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COUNTY NEWS

VOL. 82. LEONARDTOWN, MD., THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1921 $1.50 Per Year in Advance. No. 5050

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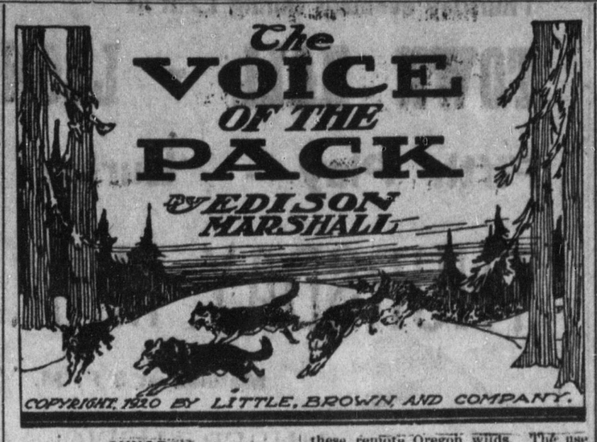

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE.

In the little town of Gitcheapolis small Dan Failing dreams boyish dreams, tinctured with melancholy over his supposed physical weakness. There, years later, he meets Destiny.

BOOK I—REPATRIATION.

CHAPTER I.—Warned by his physician that he has not more than six months to live, Failing sits despondently on a park bench, wondering where he should spend those six months. A friendly squirrel practically decides the matter for him. His blood is pioneer blood, and he decides to end his days in the forests of Oregon. Memories of his grandfather and a deep love for all things of the wild help him in reaching a decision.

CHAPTER II.

The dinner hour found Dan Failing in the public library of Gitcheapolis, asking the girl who sat behind the desk if he might look at maps of Oregon. He remembered that his grandfather had lived in southern Oregon. He looked along the bottom of his map and discovered a whole empire, ranging from gigantic sage plains to the east to dense forests along the Pacific ocean. He began to search for Linkville.

Time was when Linkville was one of the principal towns of Oregon. Dan remembered the place because some of the time-yellowed letters his grandfather had sent him had been mailed at a town that bore this name. But he couldn't find Linkville on the map.

He Couldn't Find Linkville on the Map.

Later he was to know the reason—that the town, half-way between the sage plains and the mountains, had prospered and changed its name. He remembered that it was located on one of those great fresh-water lakes of southern Oregon; so, giving up that search, he began to look for lakes. He found them in plenty—vast, unmeasured lakes that seemed to be distributed without reason or sense over the whole southern end of the state. Near the Klamath lakes, seemingly the most imposing of all the fresh-water lakes that the map revealed, he found a city named Klamath Falls. He put the name down in his notebook.

The map showed a particularly high, far-spreading range of mountains due west of the city. Of course they were the Cascades; the map said so very plainly. Then Dan knew he was getting home. His grandfather had lived and trapped and died in these same wooded hills. Finally he located and recorded the name of the largest city on the main railroad line that was adjacent to the Cascades.

The preparation for his departure took many days. He read many books on flora and fauna. He bought sporting equipment. Knowing the usual ratio between the respective pleasures of anticipation and realization, he did not hurry himself at all. And one midnight he boarded a west-bound train.

He sat for a long time in the vestibule of the sleeping car, thinking in anticipation of this final adventure of his life. He was rather tremulous and exultant as he sank down into his berth.

He saw to it that at least a measure of preparation was made for his coming. That night a long wire went out to the Chamber of Commerce of one of the larger southern Oregon cities. In it, he told the date of his arrival and asked certain directions. He wanted to know the name of some mountain rancher where possibly he might find board and room for the remainder of the summer and the fall. The further back from the paths of men, he wrote, the greater would be his pleasure. And he signed the wire with his full name: Dan Failing, with a Henry in the middle, and a "III" at the end.

He usually didn't sign his name in quite this manner. The people of Gitcheapolis did not have particularly vivid memories of Dan's grandfather. But it might be that a legend of the gray, straight frontiersman who was his ancestor had still survived in these remote Oregon wilds. The use of the full name would do no harm.

Instead of hurting, it was a positive inspiration. The Chamber of Commerce of the busy little Oregon city was not usually exceptionally interested in stray hunters that wanted a boarding place for the summer. Its business was finding country homes for orchardists in the pleasant river valleys. But it happened that the recipient of the wire was one of the oldest residents, a frontiersman himself, and it was one of the traditions of the Old West that friendships were not soon forgotten. Dan Failing I had been a legend in the old trapping and shooting days when this man was young. So it came about that when Dan's train stopped at Cheyenne, he found a telegram waiting him:

"Any relation to Dan Failing of the Umpqua divide?"

Dan had never heard of the Umpqua divide, but he couldn't doubt but that the sender of the wire referred to his grandfather. He wired in the affirmative. The head of the Chamber of Commerce received the wire, read it, thrust it into his desk, and in the face of a really important piece of business proceeded to forget all about it. Thus it came about that, except for one thing, Dan Failing would have probably stepped off the train at his destination wholly unheralded and unsung. The one thing that changed his destiny was that at a meeting of a certain widely known fraternal order the next night, the Chamber of Commerce crossed trails with the Frontier in the person of another old resident who had his home in the farthest reaches of the Umpqua divide. The latter asked the former to come up for a few days' shooting—the deer being fatter and more numerous than any previous season since the days of the grizzlies.

"Too busy, I'm afraid," the Chamber of Commerce had replied. "But Lennox—that reminds me. Do you remember old Dan Failing?"

Lennox probed back into the years for a single instant, straightened out all the kinks of his memory in less time than the wind straightens out the folds of a flag, and turned a most interested face. "Remember him!" he exclaimed. "I should say I do." The middle-aged man half-closed his piercing, gray eyes.

Listen, Steele," he said, "I saw Dan Failing make a bet once. I was just a kid, but I wake up in my sleep to marvel at it. We had a full long glimpse of a black-tail bounding up a long slope. It was just a spike-buck, and Dan Failing said he could take the left-hand spike off with one shot from his old Sharpe's. Three of us bet him—the whole thing in less than two seconds. With the next shot, he'd get the deer. He won the bet, and now if I ever forget Dan Failing, I want to die."

"You're just the man I'm looking for, then. You're not going out till the day after tomorrow?"

"No."

"On the limited, hitting here tomorrow morning, there's a grandson of Dan Failing. His name is Dan Failing, too, and he wants to go up to your place to hunt. Stay all summer and pay board."

Lennox's eyes said that he couldn't believe it was true. After a while his tongue spoke, too. "Good Lord," he said. "I used to foller Dan around—like old Shag, before he died, followed Snowbird. Of course he can come. But he can't pay board."

It was rather characteristic of the mountain men—that the grandson of Dan Failing couldn't possibly pay board. But Steele knew the ways of cities and of men, and he only smiled.

"He won't come, then," he explained. "Anyway, have that out with him at the end of his stay. He wants fishing, and you've got that in the North fork. Moreover, you're a thousand miles back—"

"Only one hundred, if you must know. But Steele—do you suppose he's the man his grandfather was before him—that all the Failings have been since the first days of the Oregon trail? If he is—well, my hat's off to him before he steps off the train."

The mountaineer's bronzed face was earnest and intent in the bright lights of the club. Steele thought he had known his breed. Now he began to have doubts of his own knowledge. "He won't be; don't count on it," he said humbly. "The Failings have done much for this region, and I'm glad enough to do a little to pay it back, but don't count much on this eastern boy. He's lived in cities; besides, he's a sick man. He said so in his wire. You ought to know it before you take him in."

The bronzed face changed; possibly a shadow of disappointment came into his eyes. "A lunger, eh?" Lennox repeated. "Yes—it's true that if he'd been like the other Failings, he'd never have been that. Why, Steele, you couldn't have given that old man a cold if you'd tied him in the Rogue river overnight. Of course you couldn't count on the line keeping up forever. But I'll take him, for the memory of his grandfather."

"You're not afraid to?"

"Afraid, h—ll! He can't infect these two strapping children of mine. Snowbird weighs one hundred and twenty pounds and is hard as steel. Never knew a sick day in her life. And you know Bill, of course."

Yes, Steele knew Bill. Bill weighed two hundred pounds, and he would choose the biggest of the steers he drove down to the lower levels in the winter and, twisting its horns, would make it lay over on its side. Besides, both of the men assumed that Dan must be only in the first stages of his malady.

And even as the men talked, the train that bore Dan Failing to the home of his ancestors was entering for the first time the dark forests of pine and fir that make the eternal background of the Northwest. He was wholly unable to understand the strange feeling of familiarity that he had with them, a sensation that in his dreams he had known them always, and that he must never go out of the range of them again.

* * * * * * *

Dan didn't see his host at first. For the first instant he was entirely engrossed by a surging sense of disappointment—a feeling that he had been tricked and had only come to another city after all. He got down onto the gravel of the station yard, and out on the gray street pavement he heard the clang of a trolley car. Many automobiles were parked just beside the station, some of them foreign cars of expensive makes, such as he supposed would be wholly unknown on the frontier. A man in golf clothes brushed his shoulder.

Dan looked up to the hills, and he felt better. He couldn't see them plainly. The faint smoke of a distant forest fire half obscured them. Yet he saw fold on fold of ridges of a rather peculiar blue in color, and even his untrained eyes could see that they were clothed in forests of evergreen. Over the heads of the green hills Dan could see a few great peaks; McLaughlin, even and regular as a painted mountain; Wagner, with queer white gashes where the snow still lay in its ravines; and to the southeast the misty range of snow-covered hills that were the Sickeyous. He felt decidedly better. And when he saw old Silas Lennox waiting patiently beside the station, he felt he had come to the right place.

It would be interesting to explain why Dan at once recognized the older man for the breed he was. Silas Lennox was not dressed in a way that would distinguish him. It was true that he wore a flannel shirt, riding trousers and rather heavy, leathern boots. But sportsmen all over the face of the earth wear this costume at sundry times. Mountain men have a peculiar stride by which experienced persons can occasionally recognize them; but Silas Lennox was standing still when Dan got his first glimpse of him. The case resolves itself into a simple matter of the things that could be read in Lennox's face.

Dan disbelieved wholly in a book that told how to read characters at sight. Yet at the first glance of the lean, bronzed face his heart gave a curious little bound. A pair of gray eyes met his—two fine black points in a rather hard gray iris. They didn't look past him, or at either side of him, or at his chin or his forehead. They looked right at his own eyes. The skin around the eyes was burned brown by the sun, and the flesh was so lean that the cheekbones showed plainly. The mouth was straight; but yet it was neither savage nor cruel. It was simply determined.

Lennox came up with a light, silent tread and extended his hand. "You're Dan Failing's grandson, aren't you?" he asked. "I'm Silas Lennox, who used to know him when he lived on the Divide. You are coming to spend the summer and fall on my ranch."

The immediate result of these words, besides relief, was to set Dan wondering how the old mountaineer had recognized him. He wondered if he had any physical resemblance to his grandfather. But this hope was shot to earth at once. His telegram had explained about his malady, and of course the mountaineer had picked him out simply because he had the mark of the disease on his face. As he shook hands, he tried his best to read the mountaineer's expression. It was all too plain: an undeniable look of disappointment.

The truth was that even in spite of all the Chamber of Commerce head had told him, Lennox had still hoped to find some image of the elder Dan Failing in the face and body of his grandson. Because of the thick glasses, Lennox could not see the young man's eyes; but he didn't think it likely they were at all like the eyes with which the elder Failing saw his way through the wilderness at night.

"You're Dan Failing's Grandson, Aren't You?"

Of course he was tall, just as the famous frontiersman had been, but while the elder weighed one hundred and ninety pounds, bone and muscle, this man did not touch one hundred and thirty. Evidently the years had brought degeneracy to the Failing clan. Lennox was desolated by the thought.

He helped Dan with his bag to a little wiry automobile that waited beside the station. They got into the two front seats, and a moment later were starting up the long, curved road that led to the Divide.

During the hour that they were crossing over the foothills, on the way to the big timber, Silas Lennox talked a great deal about the frontiersman that had been Dan's grandfather. A mountain man does not use profuse adjectives. He talks very simply and very straight, and often there are long silences between his sentences. Yet he conveys his ideas with entire clearness.

Dan realized at once that if he could be, in Lennox's eyes, one-fifth of the man his grandfather had been, he would never have to fear again the look of disappointment with which his host had greeted him at the station. But instead of reaching that high place, he had only—death. He knew what his destiny was in these quiet hills. And it was true that he began to have secret regrets that he had come. But it wasn't that he was disappointed in the land that was opening up before him. It fulfilled every promise. His sole reason for regrets lay in the fact that now the whole mountain world would know of the decay that had come upon his people. Perhaps it would have been better to have left them to their traditions.

He had never dreamed that the fame of his grandfather had spread so far. For the first ten miles Dan listened to stories—legends of a cold nerve that simply could not be shaken; of a powerful, tireless physique; of moral and physical strength that was seemingly without limit. Then, as the foothills began to give way to the higher ridges, and the shadow of the deeper forests fell upon the narrow, brown road, there began to be long gaps in the talk. And soon they rode in utter silence, evidently both of them absorbed in their own thoughts.

Dan did not feel oppressed at all. He merely seemed to fall into the spirit of the woods, and no words came to his lips. Every mile was an added delight to him. Not even wine could have brought a brighter sparkle to his eyes. He had begun to experience a vague sort of excitement, an emotion that was almost kin to exultation, over the constant stir and movement of the forest life. Once, as they stopped the car to refill the radiator from a mountain stream, Lennox looked at him with sudden curiosity. "You are getting a thrill out of this, aren't you?" he asked wonderingly.

It was a curious tone. Perhaps it was a hopeful tone, too. He spoke as if he hardly understood.

"A thrill!" Dan echoed. He spoke as a man speaks in the presence of some great wonder. "Good Heavens, I never saw anything like it in my life."

"In this very stream," the mountaineer told him joyously, "you may occasionally catch trout that weigh three pounds."

But as he got back into the car the look of interest died out of Lennox's eyes. Of course any man would be somewhat excited by his first glimpse of the wilderness. It was not that he had inherited any of the traits of his grandfather. It was absurd to hope that he had. And he would soon get tired of the silences and want to go back to his cities. He told his thought—that it would all soon grow old to him; and Dan turned almost in anger.

"You don't know," he said. "I didn't know myself, how I would feel about it. I'm never going to leave the hills again."

"You don't mean that."

"But I do." He tried to speak further, but he coughed instead. "But I couldn't if I wanted to. That cough tells you why, I guess."

"You mean to say—" Silas Lennox turned in amazement. "You mean that you're a—a goner? That you've given up hope of recovering?"

"That's the impression I meant to convey. I've got a little over four months—though I don't see that I'm any weaker than I was when the doctor said I had six months. Those four will take me all through the fall and the early winter. And I hope you won't feel that you've been imposed upon—to have a dying man on your hands."

"It isn't that." Silas Lennox threw his car into gear and started up the long grade. And he drove clear to the top of it and into another glen before he spoke again. Then he pointed to what looked to Dan like a brown streak that melted into the thick brush. "That was a deer," he said slowly. "Just a glimpse, but your grandfather could have got him between the eyes. Most like as not, though, he'd have let him go. He never killed except when he needed meat. But that—as you say—ain't the impression I'm trying to convey."

He seemed to be groping for words.

"What is it, Mr. Lennox?" Dan asked.

"Instead of being sorry, I'm mighty glad you've come," Lennox told him. "It's not that I expect you to be like your grandfather. You haven't had his chance. But it's always the way of true men, the world over, to come back to their own kind to die. That deer we just saw—he's your people, and so are all these ranchers that grub their lives out of the forests—they are your people, too. And you couldn't have pleased the old man's old friends any better, or done more for his memory, than to come back to his own land for your last days."

The words were strange, yet Dan intuitively understood. It was as if a prodigal son had returned at last, and although his birthright was squandered and he came only to die, the people of his home would give him kindness and forgiveness, even though they could not give him their respect.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Imperfections Jay Use

All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort and the law of human judgment, Mercy.—Ruskin.

The Island of Guam

The island of Guam, ceded to the United States by Spain in 1898, is 5,044 miles from San Francisco and 1,506 from Manila. It is 30 miles long and 100 around and has a population of 13,000.

POULTRY FLOCKS

BEST BREED FOR CAPONIZING

Rocks, Brahmas, Cochins, Langshans and Wyandottes Are Favored by Different Producers.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

In selecting the breed best suited for caponizing, several factors must be taken into consideration, say poultry specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture. Large capons bring the best prices. Consequently the breed should be large. It does not pay to caponize small fowls. Yellow legs and skin, as in other classes of poultry, are most popular. Plymouth Rocks, Light Brahmas, Cochins, Cornish, Langshans and Wyandottes are all recommended by different producers. There are also various

Performing the Operation.

crosses of these. Orpingtons also make fine capons, but the white legs and skin are somewhat of a disadvantage in this country.

Brahmas and Cochins possess good size. Some breeders claim that Brahmas are difficult to operate upon; others deny this. Plymouth Rocks and Wyandottes are somewhat smaller, but sell readily and possess the advantage of yellow skin and legs. The Langshan is large and is easily operated upon. The Cornish is probably most useful as a cross with some of the other breeds, thereby improving the breast meat without materially reducing the size of the fowl.

In Massachusetts the Brahma was formerly the most popular breed because of the demand for large birds for roosters. Later, crosses between the Light Brahma and the Barred or White Plymouth Rock became quite popular, while at present pure Barred and White Plymouth Rocks are perhaps most widely used.

Melons were first extensively cultivated in France early in the Seventeenth century, but were known to the ancients from the commencement of our era. The Egyptians grew them. They are said to have been carried to America by Columbus, and to the Malay archipelago by the Portuguese.

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