

The Man From the Bitter Roots

An Outdoors Romance of a Battle for Fortune.
By CAROLINE LOCKHART
Author of "Ma Smith," Etc.

CHAPTER XVI.
(Continued.)
The Clean-Up.
HE perceived that he was tricking from his hair and through his thick eyebrows when he reached the boat landing where ordinarily they crossed. He brushed it out of his eyes with the back of his sleeve and stared at the place where usually the boat rode. It was gone! Smaltz had taken it instead of the overhead tram in which he always crossed.

He kept on running along the river until he came to the steps of the platform, where the heavy iron cage, suspended from a cable, was tied to a tree. Bruce bounded up the steps two at a time and loosened the rope. It was not until then that he saw that the chain and sprocket, which made the crossing easy, were missing. This, too, was strange. There was no time for speculation. Could he cross in it hand over hand? For answer he put his knee on the edge and kicked off.

The impetus sent it well over the river. Then it struck the rock in the cable and slowed up. Bruce set his teeth and went at it hand over hand.

When he reached the platform on the other side he was just able to throw an arm around the tree and crawl out, while the ponderous iron cage, squeaking on the rusty cable, rolled back to the middle of the river, where it swung to and fro.

Bruce stepped up on the wooden casing which covered the pipes and bozzles inside the power house.

Down below, Banule had thrown out the switch and the machinery was running away. A rim of fire encircled the commutator. For a moment the amazing, unexpected sight deprived Bruce of the power to move. Then he jumped for the lever and shut down.

Smaltz stood his ground as Bruce advanced.

"Why didn't you answer that telephone, Smaltz?"

"I declare the receiver's dropped off the hook!"

"Why didn't you shut down?"

"How should I know? The bell didn't ring—Banule hadn't told me."

Bruce turned to the telephone and rang the bell.

"Hello—hello—hello!" came the frantic reply.

"What you swim, Banule!"

"Yes."

"Then take it where the cable crosses the river. Come quick. He put the receiver back on its hook and stepped to the lever. Smaltz's eyes opened wide as Bruce shoved it hard. He stared as though he thought Bruce had gone out of his mind. Then the dynamo began to pick up.

"What you goin' to do?" shouted Smaltz above the screech of the belt and the hot bearings.

"I'm going to kill you! Do you hear?" His face was blood-red, more than ever he looked like some battle-crazed grizzly seeing his victim through a blur of rage and pain.

"I can—throw you—across those commutators—here—over—my—stop—I'm goin' to give you fifteen hundred volts!"

A wild light came in Smaltz's eyes. "I get me up!"

"I'm all in," he yelled.

"Go on, then—talk!"

"I was paid."

For the fraction of a second Bruce stared at Smaltz's scared face.

"You were paid," he repeated slowly.

"Who?" and then the word came rapier-like as had the thought—

"Sprudell!"

"I told me to see that you didn't start. He left the rest to me." With sudden satisfaction. "And it's cost him plenty—you bet!"

He turned the boat loose in Meadow.

"Yes."

"You wrecked it on that rock!"

"Yes."

"You fouled the mercury in the boxes?"

"Yes."

"And Toy?"

"Smaltz whispered—he could barely speak—he told the truth—it was an accident. He jumped me—I threw him off and he fell in the sluice-box—backward—I tried to save him—I didn't want to see him die."

Finally Bruce took his knee from his chest and got up. Smaltz pulled himself to his feet and stood uncertainly.

"I suppose it's jail. There was sudden resignation in his voice.

"I want you to write what you told me—exactly—word for word. Write it in duplicate and sign your name."

He was still writing when Banule came, breathing hard and still dripping from his frigid sweat.

Smaltz handed Bruce the paper when he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."

Banule did as he was told.

"Now sign it," said Bruce, and Smaltz signed.

Bruce stepped to the double doors and slid the bolt.

"There's your trail—now hit it!" He motioned to the wilderness as he threw the doors wide.

Smaltz wheeled and turned sharply to Bruce.

"You know even a liar sometimes tells the truth and I'm goin' to give it to you straight now I've nothin to win or lose. This machinery never will run. The plant was a failure before it was set up. And he nobled you—suspiciously at Banule, 'sbody know better than that bud."

When he had finished and signed his name. Neither the writing nor composition was that of an illiterate man. Bruce read it carefully and handed it to Banule.

"Read this and witness it."