one more just about your height and circumference. Do you get on to my meaning now, James?"

"Hi do, sir," said James, dodging back out of range of the automatic's muzzle, and his red face turned to a sickly tallow color.

"An' you'll live up to the law of what I've said?"

"Hi will, sir."

"Cut out that 'sir,'" admonished Billy. "If you don't call me 'M'Lord' an' 'Your Lordship' an' 'Your Royal Highness' from this minute on I'll lick you every seven steps you take. It's a glorious wallop' every time you forget. Understand?"

"Hi do, Your 'Ighness!"

"Good!" said Billy. "Now, James, run down and get the bacon, a skillet, the coffee pot, four potatoes an' a can o' beans, along with an armful of that high-toned stuff I can't name an' get dinner. Lord William is goin' to smoke a box of these greaser lady cigarettes an' practice with the eyeglass. Tell me, James, how do you get next to the windowglass?"

"You hopsen your heye wide, sir," explained James, "an' puts it hin. Then you closes the heye an' 'olds tight."

"Easy!" said Billy.

He went off by himself, and now and then James heard the sounds of battle. When he went to tell his new master that dinner was ready Billy Smoke had achieved his triumph, and strutted back with the eyeglass glaring from his right optic.

"How's that, James?"

"Hexcellent, Your Lordship; hexcellent!" exclaimed James.

"Thank you, James. By the way, what is your salary?"

"Four p'und ten—han' keepin'!"

"That's what I call miserly, James. You're worth more than that. It's eight p'und twenty from now on, an' I'll have you paid six months in advance as soon as we reach Churchman. You're on to the fact that your present lordship owns Churchman, ain't you?"

"Hi am, sir."

"What?"

"Your Royal 'Ighness—I begs your pardon!"

After dinner Billy said:

"Now, James, I'm ready for a shave, a shine, a haircut, a shampoo and a massage. Bring up a pair of His Dido's best pants, a good shirt an' all the fixin's. Don't forget anything, James. Percy didn't dress like a gentleman, an' we've got to make up for it."

It was the middle of the afternoon before Billy Smoke pushed out from under the hands of James. He surveyed himself in a glass and gasped.

"James," he said, "I'm goin' to make that sixteen p'und forty, an' pay you a year in advance! Who'd ever think this was Billy Smoke! I'd sure go in a beauty show with the best of 'em now. James—shake!"

He wrung James' hand until tears started in the valet's pale eyes.

"Have a smoke!"

"I'll never smoked in 'is Lordship's presence," protested James.

"But you smokes in this lordship's presence!" exploded Billy.

Something like a gleam of real human gratitude flickered into the lusterless orbs of James Augustus Dobbs.

Among other things Billy had confiscated an alligator-skin handbag belonging to His Lordship, a high-toned and aristocratic-looking affair to be swung from the shoulder by a strap, and which he thought an ornament quite necessary to his proper entry into Churchman. While Billy cleaned up about camp he looked into this valise and found it partly filled with papers, among which were a number of large and official-looking documents. With one of Lord Percival's dollar-a-box cigarettes between his lips, Billy seated himself comfortably with

his back to a tree and began a closer examination. There were papers with the big red seal of the Farthest North Improvement Company, papers with blue seals, and other papers at the top of which was a roaring lion balancing himself on his tail—an attitude that Billy could not understand.

At last he came to a letter which interested him more than all the others. At the end of the first paragraph he gave a low whistle of surprise; at the end of the second he sat erect; at the end of the third he had forgotten James, the camp, his unlighted cigarette, the burned-out match between his fingers. Page after page of that letter, written in coarse script, he read with such haste that he skipped a third of the lines. At the end was the signature of Bristol Gardam, local manager of the British syndicate's interests at Churchman. He went back to the beginning and read more carefully. His eyes began to shine with a fierce glow, and every muscle in his body grew tense and hard with suppressed excitement. He put the papers back into the bag and sprang to his feet. His face was white, his jaws set and his eyes glittering when he confronted James.

"Get my old duds," he commanded; "and hustle, James! I can't work in these, an' we're goin' to work. There's some one callin' Lord William to Churchman, an' he's got to be there within forty-eight hours. It's an even hundred miles. Now, old chap, if you're a sport—rustle!"

With small regard for buttons and ripped fabric Billy Smoke proceeded to divest himself of Lord Percival's stiff collar, silk tie, starched shirt and dressed trousers with amazing swiftness.

There was a look in his face that puzzled and alarmed James when, his brawny arms bare and his brown shoulders naked to the sun, he sent the canoe out with powerful strokes into the down-sweeping current of the river.

IV

IT WAS five o'clock in the afternoon before Billy Smoke ran his canoe once more in to shore. He made thirty-five miles with the current without a portage. Three times he shot through rapids that he had never ventured to hazard before, and James' heart died so completely within him and his fat legs became so paralyzed that at last, when Billy helped him out like a bag of wheat, he rolled over on the ground with a muffled groan and lay still. Billy laughed and patted him almost affectionately on the shoulder.

"You're a true sport, James!" he cried. "You've got His Nibs back there beaten to a singed frazzle. I ain't heard a whine out of you all the afternoon, an' I'll bet your bones feel as though they'd been through a sawmill! Move round a little, old boy. You'll come to in a bit."

He proceeded to gather fuel and build a fire, and by the time supper was under way James managed to stagger up with a pail of water.

"Hi'm all in!" he apologized weakly. "Hi'm blistered an' broke front hay to z, sir. Hi feel as though all the hile was gone from between my j'int's."

Billy had dug out a flask from His Lordship's belongings. "Have a nip, James," he invited.

A shadow of animation flitted over James' waxen features. Never in his life had he polluted Lord Percival's silver whisky flask with his own lips, and for one brief moment he hesitated. Then he tilted his head back, applied the bottle, and a gurgle of delight ran down his throat.

"Because you'll need it, James," went on Billy. "We've just begun our day's work, you might say. We're goin' on after supper. There's some one needs us at Churchman, James—needs us bad—mighty bad! Understand?"

For an instant a valve seemed to close in James' throat and he blinked at Billy Smoke.

"You've been up agin a'ciety all your life, ain't you, James? An' you've seen lots and lots of pretty girls; but did you ever hear a prettier name than Faith McKay? Beats Hope an' Charity, don't it? An' I reckon it's this here same Faith McKay, who may be a little Scotch or a little Irish or a little o' both—God bless 'er!—whose aprayin' just about now for a couple o' friends about the size o' Billy Smoke an' James Augustus Dobbs. So take one more nip, James. You'll need it. An' then you can sit down. I want to talk to you while the bacon's fryin'."

As it might have awaited a scheduled earthquake, a storm of blue violets in midwinter or a shipload of pretty girls from London, so Churchman waited for Lord Percival Algernon Jones—that is to say, none of these impossible events could have created a greater interest than the anticipated arrival of His Lordship. He was the first real live lord to visit Churchman that then lived and breathed, unless one counted Donald Smith, who afterward became Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, and who, of course, was not a born lord but only a made one. It was known that he was coming some time this month by way of the Churchman, and Bristol Gardam, manager of the Farthest North Improvement Company, kept sharp watch for him; but in some way the Canoe of Honor, twenty miles up the river, missed him when he did come. At the minute it passed a certain point Billy Smoke was concealed back in the balsams enjoying a shave, a massage and a general change of wearing apparel; and when at last the current bore him majestically down almost alongside the company's offices at Churchman, Gardam and his assistants, collarless and in shirtsleeves, were checking over for a second time the list of information which was to show the blueblooded representative of the powerful British syndicate just how loyally they had performed their work. Gardam was more than delighted with what he had achieved, and his mean little face wore an almost perpetual smile of satisfaction that showed two rows of doglike and uneven teeth.

Out in the river the canoe came into view. For a puzzled moment Gardam stared at it through a window. Then he strolled out on the office veranda, still staring and wondering. The office force followed him.

Said Billy:

"James, when you have a swell event over in Lunnon, an' a lord or a prince or a king shows up, what do you do?"

"If it's at an 'ouse we hannounces 'im, Your Lordship."

"All right, James. See that bunch up there? Jump out and 'hannounce' me."

"But—but—" protested James. "It hisn't quite correct 'ere, sir. We only hannounces at an 'ouse."

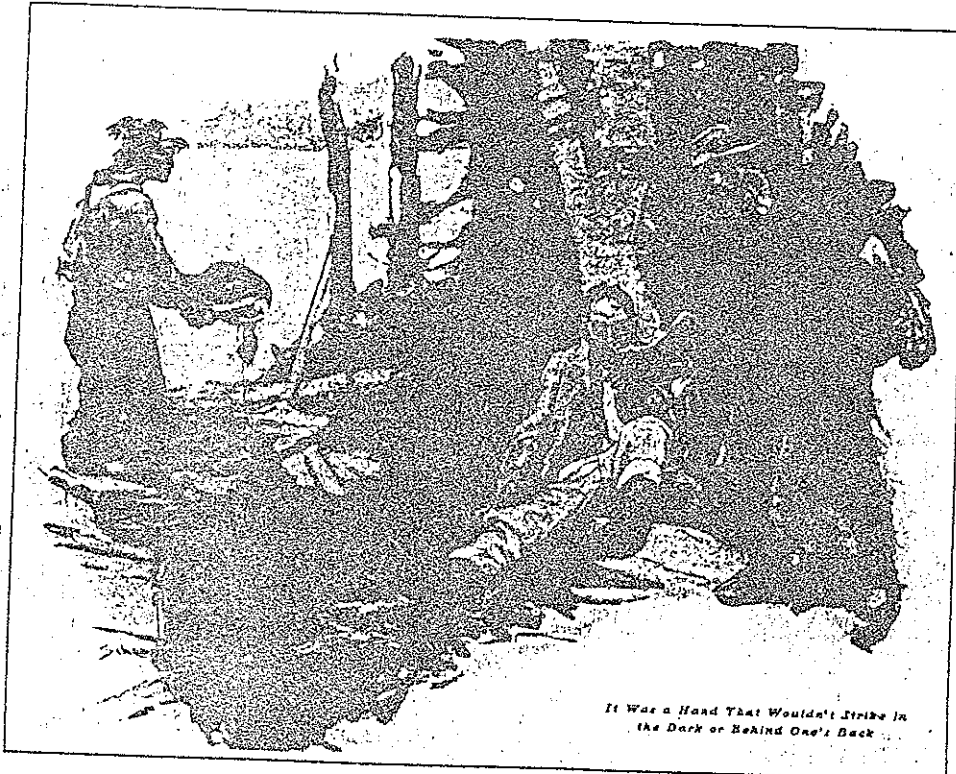
Billy, with his eyeglass gleaming, and stiff in His Lordship's best clothes, drew from under his coat the death-engine which he had once explained to James.

"James!"

His voice was so hard that it cracked.

With a gasp James tumbled ashore. With one foot still in the mud he faced the puzzled group on the veranda and struck an attitude that no one could longer fail to recognize. Then from deep in his chest there rolled forth a voice such as Billy Smoke had

(Continued on Page 33)



It Was a Hand That Wouldn't Strike in the Dark or Behind One's Back

was something about them that tickled his hump of humor; but James Augustus Dobbs was like a red rag flouted in the face of an outraged bull; and long after the others had gone to bed Billy sat smoking beside the dying embers of the campfire, seriously considering whether, from the standpoint of humanity, he ought longer to travel in James' company. For he knew that he would keep his word. In spite of his amiable nature he longed for the morning—even as the birds longed for it. His fingers itched for another grip in James' glorious side-whiskers.

It was nearly midnight when he took a last look about the camp. It was not the sort of camp he liked. There were two silk tents—one for His Lordship and one for James. There was none for himself and the Indian; so he wrapped himself in a blanket and went to sleep.

Some time later His Lordship was aroused from a restless slumber by an unusual commotion and strange and muffled sounds in the air. He raised himself to a sitting posture to listen. Something was astir in the camp. It sounded to him like the heavy bodies of animals struggling close by. Suddenly an object plunged through the front of the tent and toppled him over in a heap.

"Don't be afraid—it's only Hi, sir!" gasped James. "The bloody warmint' as kicked me out of my tent, sir!"

"He's what?"

"Housed me, sir—after pulling out 'ar' my 'air!"

Lord Percival Algernon Jones was not a coward. Sometime back in history his ancestors had gone to war and had even fought duels.

He fumbled under his pillow and drew out his silver-mounted revolver. Then he stalked out into the moonlit night, tall and gaunt and ghostly-looking in his striped pajamas, tasseled nightcap and bristling mustaches. Billy Smoke was turning James' feather bed sideways, so that there would be room on it for both himself and the Indian, when Lord Percival's face appeared at the tent flap.

"I'll have a word with you, my man!"

"Sure!" said Billy. He came out smiling and companionable. The next instant he was looking along the shining barrel of His Lordship's revolver.

"Now, my man, up with your hands!"

"Sure!" said Billy. Billy's hands rose obediently; but in rising one of them sent the revolver spinning, and the other, as hard as a birch knot, landed on the point of His Lordship's jaw. This time, once more, it was James who looked on.

A few minutes later James assisted his master to his tent.

"Shall I get out a suit of hextra pajamas, sir?" he asked.

Lord Percival Algernon Jones sank down wearily upon his bed and made no answer. He was not even much interested when about dawn Billy Smoke entered unannounced; and took away James by the scruff of his neck. Three-quarters of an hour later Billy reappeared and kindly but firmly invited His Lordship to choose between walking out to his breakfast or being pulled out by his heels. That morning Lord Percival ate breakfast in company with Billy Smoke and the Indian, while James, in forlorn whiskers and striped pajamas, did an early morning wash.

Billy was cheerful. All that night a big idea was swiftly developing in his head. It was so big that at times it staggered him. After the meal was over he induced His Lordship to step a few paces aside, where he explained it to him.

III

"YOU see, Your Lordship, I ain't never had what you might call a real sportin' chance up here in the woods," he began, peeling off a pipeful of hard-cut into the palm of his hand. "I've roughed it almost since I can

remember, and there ain't no special opportunities ever come snooping round my back door, so to speak—until now. There isn't no telling what I might 'a' been if I'd had a fair throw, like you have. I'm genius lost—that's what I am. I've starved an' I've froze an' I've drowned, an' I've never had a real big dream come true. Now I don't want you to shed no tears of sympathy over me, Percy; but just the same I want you to understand how I've been crawlin' out of the little end of the horn all my life. An' I enjoyed it until I met you. But you've enlightened me, Percy. You've made me see what I've missed an' you've set my insides biling with ambition. You've spoiled me—an' that's putting it weak. So I've made up my mind to have one great big glorious fling if I die for it. Do you understand? From now on I'm goin' to make history up in these here diggings. I'm goin' to cut 'er open to the limit. I've just seen what it is to be a lord—an' I'm goin' to be a lord! Yes, sir—a real, live, blood-eating lord—without the whiskers; an' you're goin' to be Billy Smoke. Begin to see the point, Percy?"

Billy paused to allow the significance of his words to sink in and primed the bowl of his pipe. Lord Percival stood speechless, focusing Billy with the wild glare of his one good eye.

"Begin to see the drift?" asked Billy mildly. "Henceforth an' from now on I'm Lord Percival Algernon Jones, an' as such I hereby take possession of everything belongin' to Lord Percival Algernon Jones, includin' James an' the

and care for Lord Percival until his return some weeks later. Then he went over to interview James. Three times that benighted individual took a ducking in the river before he could be made to see the new orbit in which he was to travel. Inside of half an hour Billy's canoe was packed, and he approached Lord Percival. His Lordship had not moved a step.

"Don't speak—don't whisper!" begged Billy. "It's a licking a word now, Percy. I've just come for the eyeglass. I've an uncanny hankering for that thing."

Lord Percival made a movement. His thin throat twitched as if he were about to speak; but there was something in Billy Smoke's smiling eyes that stopped him. With the eyeglass Billy returned to the canoe.

"James," he invited, "step in!"

In one last loyal stand James struck the attitude of an unhearing statue. Billy came up very close to him and his teeth smiled through the stubble on his face.

"James!" he said softly. "Hi—Hi beg your pardon, sir!" exclaimed James, stepping in double-quick to the canoe.

Billy lost no time in getting away, and not a word came from His Lordship's lips. There was something in his silence, in the gray pallor of his lean face and in the steady glare of his one eye that gave Billy his first twinges of uneasiness; but the feeling quickly passed. He knew that Lord Percival was anchored for an indefinite period. Nothing could induce the Indian to move in the face of

his final injunction, especially as he would be unable to understand a word of Lord Percival's ravings. In addition to this Billy had told him that Lord Percival was crazy, and that he must watch him closely until his return. Meanwhile Billy planned to have the biggest time of his life. Back in the valley he had learned a lot about Lord Percival. He was the representative of the big London syndicate that had gobbled up everything worth while at Churchman, and he was going up to look things over for his brother capitalists, invested with an authority that was unlimited. Moreover, there was not a soul at Churchman who had ever had the pleasure of gazing upon his blue-blooded face—a circumstance of vital importance to Billy Smoke. All in all Billy figured that he ought to have a very good time. His one present uneasiness lay in James.

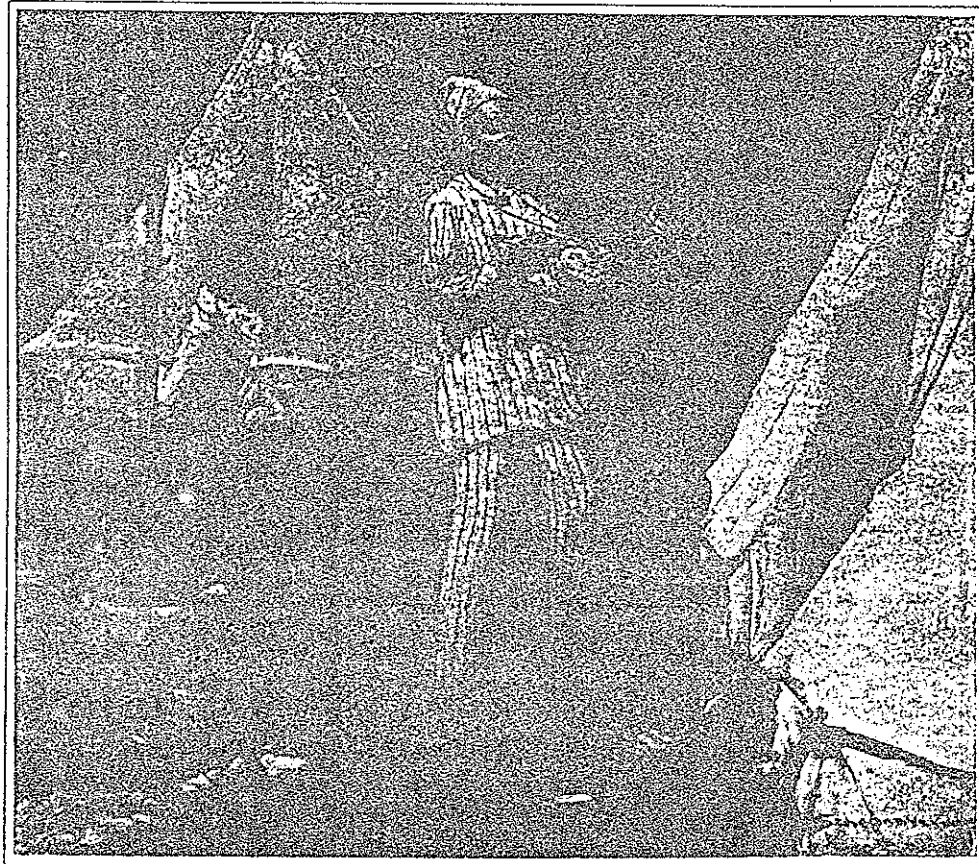
A little before noon he ran ashore on a level strip of gravelly riverbed and discussed the situation in more definite detail with James.

He finished by sitting down close beside that exhausted person and pulling from his holster a curious-looking weapon of black, shining metal.

"I'm goin' to show you something interesting, James," he said. "See this? It's what we call an automatic—an' you'll notice it's got the picture of a warwhooping savage, with feathers in his hair, on the handle. That means it's a bad weapon. Now"—and he touched a spring in the butt—"this is what we call the clip, an' you'll observe there's ten cartridges in it, with another in the chamber—eleven in all. Now I shove this clip back—an' you see that pond-lily leaf —"

A steady stream of fire leaped forth from the gun and the leaf disappeared.

"Eleven shots in four seconds!" he went on. "Pretty good—ain't it, James? Now what I'm calling your attention to is this: if you so much as wink out of the wrong side of your eye when we reach Churchman, or if you open your mouth to say a word that ain't spoken to me, I'm goin' to put eleven bullets into you so quick that you won't



"I'll Have a Word With You, My Man!"

tin baw-w-w-whtub. You're two hundred miles from nowhere an' you can't move a foot without getting lost. I'm goin' to leave you here with the Indian. He don't understand your lingo an' you can curse him all you want to. My vally and me are goin' on up to Churchman. I'm goin' to live like a lord if it ain't for more'n a week. An' you might as well take it easy an' keep quiet, for if you say two words I'll wallop the dickens out of you!"

"This—is this outlawry!" gasped His Lordship, his teeth fairly chattering.

Billy Smoke calmly rolled up his sleeves. "Four words—two lickings!" he figured. "I'll let you off this time, Percy, just for decency's sake; but if you open your trap again —"

He spat on his hands. For one moment Lord Percival's pale blue eye glared into Billy's. His thin lips quivered. His bloodless cheeks were the color of ash. Then his trembling fingers fell to fumbling with his eyeglass, and without another word Billy turned toward the tents. In Cree he informed the Indian that he was to remain behind

and round the tree until at length he discovers two very small and very green spots of light. It is more professional to climb up and poke Brer Coon out for some fun with the dogs, or even to cut down the tree, but the professional coon hunter is very apt to pot him with a shotgun. There is a certain atmosphere and flavor about the coon hunt at night that is not to be found in any other sort of sport. The coon hunt is the one great human democracy. Nor is the animal pursued wanting in his own cunning. Sometimes he is treed but cannot be found on the tree. The professional hunter will then tie round the trunk of the tree, as high as he can reach, a white rag or even a band of constables. He knows that Brer Coon will not back down over this sort of thing, but will stay up there until the next day, when he can be argued with at leisure.

Hunting rabbits with ferrets is a poacher's sport, but it is interesting to see it practiced—just once. It is an even bet whether you are going to get your ferret or your rabbit after the former has gone down a hole. Most ferreters use the ferret to start the rabbit and a shotgun to get him when he bolts from the earth. It is too near a cinch to be called sportsmanlike and it is forbidden by the law in many states. Far more ingenious and interesting was the expedient of the small boy who used to go out and get a string of rabbits with nothing but his coat and a little terrapin or land turtle. He would put a piece of hot waxing wax or a short length of candle on the top of the shell of his ally, and touching it off good and hot would send Mr. Terrapin down into the hole. It did not take the rabbit long to figure out that the hole was not big enough for two such companions. When he bolted the boy caught him in his coat.

The writer one time hunted wild turkeys with a rancher whose bird dog was a full-blooded bulldog. This pup looked as little like a sporting dog as anything that could well be imagined; yet he had nose enough to trail the birds. Having treed them, he would make sincere endeavors to gnaw down the tree, while attracting our attention by giving vent to the wildest bull-pup clamorings. This three-cornered arrangement proved profitable to everybody but the turkeys.

Man is the greatest of all hunting animals and the one with the greatest ingenuity. For instance, an old trapper up in British Columbia nearly always managed

to have plenty of Mallard ducks to eat, although he never fired a gun. He caught them in steel traps set under the water, and used no bait but a piece of bright tin lashed to the pan of the trap. The ducks would come and peck at this curious object, and later on get themselves picked for their curiosity.

Probably no one would lament very much if the entire breed of English sparrows were wiped off the earth. At one time live-bird contests were held on sparrows, but these were nearly always conducted in so brutal and inhuman a manner as to cause feelings of revulsion among most of the spectators. Trap-shooting at pigeons is none too commendable in its best form and is illegal now in most states of the Union. The sparrow shooters used very fine shot, with the result that many of these little birds would be seen walking about with broken wings. Because they were so small no trouble was taken to collect them. Such practices very justly brought trap-shooting into general disrepute, and it is now pretty much confined to artificial targets. Really the best part about a sparrow shoot was getting the birds in the first place. For this purpose the catchers used a square net like a landing net, attached to a long pole. Sparrows very often roost closely packed together on the ivy of an ivy-covered wall; and at night the netters would simply slap this net against the side of a church or a house, usually taking it down with several birds inside.

The bat is not a very lovable creature any way you look at him, nor is he ranked high in the plans of sportsmen, yet at one

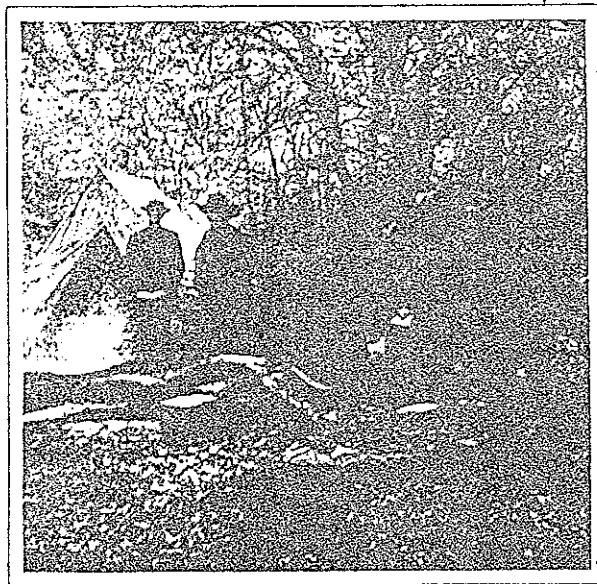
time in the South, especially near New Orleans, trap shoots at bats were not unusual. Professional bat-catchers supplied these creatures, which made a small and rather erratic mark when they started to fly from the trap.

Couring the hare with greyhounds is regarded as legitimate sportsmanship, and in England it is even the custom to course hares and rabbits in inclosures, the intent being, of course, to determine which is the better of the brace of dogs slipped in each course. An artificial system of scoring is used in this work, the killing of the hare not necessarily determining the winner of the course. There is a certain flavor of excitement in the hard riding of pursuit of a covote, with a big pack of dogs, over a rough Western country.

At one time in the Choctaw country (Eastern Oklahoma, a rough and heavily wooded region with very few human habitations, the writer joined a party of residents for a camp hunt after the winter's meat of wild hogs. Not a bad sort of camp hunt it was, twenty or thirty miles away from the nearest house, with the intent to capture animals almost as wary as deer. In this hunting we rode cautiously through the woods and round the edges of abandoned clearings until a bunch of hogs was sighted. Then it was necessary to dismount and stalk the game as cautiously as any other sort of big game. The endeavor was, if possible, to shoot the animal through the head or neck and to stop it at once. Later on I discovered that some of these hogs that we got had earmarks or brands denoting ownership. I understood then why

it was not considered wholly desirable for a stranger to engage in the shooting. We left the ears on our hogs which we had hanging around camp, for they seemed to be the kind of ears that suited our book. It was a touch-and-go country, and it was just as well not to have even a scraped hog showing the wrong notches missing.

Quite as practical as hunting hogs is the erstwhile Western pursuit known as hammering a slow elk. Being interpreted, this means shooting a beef animal that wears the brand of some one else. A great many "slow elk" have been killed all over the Western range. Out of that custom grew the amiable Western pastime of hiding behind the corral fence and potting the man esteemed to be too proficient in acquiring his neighbor's slow elk. Both these pastimes now, however, have somewhat fallen into disuse.



A Camp of Wild Hog Hunters in the Wilderness.

THE LAWLESS GODLINESS OF BILLY SMOKE

(Continued from Page 16)

never heard before, and little chills of joy and triumph chased up and down his spine.

Bellowed James, his voice vibrant with the pride and greatness of twenty generations:

"Is 'Tighness, Chamberlain of the Exchequer, Lord Percival Algernon Jones!"

"Right-O!" applauded Billy Smoke, crawling stilly from the canoe. "Now, you sweet workers o' charity, you're goin' to see what a real lord's like!"

BRISTOL GARDAM came down from the veranda like a man who was just getting out from under the effect of a dose of chloroform. Half a dozen followed him and, to a man, their jaws hung loose. His Lordship had surprised them beyond their power of immediate recoupment, and the finely worded greeting which Gardam had been memorizing and polishing for a fortnight past sputtered and bubbled in his chest without articulate sound. Billy broke the ice with a smash.

"Hello, Brisey, old chap!" he greeted, holding out a hand on which James had

worked faithfully to relieve it of some of its knottlike toughness. "Sort o' surprised you, ain't it? Thought I'd come up in a private car or a steamship, mobby! They tried to tie me up with a bunch of Indians an' white guides; but there ain't no country on earth that Lord Percy can't travel through alone with a compass an' his eyes. Dam' nice country too! Beats Injy an' 'Afriky, so far you can't see 'em with a telescope. If you had a few lions an' tigers an' elephants it'd be ideal. James!"

"Yes, Your Lordship!"

"Nough, James. I wanted to see if you could talk. It's been hard on my vally, gentlemen."

He shook hands round twice while Gardam and the others were finding their wits, adjusted his eyeglass and produced a box of Lord Percival's expensive cigarettes.

"Have a smoke, gentlemen," he invited, "an' don't mind the lugubrious expression on James' face there. Dad was a stickler on etiquette—a reg'lar old king—an' James can't get out of the habit. I'm the only lord in the British Kingdom who can use his fists, cut wood, cut out of a wash dish,

an' chew tobacco; so don't offer me no silver drinkin' mugs or pat' de foy gruss. How's business, Brisey?"

"Splendid, Your Lordship," gasped Bristol Gardam. Then he found his voice. "You—you have surprised us, by Jove!" he laughed. "But it's—it's a pleasant surprise!"

"I thought they'd send up some weak-kneed, watery-eyed little aristocrat, eh?" asked Billy Smoke. "Let's take a look round. I've got half a million of my own tied up in this syndicate, an' I'm interested."

Three-quarters of an hour later Billy sat opposite Gardam at a big table in the quarters specially appointed for His Lordship. He heaved a real sigh of relief as he lighted one of the fancy cigars the manager had imported from London six months previously in anticipation of this visit.

"I feel easier—much easier," he said. "You know, we rather feared we wasn't getting the worth of our money. Somebody said you had too much conscience—an' that won't go! This success business is a knockdown affair, you know. Hardest fists win, Eh?"

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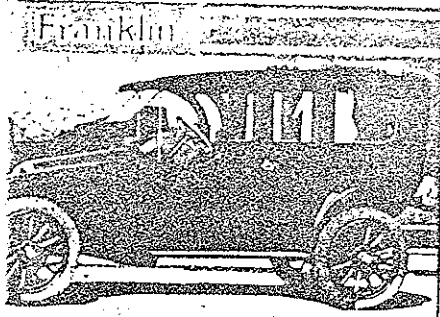


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Billy tried to appear calm, but there was a hard thumping at his heart. Bristol Gardam's little eyes glistened.

"We've saved half a million up here—by hitting hard," he chuckled. "We've got practically everything in sight, and when the new railroad comes up it's got to go just about where we tell it to. We've hidebound every possible terminal, an' there isn't an iron or coal prospect that we haven't got our fingers on in one way or another. We scared out the Fitzhugh interests so that they sold to us for about thirty cents on the dollar; an' that fellow who came up with fifty thousand dollars—"

"Left it with us," interrupted Billy, seeing the significance now of what he had read in one of the letters. "Good for you, Brissy! And now"—he struck a match to apply to a cigar that was already lighted—"and now—how about—that McKay affair?"

Gardam's hands rasped with a curious sound as he rubbed them together excitedly.

"Coming out a little differently from what we expected, Your Lordship—but right," he said. "Couldn't be better. You understand how this McKay—"

"I'm a little rusty on it," advised Billy. "Well, McKay has been squatting here for twenty years, an' through the Government he got that half-milestrip that holds the only good right-of-way through the range to the east. I wrote the company about that, you know—that if we didn't get hold of the McKay strip it would beat us out of a million to reach our coal lands over there. So we went after it. McKay would have sold, but the girl wouldn't. Then we found she had a half-interest in it and had been to school for two years down in Prince Albert. That's what cut the devil, Your Lordship—the school. We offered ten thousand—fifteen—twenty; she stuck like a little monster for a hundred!"

"Wasn't it worth it?" asked Billy mildly. "Seems to me, accordin' to your own figuring, that would have saved us just nine hundred thousand. But I catch your p'int, Brissy. You wanted to save us eighty thousand dollars more. You're a brack!"

Billy shivered. "That's it," Gardam exulted. "And we're going to do it! We're going to save ninety thousand—perhaps ninety-five!" "Did—did that man Walton marry her?" asked Billy, finding his breath a little difficult.

Gardam chuckled. "Better than that, Your Lordship. He went after her like a dog after a bone. She liked Walton mighty well, an' he posed as an enemy of the company from the time we sent him into the game. You see his scheme was to fake some sort of marriage deal if he couldn't get her to put her property in his hands before that; and then—"

"Vamome!" said Billy, biting hard at the end of his cigar.

"Just that," grinned Gardam. "We were to give him five thousand when the deal was pulled off and he was to disappear; but two things turned up to spoil that. This Faith McKay is a beauty. She'd get most any man going—and Walton fell in love. Top of that, after the girl had known him a little while she wouldn't have anything more to do with him. Then something happened—out in the woods. Walton said they were walking and that he only tried to kiss her. But anyway, McKay found Walton and nearly killed him on the spot. McKay stabbed him twice—and Walton lived just long enough to tell the story. The police have got McKay over at the barracks—and we're going to have that right-of-way within two or three days for five thousand."

Billy had turned his back toward Gardam and was looking out of a window. "Go on, Brissy," he said. "How are you going to work it?"

"It's about settled now," continued Gardam. "You see there's no hope for McKay. He'll swing. But the girl thinks there's hope; and I've induced her to sell so that they can pay the expense of a big defense."

Billy turned back to the table. His face was strangely white, but Gardam did not notice that. Adjusting his eyeglass, Billy opened Lord Percival's alligator-skin bag and dumped out a mass of papers. He did this for its effect on Gardam. Then he said: "I don't like the idea of murder, Brissy. But you've done mighty well. I've got a

lot of papers to look over; an' if you'll leave me—"

"Certainly, Your Lordship," cried Gardam, jumping briskly to his feet. "Shaff I return at dinnertime?"

"Yes. An'—see here, Brissy. Can you get hold o' this Faith McKay—right away?"

"I can have her here within half an hour, sir,"

"Bring her," commanded Billy shortly. "I want to see her alone. An' you needn't say anything about the visit. Understand?"

Scarcely had Gardam's back disappeared through the door than Billy sprang to his feet, with a look on his face that would have startled and amazed that individual had he seen it.

"James!" he called. A door leading into a second room opened and James appeared.

"Did you call, Your Lordship?"

For a moment Billy Smoke made no answer. He seized one of the vult's warm, fat hands and gazed squarely into his eyes. After all there was something strong and likable about James Augustus Dobbs. He was a man buried under generations of pagan servitude; and the grip of Billy's hand, unlike anything he had ever felt before, brought once more a flicker of something that was strange and new into his soulless eyes. Billy motioned him to the chair Gardam had occupied, passed him the box of cigars, watched him while he lighted one and then spoke.

James listened. His pale eyes opened wider as Billy proceeded. His heavy chin dropped. He uttered no sound and Billy went on evenly, without interruption. When he had finished James sat stunned and speechless, the cigar trembling between his pudgy fingers.

"What do you think of it?" asked Billy. "Hi—Hi thinks it's 'elish, sir!" gasped James.

For another three minutes Billy Smoke talked. At the end he waited for the other to speak. Slowly James stiffened.

"Hi'm with you!" he said at last. "Hi am—so 'elp me."

For the first time in his life he dared to offer his hand to a man. And Billy Smoke shook it until the papers rattled on the table.

FIFTEEN minutes later there came a knock at the outer door which set Billy's heart palpitating. It was not Gardam's and he knew it was Faith McKay's.

James opened the door, admitted some one who entered with a quick, timid step, bowed with prodigious stateliness, and then walked through into the inner room.

Not until he heard the inner door close did Billy lift his eyes from the paper which he was pretending to read. When he did he looked almost straight up, for the girl had come near and stood with her two hands gripping the back of the chair at the opposite side of the table. At first he was only conscious of a pair of wonderful blue eyes meeting his own—the eyes that women sometimes have whose beauty is the laughter of sunlight in a violet-blue sky. Even in the pain and the terror of the thing that was gripping like death at her heart that beauty flooded into them for an instant as Faith McKay looked into Billy's face, surging with the red blood pounded up from his heart. He was different from what she had expected. And she was different—with her wonderful blue eyes, her pale cheeks a little flushed, her brown-gold hair in a loose, rippling braid over her shoulder, her lips parted in a tense waiting that was almost pain. Billy Smoke rose from his chair. He had not intended there should be such an embarrassing silence, but he knew that if he spoke his voice would tremble; and so, instead of speaking, he stretched one of his big, strong, brown hands across the table. There came a catch in Faith McKay's throat. And then, slowly, wonderingly, her eyes questioning him like those of a child who fears and yet trusts, she gave him her hand.

For an hour after he had seen Faith McKay enter His Lordship's presence Bristol Gardam waited for her reappearance. He waited another half-hour before his patience was rewarded. He was so close that he marked the change in her. Her cheeks burned with a mysterious excitement. Her eyes turned upon him like blue diamonds, almost feverish in their luster; and wonderingly he marked the quickness of her step and the new poise of her head as she turned away, her thick

braid shimmering like a gold in the setting sun.

He knocked, and B him to enter. There v Lordship's face, too, puzzled. Billy was qu to see that, and proceed manager.

"By Heaven, but sh cried. "Brissy, I don't Walton. Do you know He stopped to light a "She is pretty. Ye replied with a look that desire to strike him. " "Sit down!"

Gardam dropped in Billy smiled across at hi "Look here, Brissy dentally. "You know can do anything I ple you've done so well th taking any authority c Understand? I want a matter—absolutely acc ment. Now, don't you would be pretty cheap f There was no mistak "Cheap as dirt, Your "Twenty would be ch "It's worth ten time Gardam, rubbing his ha

Billy Smoke passed smiled with the benign thoroughly well pleased quick perception.

"Now I don't want your hands," he repeat the authority to spend i you?"

Gardam nodded as he "And I don't want went on Billy. "I don't you at all; but I just wa don't pay her thirty th that property tonight with. Just a suggestion as you might say."

"Thirty thousand!" "Yes. It's worth ev is n't it—the compa thirty thousand tonigh think of it, Brissy?"

This time he winked "Why—if I think w Your Lordship."

"Good!" exclaimed B cealed satisfaction. "Yo matter so that you can Miss McKay right aft you?"

Gardam nodded again. "And there's another I'd like to do all I can f understand—of course. we can do for her father?"

"Nothing, absolutely Lordship. Even if we at that he was saving his dat when he killed Walton it v The case is out of our murderer, land, there is ment for that under the C McDowell tells me they him down to Prince Alber week. Nothing on ear from hanging."

"Too bad," mused B you're a better manager t If I was you I'm sure I'd thousand. It's hard on I I'm afraid—I'd make it— Gardam fidgeted.

"Perhaps I am a little ship," he ventured. "If s "Oh, don't mind me!" "I want you to do it. I think it over. Use your ment. I don't want to ta at all away from you."

His voice was so genial Bristol Gardam purred slowly gathered up the arranging and resorting th showed them off most as the little manager.

"This is—er—detachm for the Royal Northwest Brissy?" he asked carefu with studious care that s signed letter which he h up in the woods, ain't men?"

"Inspector McDowell, three privates," said Gar Shaw is down on the Lit for a dog thief."

Billy puckered his face "That's bad," he said, borrow a couple of those n

braided shimmering like a sinuous rope of pure gold in the setting sun.

He knocked, and Billy's voice invited him to enter. There was a change in his Lordship's face, too, and Gardam was puzzled. Billy was quick-witted enough to see that, and proceeded to enlighten the manager.

"By Heaven, but she's a blinger!" he cried. "Brissy, I don't blame that man Walton. Do you know —"

He stopped to light a fresh cigar.

"She is pretty, Your Lordship," he replied with a look that filled Billy with a desire to strike him. "She's —"

"Sit down!"

Gardam dropped into the chair, and Billy smiled across at him significantly.

"Look here, Brissy," he said confidentially. "You know, of course, that I can do anything I please up here; but you've done so well that I don't feel like taking any authority out of your hands. Understand? I want you to handle this matter—absolutely accordin' to your judgment. Now, don't you think ten thousand would be pretty cheap for that property?"

"There was no mistaking his smile.

"Cheap as dirt, Your Lordship."

"Twenty would be cheap, wouldn't it?"

"It's worth ten times that," chuckled Gardam, rubbing his hands.

Billy Smoke passed the cigars and smiled with the benignity of one who was thoroughly well pleased with the other's quick perception.

"Now I don't want to take this out of your hands," he repeated. "You've got the authority to spend the money, haven't you?"

Gardam nodded as he lighted his cigar.

"And I don't want to influence you," went on Billy. "I don't want to influence you at all; but I just want to ask why you don't pay her thirty thousand dollars for that property tonight and have it over with. Just a suggestion from the outside, as you might say."

"Thirty thousand?"

"Yes. It's worth even ten times that, isn't it to the company? She'd take thirty thousand tonight. What do you think of it, Brissy?"

"This time he winked—winked broadly.

"Why—? I think we'd better do it, Your Lordship."

"Good!" exclaimed Billy with unconcealed satisfaction. "You can arrange the matter so that you can take it up with Miss McKay right after dinner, can't you?"

Gardam nodded again.

"And there's another thing, Gardam. I'd like to do all I can for this girl. You understand—of course. Is there anything we can do for her father?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, Your Lordship. Even if we attempted to show that he was saving his daughter from insult when he killed Walton it would do no good. The case is out of our hands. He is a murderer, and there is only one punishment for that under the Crown. Inspector McDowell tells me they are going to take him down to Prince Albert some time next week. Nothing on earth can save him from hanging."

"Too bad," mused Billy. "I'm afraid you're a better manager than I'd be, Brissy. If I was you I'm sure I'd give the girl forty thousand. It's hard on her, terrible hard! I'm afraid—I'd make it—forty thousand."

Gardam fidgeted.

"Perhaps I am a little hard, Your Lordship," he ventured. "If you believe —"

"Oh, don't mind me!" interrupted Billy.

"I want you to do it, you know. Just think it over. Use your own good judgment. I don't want to take any authority at all away from you."

His voice was so genuinely flattering that Bristol Gardam purred all over. Billy slowly gathered up the scattered papers, arranging and resorting them in a way that showed them off most advantageously to the little manager.

"This is—er—detachment headquarters for the Royal Northwest Mounted, isn't it, Brissy?" he asked carelessly, scrutinizing with studious care the heading of a red-sealed letter which he held. "Pretty far up in the woods, ain't it? How many men?"

Inspector McDowell, a corporal and three privates," said Gardam. "Corporal Shaw is down on the Little Bear, hunting for a dog thief."

Billy puckered his face thoughtfully.

"That's bad," he said. "I wanted to borrow a couple of those men for a week or

so; but if they're goin' to take McKay down how the devil can I do it?" Before Gardam could reply he leaned anxiously across the table. "See here, Gardam. After you've settled this affair with the McKay girl I'm going to tell you something that'll open your eyes. An' meanwhile, as a sort o' reward for savin' us a few hundred thousand on this deal, you have my permission to write out a check to yourself for a thousand."

Gardam's eyes popped and his voice fairly trembled when he spoke.

"That's—That's mighty good of you, Your Lordship!"

Billy raised his hands deprecatingly.

"Nothing—nothing at all, Brissy," he assured him.

Then he smiled so significantly that Gardam stopped himself on the point of further speech.

"Brissy, will you do me a little favor?" he asked. "How long before it's dark?"

Gardam looked at his watch.

"In about an hour, Your Lordship."

"Well, as soon as it's dark, can't you bring our dinner over here—if it won't inconvenience you too much?"

"It will be a pleasure," assured Gardam.

"And then," continued Billy, still smiling, "can't you take me to this Faith McKay's cabin without any one seeing us? You see," he explained, as Gardam began to purr understandingly, "I've got an invitation to take dinner with Miss Faith."

After Gardam had gone, Billy sat for many minutes in deep thought, the smoke from his cigar rising thickly above his head. Suddenly he jumped from his chair and went across to a mirror that hung on the opposite wall and quite seriously studied the reflection of himself. It was a strong, square-jawed, forceful face that looked out at him, with keen gray eyes and a mouth that was softened by the humorous and pleasant things he had always found in life. Billy had never before contemplated himself with quite the same emotions as he was experiencing at the present moment. He found himself figuring up his age, which was thirty-four; but he looked younger, so much younger that he smiled stately. When he caught himself in the glass he turned away, flushing as hotly as though Faith McKay herself had detected him in the act.

Gardam returned at six o'clock, bringing with him a large basket, which Billy transported to James in the room beyond his own. He had already given James his instructions, but he repeated them now in a low voice:

"Remember—put out all the lights as soon as you've finished your supper—and lock the doors. Don't admit any one. Gardam may return, but if the lights are out he'll think you're in bed. You'll know my knock—three of 'em—like I told you."

Ten minutes later Gardam halted him in front of a cabin built of logs. Curtains were drawn at the windows, but Billy caught the gleam of lights inside. He was glad that darkness hid his face from the manager.

"Come back about eight," he said.

"Bring the papers with you. We'll settle this business right here with Miss McKay tonight."

He reached out deliberately and nudged Bristol Gardam in the ribs.

"Have a cigar, Brissy!"

Gardam went away chuckling. He turned in time to see the cabin door open and caught a glimpse of Faith McKay's pretty face in the lamplight as she greeted Billy. He was still chuckling when he returned to the company's offices and secured the two or three papers necessary for that night's deal. He was highly pleased with his Lordship and wished him a good time. He felt that Fate was making him mighty popular with this powerful representative of the Furthest North Improvement Company.

Promptly at eight he was back at the McKay cabin. Faith opened the door when he knocked. He glanced quickly into her face; and in spite of himself the smile that barely moved his lips flickered in his eyes. He had never seen the girl more beautiful.

Gardam lost no time in getting down to business. He suspected that his presence was not wanted for any length of time.

"I've made it forty thousand, Your Lordship," he said in a low voice. "And I—I guess it's going to be worth it."

Ten minutes later Faith McKay held the company's check for forty thousand

Bad lighting wastes money Good lighting makes money

This is true everywhere—in homes, offices, factories, stores, railway stations—everywhere.

Bad lighting wastes money by using more electric current than is needed to produce the light. It wastes money by having product not up to the mark. By straining and wearing out employes. By driving away trade.

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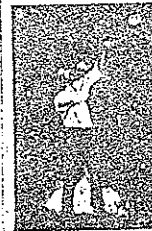
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ollars in her hand. With glistening eyes he looked at Billy. Gardam moved toward the door. He was astonished when Billy said:

"Wait for me outside, Brissy. I'll join you in about two minutes."

Billy closed the door after him and turned toward the girl. She had followed him halfway and stood with the check still in her hand, looking at him as a woman ever looks at a second man.

"Good night," he whispered. Even those two words almost choked him. She tried to speak, but it was only a little sound in her throat; and when Billy went to her, holding out his hand, the blue eyes that looked up at him were a swimming loveliness of tears. Billy Smoke could not have explained what happened then.

The next moment Faith McKay as in his arms and his face was pressed close down against her face; and he knew that he felt the gentle pressure of her arms about his shoulders and that he was telling her things he seemed now to have dreamed of, years and years ago, amid the fitting shadows of many lonely campfires. Bristol Gardam waited ten minutes instead of two for His Lordship.

VII

THE next morning Bristol Gardam found His Lordship sick in bed. As a matter of fact, Billy Smoke had never felt better in his life.

"My appendix" grimaced Billy in explanation. "The cursed thing kicks up fuss every so often. I'm afraid I can't go to that dinner you fellows have got up for me." He scowled savagely and gave a sudden twinge as if of pain. "You'll give 'em my excuses, won't you, Brissy? Tell 'em I won't last more than two or three days and that we'll make up for lost time then."

"You'd better let me send over the company doctor," suggested Gardam solicitously.

Billy smiled sweetly. "Brissy, you don't want me to commit murder, do you?" he asked. "I can't remember havin' a doctor musing round here since the day I come to town; and if you send one over now —" He doubled up a big fist and drew it significantly out from under his blanket. Then he revealed the other hand, and with it a small package plastered with big red seals cleverly one in wax by James Augustus Dobbs. Inside that package were two pairs of ragged socks and odds and ends of paper; but Gardam never would have guessed that in a hundred years from the manner in which Billy handled it. He looked from the package to Gardam, as though he could scarcely trust its secret to the little manager. Then he said:

"You've got to attend to this for me, Brissy. There's a hundred thousand dollars in this package and it's got to start up the river some time today. I want you to see Inspector McDowell and have him send two men down with it. It'll take a week to do the job; but tell him that it's mighty important, an' that McKay can wait 'till he gets this package can."

A few minutes later Gardam rose to go. It was three-quarters of an hour later when he returned, and as he came through the door his eyes glistened triumphantly.

"McDowell has ordered his men to get ready," he said. "They are to leave this afternoon."

Billy gave a groan of relief. "That's pretty good in Mac," he said. "Leaves only one man to take care of McKay, don't it?" he asked casually.

Gardam gave his shoulders a shrug. "McKay's down sick too. His girl is with him."

Billy's face was turned to the wall, and Gardam did not see the manner in which his mouth twitched or the exultant light that came into his eyes.

"This McKay girl is going to take dinner with me—here," he said. "So have brought over a little early, will you, Brissy? Of course—you understand —" "Sure—Sure—I understand, Your Lordship," replied Bristol Gardam.

Looking out of his office window, Gardam saw Faith McKay when she entered Billy's cabin. It was two hours later when she reappeared, and he observed that she went directly to her own room. At five o'clock Faith returned to her room in his prison, taking his supper with her. Bristol Gardam carried Billy's supper him at six. In spite of his sickness Billy was the happiest-looking man he had ever

seen. It was nine o'clock when Billy turned over and said that he felt like going to sleep.

No sooner was Gardam gone than he hopped from his bed and called for James. The valet entered from the other room and Billy motioned him to one of the two chairs beside the table. He passed the cigars and both lighted in silence.

"Do you know, James," said Billy, "I almost wish you was going with me? You'd be a mighty good pal in a little while, old fellow."

"Hi almost wish Hi were going, sir," replied James; "but Hi'm afraid Hi couldn't stand the strain."

"They talked and smoked until the hand of Billy's watch pointed to eleven; then Billy rose to his feet.

"It's about time, James," he announced. "I hate to do it, old man; but it's best for you. If I didn't, you know, they might think you helped me. Now—if you'll lie down—there—flat on your belly —"

He went to his bunk and drew out from under the blankets several short pieces of babiche rope. When he returned James Augustus Dobbs was lying flat on his face in the middle of the floor.

"I won't tie your hands too tight," said Billy as he went to work, "for it'll be pretty dang'ol uncomfortable waiting for some one to come an' set you free."

Quickly he tied James' hands behind his back and then bound his feet securely together. Then he rolled his prisoner over. "This gag ain't anything but a bluff," he went on as he tied three hard knots in a piece of cloth. "I'm goin' to twist it up an' put it on the floor close to your head. When Brissy comes in the mornin' you can yell an' tell 'im you just slipped the thing off. Understand?"

"Hi do, sir. Hi won't make a sound until then."

"And now, Dobbs, old man—goodby!" "Goodby, sir; han' may good luck go with you!"

Billy turned out the light. Softly he opened the outer door. Cautiously he stole out. The night was brilliant with starlight and he crouched low as he slipped away from the cabin, his heavy-caliber rifle trailing below his knee. All was dark in the McKay cabin when he rapped at the door; but instantly he heard a quick, eager step. The door opened slowly and he reached up his free arm. Faith slipped into it. She lifted her face to him, and for one glorious moment he felt the sweet warmth of her lips against his own.

"Everything is ready!" she whispered.

VIII

FAITH led him swiftly through the night. Her little hand clung tightly to his and at last she halted him on the edge of a small clump of balsams, beyond which, close to the shore of the river, lay the three small buildings that made up police headquarters at Churchman. One of these buildings was within a stone's throw of them and separated by some distance from the others. Faith pointed to it.

"He's in there," she breathed tremblingly. "I—I don't believe they'll watch him very closely tonight—because they think he is sick." Suddenly she gripped his arm. "There—look!"

In the shadow of the little building there appeared a tiny flare of light. The guard was lighting his pipe. Billy laughed softly, and as he laughed he drew Faith close up in his arms and looked down into her wonderful shining eyes. No woman had ever looked at him as she looked at him now.

"We've got to say goodby, little girl," he whispered. "You must go back an' undress yourself an' get into bed, so they can't lay anything up against you tomorrow. Everything's clear to you, ain't it, dear? We're goin' to strike west an' north into Alaska, and after a little we'll drop southward. You take the first mail down an' go to my sister in Winniepeg. An' then—bout next Christmas —"

Her arms tightened about his neck and he could hear her breathe, almost sobbing: "You'll come—then —"

"I'll come—or send for you," he said. "Now—you must go."

She drew her arms from about his neck and took his face between her hands.

"I'll wait for you and pray for you, night and day!" she whispered, and kissed him.

Five minutes later, like a shadow of the night itself, Billy Smoke came up behind the log guardhouse. Peering round the

end of the building, he found himself looking almost straight down into the glowing bowl of Private Ford's pipe. Ford was sitting down with his back to the logs, and it was many minutes before he moved. Then he rose to his feet and began to pound the ash from his pipe into the palm of his hand. It was Billy's opportunity. Ford did not see Billy's face and scarcely knew what happened. Only a gasp escaped his lips as Billy's powerful hands shut about his throat from behind. Not until he hung limp and heavy did Billy let him drop to the ground. Then he tied his hands and feet and bound a thick cloth securely over his mouth. After that he searched in his pockets until he found the

key that unlocked the log prison. Then he swung the door open a man stood within reach of his arms. The starlight showed a bearded face, and Billy saw a pair of staring eyes whose brightness made him think of Faith McKay's.

He stretched in a hand. "I'm Billy Smoke," he said.

A few moments later, from her opened window, Faith McKay saw shadows hurrying through the night, the edge of the forest they stopped to two light packs on their shoulders. They turned their faces into the thousand miles of desolation to the west; and they went Faith McKay knelt down by her bed to pray.

Oddities and Novelties

Plague for the Gipsy Moths

THE gipsy-moth fighters in Massachusetts have derived much encouragement from the success of certain recent experiments which have had for their object the spreading of a plague among the caterpillars of this destructive insect.

The disease in question is known as *flacherie*, or caterpillar cholera, and is extremely infectious. A caterpillar suffering from it stops eating, becomes weak and lazy, and usually crawls up on some vertical surface, such as a tree-trunk or fence, where it remains motionless. Soon it turns black and before long it hangs there dead. The slightest touch suffices to break its skin, and a thin, dark, offensive-smelling liquid flows out.

Under the direction of Mr. William Rieff, of the Bussey Institution of Harvard, attempts were made to spread this horrid malady among gipsy-moth caterpillars in a number of localities by introducing a few sick specimens among them.

In one case some oak and willow trees were found to be infested by a number of the insects, estimated at ten thousand. Two hundred sick and one hundred dead victims of *flacherie* were suitably distributed, whereupon it spread with amazing rapidity. Within twenty-four hours many caterpillars died, and a few days later it was reckoned that four-fifths of them had succumbed.

Similar results were obtained in other places, one method of distributing the sick specimens being to hang a few of them in a hammock-shaped bag between branches in the midst of dense foliage. Under such circumstances the caterpillars could be relied upon to crawl out and communicate the infection to the healthy insects on the tree. It was found that, following measures of the kind, such egg clusters as were deposited were comparatively small in size, containing proportionately few eggs, more than four-fifths of which were empty or infertile.

Caterpillars killed by the plague were mixed with water in different ways, and the mixture was either sprayed upon trees or painted in rings round the trunks. One of the other of these methods may prove valuable as a means of spreading the infection, but such methods would be expensive if applied on a large scale; whereas the distribution of sick caterpillars in the manner above described is accomplished at a trifling cost.

In the forests of Central Europe the number, a near relative of the gipsy, does enormous damage. Fortunately, when the species becomes numerous beyond a certain point, it is wiped out wholesale by natural outbreaks of *flacherie*. The suggestion is seriously made that the ravages accomplished by the bug might be greatly lessened through the spreading of the disease by artificial means.

Vaccines for All Diseases

BEFORE long there will be vaccines for nearly every ailment. Typhoid vaccine is already an old story. Our army, rank and file, is to be dosed with it and the navy is soon to follow suit.

At Bombay the British Government is making plague vaccine on a wholesale scale for all India, putting up eighty thousand doses a day in tiny fire-sealed glass tubes, one tube, one dose—given by hypodermic injection. It is an almost certain preventive of infection; but native superstitions are against its employment and difficulties are encountered in the use of it.

All the great epidemic diseases seem to originate in Asia, and thence travel westward by way of Russia, following the routes of Attila and Genghis Khan. They follow along the caravan routes of today. For example, grippé—a typical highly infectious germ disease—appears in a malarial form in Central Asia once in a certain number of years and journeys toward the west, setting sun at a regular rate of twenty miles a day—the ordinary speed of a train—adopting a suddenly accelerated pace on reaching the longitude of railroad express trains.

One of the worst of these Asiatic maladies is cholera, about which recently there was somewhat of a scare in our own country. We had frightful epidemics of it half a century and more ago—in New Orleans elsewhere. Hence it is pleasing to know that the mortality from this disease has been reduced to a relatively trifling figure by the use of a specific vaccine.

All such vaccines are made in the same way—that is to say, by breeding the germ of the disease, whatever it may be, in soup, and then killing them by raising the fluid to the boiling point. Nothing can be more simple. The microbe broth is prepared in the curative agent, administered by the hypodermic syringe.

These vaccines—otherwise known as dead cultures—have been used most successfully as preventives and even to some extent as cures for a number of diseases, notably pneumonia, carbuncle, inflammation of the kidneys, and the very dangerous disorder known as childbed fever. For treatment of pneumonia, in cases already developed, the germs are bred from sputum of the patient.

Boils, and even Riggs' Disease—a bacterial complaint which causes the patient to fall out—are successfully treated by means; and the same method is being adopted for dealing with certain dangerous forms of dysentery. One of the latter is caused by a bacterium recently discovered by a surgeon in our own army, Major F. Russell, and named by him Bacillus This particular bacillus has been made troublesome of late in the German army, as vaccine has been manufactured from it used among the troops of the Kaiser.

