LORDS OF THE NORTH

A Story of the Trappers and Pioneers of the Great Northwest.

By A. C. LAUT.

Copyright 1900.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

A story of the pioneers and trappers in the Canadian northwest in the early days of the past century. Rufus Gillespie, a trader and clerk for the Northwest company, is telling his experiences and adventures. The story opens at Quebec. Gillespie, a lad of 18, is waiting in a club for his friend, Eric Hamilton, a trader with the Hudson Bay company. A number of old traders and army officers are gathered at the club, among whom were Jack MacKenzie, uncle of Rufus, and Colonel Adderly. Hamilton had been married only a year or so, and on arriving at the club late, was quizzed for his tardiness by the colonel, whom he struck with a whip. It develops that Hamilton, on returning home early that evening, could find no trace of his wife or child. He is sharply questioned by Gillespie, and it is surmised that they were abducted by Indians, one of whom, La Grande Diable, had a grudge against Hamilton. A visit is paid to the deserted camping ground of the Indians and traces are found of the missing ones. A severe snowstorm prevents a further search for three days, when the search parties are sent out in different directions. Gillespie secures the services of Paul Larocque, an old guide, who leads him through the woods to the camp of some Indians and vagabond white trappers. Among them he is surprised to find Louis Laplante, a schoolmate. With the latter's assistance he makes a search of the tents, but finds no trace of woman or child. He is told that a tent standing apart from the others sheltered a smallpox patient. Having doubts of Laplante's honesty, he returns by a roundabout way to the single tent, but is warned away. A month passes, but no trace. Again he visits the renegade's camp to drown his suspicions, and has pointed out to him a mound, the grave of the smallpox victim. Once more he visits the camp, finds it deserted, and, digging into the mound, discovered only a cache of provisions, thus verifying his suspicions.

Gillespie secures a commission in the Northwest company, and in the spring goes with the voyageurs on their annual trip to the head of Lake Superior. Hamilton attaches himself to the brigade of Colin Robertson, a former Nor'wester, but now in the employ of the Hudson Bay company, which leaves for Red river settlement by way of Ottawa and the Sault. They hope thereby to find some trace of the renegades who have gone north. Forced to camp at Lake Nipissing because of a storm, Gillespie discovers Laplante in an Indian camp, half drunk. He is filled with liquor by a trader and confesses that Le Grande Diable stole Hamilton's wife. Gillespie later finds this Indian among his crew, and that he was in search of his wife, the daughter of a Sioux chief. Diable also makes an attempt to kill Gillespie. Arriving at Fort Williams, the annual general assembly of the Nor'westers is held, and Gillespie is appointed to the Red river department, under Duncan Cameron. He also sees the daughter of a settler, to whom he is greatly attached. At the annual banquet, he learns that Robertson's brigade passes that night, and resolves to communicate with Eric Hamilton in some way. Father Holland tells of seeing a white squaw and a baby in an Indian camp on Lake Winnipeg, and Gillespie believes it was Miriam.

With the assistance of the priest and the unexpected aid of the girl, who had been given the name of "Little Statue," a boat is secured and the Hudson Bay brigade intercepted. Hamilton had already passed, however, but a message is sent forward. They are shadowed by an Indian canoe, and next it is learned Diable had deserted. The Red river brigade then starts for the north, the girl accompanying it with her father. Her presence has a refining influence on the rough trappers and voyageurs.

Duncan Cameron, at Fort Gibraltar, attempts to arrest Governor McDonell of Hudson's Bay company, located in Fort Douglas, for plundering Nor'west posts. His agents are laughed at, and, in retaliation, the Bois-Brules burn houses in the settlement and fire on Fort Douglas. Frances Sutherland, the "Little Statue," comes to Fort Gibraltar with news for Gillespie that Hamilton was wounded at Fort Douglas and wanted to see him, and on returning to the fort the two young people become good friends. In the fort Rufus recognizes La Plante, who, he learns, has been pressing his attentions on the girl.

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

I edged cautiously near enough the wounded man to see that he was not Hamilton. Near the litter was a group of clerks.

"They're fools," one clerk was informing the others. "Cameron sent word he'd have McDonell dead or alive. If he doesn't give himself up, this fort'll go and the whole settlement be massacred."

"Been altogether too high-handed anyway," answered another. "I'm loyal to my company; but Lord Selkirk can't set up a military despotism here. Been altogether better if we'd left the Nor'westers alone."

"It's all the fault of that cocky little martinet," declared a third.

"I say," exclaimed a man, joining the group, "d'y' hear the news? All the chiefs in there——" jerking his thumb towards a side door—"are advising Captain McDonell to give himself up and save the fort."

"Good thing. Who'll miss him? He'll only get a free trip to Montreal," remarked one of the aggressives in this group. "I tell you, men, both companies have gone a deal too far in this little slapback game to be keen for legal investigation. Why, at Souris, everybody knows——"

He lowered his voice and I unconsciously moved from my dark corner to hear the rest.

"Hoo are ye, gillie?" said the burly Scot in my ear.

Turning, I found the canny swain had followed me on an investigating tour. Again I gave him an inarticulate reply and lost myself among other coteries. Was the man spying on me? I reflected that if "the chiefs"—as the Hudson's Bay man had called them—were in the side room, Eric Hamilton would be among those conferring with the governor. As I approached the door, I noticed my Scotch friend had taken some one into his confidence and two men were now on my tracks. Lifting the latch, I gave a gentle, cautious push and the hinges swung so quietly I had slipped into the room before those inside or out could prevent me. I found myself in the middle of a long apartment with low, sloping ceiling and deep window recesses. It had evidently been partitioned off from the main hall; for the wall, ceiling and floor made an exact triangle. At one end of the place was a table. Round this was a group of men deply engrossed in some sort of conference. Sitting on the window sills and lounging round the box stove behind the table were others of our rival's service. I saw at once it would be difficult to have access to Hamilton. He was lying on a stretcher within talking range of the table and had one arm in a sling. Now, I hold it is harder for the unpracticed man to play the spy with everything in his favor than for the adept to act that role against the impossible. One is without the art that foils detection. The other can defy detection. So I stood inside with my hand on the door, lest the click of the closing latch should rouse attention, but had no thought of prying into Hudson's Bay secrets.

"Your honor," began Hamilton in a lifeless manner, which told me his search had been bootless, and he turned languidly towards a puffy, crusty, military gentleman, whom, from the respect shown him, I judged to be Governor McDonell. "Duncan Cameron's warrant for the arrest is perfectly legal. If your honor should surrender yourself, you will save Fort Douglas for the Hudson's Bay company. Besides, the whole arrest will prove a farce. The law in Lower Canada provides no machinery for the trial of cases occurring——" Here Hamilton came to a blank and unexpected stop, for his eyes sudenly alighted on me with a look that forbade recognition, and fled furtively back to the group at the table. I understood and kept silent.

"For the trial of cases occurring?" asked the goveronr sharply.

"Occurring—here," added Hamilton, shooting out the last word as if his arm had given him a sudden twinge. "And so I say, your honor will lose nothing by giving yourself up to the Nor'-Westers, and will save Fort Douglas for the Hudson's Bay."

"The doctor tells me it's a compound fracture. You'll find it painful, Mr. Hamilton," said Governor McDonell, sympathetically, and he turned to the papers over which the group were conferring. "I'm no great hand in winning victories by showing the white flag," began the gallant captain, "but if a free trip from here to Montreal satisfies those fools, I'll go."

"Well said! Bravo! your honor," exclaimed a shaggy member of the council, bringing his fist down on the table with a thud. "I call that diplomacy, outmaneuvering the enemy! Your honor sets an example for abiding by the law; you obey the warrant. They must follow the example and leave Fort Douglas alone."

"Besides, I can let his lordship know from Montreal just what reinforcements are needed here," contined Captain McDonell, with a curious disregard for the law which he professed to be obeying, and a faithful zeal for Lord Selkirk.

Hamilton was looking anxiously at me with an expression of warning which I could not fully read. Then I felt, what every one must have felt at some time, that a third person was watching us both. Following Eric's glance to a dark window recess directly opposite the door where I stood, I was horrified and riveted by the beady, glistening, insolent eyes of Louis Laplante, gazing out of the dusk with an expression of rakish amusement, the amusement of a spider when a fly walks into its web. Taken unawares I have ever been more or less of what Jack MacKenzie was wont to call a "stupid loon!" On discovering Laplante I promptly sustained my reputation by letting the door fly to with a sharp click that startled the whole room-ful. Whereat Louis Laplante gave a low, soft laugh.

"What do you want here, man?" demanded Governor McDonell's sharp voice.

Jerking off my cap, I saluted.

"My man, your honor," interjected Eric quietly. "Come here, Rufus," he commanded, motioning me to his side with the hauteur of a master towards a servant. And Louis Laplante rose and tip-toed after me with a tigerish malice that recalled the surly squaw.

"Oh, Eric!" I cried out eagerly. "Are you hurt, and at such a time?" Unconsciously I was playing into Louis' hands, for he stood by the stove, laughing nonchalantly.

Thereupon Eric ground out some imprecation at my stupidity.

"There's been a shuffling of allegiance, I hear," he said with a queer misleading look straight at Laplante. "We've recruits from Fort Gibraltar."

Eric's words, curiously enough, banished triumph from Laplante's face and the Frenchman's expression was one of puzzled suspicion. From Eric's impassive features, he could read nothing. What Hamilton was driving at, I should presently learn; but to find out I would no more take my eyes from Laplante's than from a tiger about to spring. At once, to get my attention, Hamilton brought a stick down on my toes with a sharpness that made me leap. By all the codes of nudges and kicks and such signaling, it is a principle that a blow at one end of human anatomy drives through the density of the other extremity. It dawned on me that Eric was trying to persuade Laplante I had deserted Nor'-Westers for the Hudson Bay. The ethics of his attempt I do not defend. It was after the facile fashion of an intriguing era. A sharper weapon was presently given us against Louis Laplante; for when I grasped Eric's stick to stay the raps against my feet, I felt the handle rough with carving.

"What are these carvings, may I inquire, sir?" I asked, assuming the strangeness, which Eric's signals had directed, but never moving my eyes from Laplante. The villain, who had befooled me in the gorge and eluded me in the forest, and now tormented Frances Sutherland, winced under my watchfulness.

"The carvings!" answered Eric, annoyed that I did not return his plain signals and determined to get my eye. "Pray look for yourself! Where are your eyes?"

"I can't see in this poor light, sir; but I also have a strangely carved thing—a spear-head. Now if this head has no handle and this handle has no head—they might fit," I went on watching Laplante, whose saucy assurance was deserting him.

"Spear-head!" exclaimed Hamilton, beginning to understand I too had my design. "Where did you find it?"

"Trying to bury itself in my head," I returned. At this, Laplante, the knave, smiled graciously in my very face.

"But it didn't succeed?" asked Hamilton.

"No—it mistook me for a tree, missed the mark and went into the tree; just as another friend of mine mistook me for a tree, hit the mark and ran into me," and I smiled back at Laplante. His face clouded. That reference to the scene on the beach, where his Hudson's Bay dispatches were stolen, was too much for his hot blood. "Here it is," I continued, pulling the spear-head out of my plaid. I had brought it to Hamilton, hoping to identify our enemy, and we did. "Please see if they fit, sir. We might identify our—friends!" and I searched the furtive, guilty eyes of the Frenchman.

"Dat frien'," muttered Louis with a threatening look at me, "dat frien' of Mister Hamilton he spike good English for Scot' youth."

Now Louis, as I remembered from Laval days, never mixed his English and French, except when he was in passion furious beyond all control.

"Fit!" cried Hamilton. "They're a perfect fit, and both carved the same, too."

"With what?"

"Eagles," answered Eric, puzzled at my drift, and Louis Laplante wore the last look of the tiger before it springs.

"And eagles," said I, defying the spring, "signify that both the spear-head and the spear-handle belong to the Sioux chief whose daughter"—and I lowered my voice to a whisper which only Laplante and Hamilton could hear—"is married—to Le—Grand—Diable!"

"What!" came Hamilton's low cry of agony. Forgetting the fractured arm, he sprang erect.

And Louis Laplante staggered back in the dark as if we had struck him.

"Laplante! Laplante! Where's that Frenchman? Bring him up here!" called Governor McDonell's fussy, angry tones.

Coming when it did, this demand was to Louis a bolt of judgment; and he joined the conference with a face as gray as ashes.

"Now about those stolen dispatches! We want to know the truth! Were you drunk, or were you not? Who has them?" Captain McDonell arraigned the Frenchman with a fire of questions that would have confused any other culprit but Louis.

"Eric," I whispered, taking advantage of the respite offered by Louis' examination, "we found Laplante at Pointe a la Croix. He was drunk. He confessed Miriam is held by Diable's squaw. Then we discovered some one was listening to the confession and pursued the eavesdropper off into the bush. When we came back, Laplante had been carried off. I found one of my canoemen had your lost fowling-piece, and it was he who had listened and carried my canoemen had your lost fowlnig-pieces, off the drunk sot and tried to send that spear-head into me at the Sault. 'Twas Diable, Eric! Father Holland, a priest in our company, told me of the white woman on Lake Winnipeg. Did you find this"—indicating the spear handle—"there?"

Eric, cold, white, and trembling, only whispered an affirmative.

"Was that all?"

"All," he answered, a strange, fierce look coming over his face, as the full import of my news forced home on him. "Was—was—Laplante—in that?" he asked, gripping my arm in his unwounded hand with foreboding force.

"Not that we know of. Only Diable. But Louis is friendly with the Sioux, and if we only keep him in sight we may track them."

"I'll—keep—him—in sight," muttered Hamilton in low, slow words.

"Hush, Eric!" I whispered. "If we harm him he may mislead us. Let us watch him and track him!"

"He's asking leave to go trapping in the Sioux country. Can you go as trader for your people? To the buffalo hunt, first, then, south? I'll watch here, if he stays; you, there, if he goes, and he shall tell us all he knows or——"

'Hush, man," I urged. "Listen!"

"Where," Governor McDonell was thundering at Laplante, "where are the parties that stole those dispatches?"

The question brought both Hamilton and myself to the table. We went forward where we could see Laplante's face without being seen by his questioners.

"If I answer, your honor," began the Frenchman, taking the captain's bluster for what it was worth and holding out doggedly for his own rights, 'I'll be given leave to trap with the Sioux?"

"Certainly, man. Speak out."

"The parties—that stole—those dispatches," Laplante was answering slowly. At this stage he looked at his interlocutor as if to question the sincerity of the guarantee, and he saw me standing screwing the spear-head on the tell-tale handle. I patted the spear-head, smiled blandly back, and with my eyes dared him to go on. He paused, bit his lip and flushed.

"No lies, no roguery, or I'll have you at the whipping-post!" roared the governor. "Speak up. Where are the parties?"

"Near about here," stammered Louis, "and you may ask your new turn-coat."

I was betrayed! Betrayed and trapped; but he should not go free! I would have shouted out, but Hamilton's hand silenced me.

"Here!" exclaimed the astounded governor. "Go call that young Nor'-Wester! If he backs up y'r story, he was Cameron's secretary, you can go to the buffalo hunt."

That response upset Louis' bearings. He had expected the governor would refer to me, but the command let him out of an awkward place and he darted from the room, as Hamilton and I supposed—simpletons that we were with that rogue!—to find the young Nor'-Wester. This turn of affairs gave me my chance. If the young Nor'-Wester and Laplante came together, my disguise as Highlander and turn-coat would be stripped from me and I should be trapped indeed.

"Good-by, old boy!" and I gripped Hamilton's hand. "If he stays, he's your game. When he goes, he's mine. Good luck to us both! You'll come south when you're better."

Then I bolted through the main hall, thinking to elude the canny Scots, but saw both men in the stairway waiting to intercept me. When I ran down a flight of side stairs they dashed to trap me at the gate. As the doorway a man lounged against me. The lantern light fell on a pointed beard. It was Laplante, leaning against the wall for support and shaking with laughter.

"You again, old tombstone! Whither away so fast?" and he made to hold me. "I'm in a hurry myself! My last night under a roof, ha! ha! Wait till I make my grand farewell! We both did well, did the grand, ho! ho! But I must leave a fair demoiselle.

"Let go," and I threw him off.

"Take that, you ramping donkey, you Anglo-Saxon animal," and he aimed a kick in my direction. Though I could ill spare the time to do it, I turned. All the pent-up strength from the walk with Frances Sutherland rushed into my clenched fist and Louis Laplante went down with a thud across the doorway. There was the sish-rip of a knife being thrust through my boot, but the blade broke and I rushed past the prostrate form.

Certain of waylaying me, the Scots were dodging about the gate; but by running in the shadow of the warehouse to the rear of the court, I gave both the slip. I had no chance to reconnoitre, but dug my hunting knife into the stockade, hoisted myself up the wooden wall, got a grip of the top and threw myself over, escaping with no greater loss than boots pulled off before climbing the palisade, and the Highland cap which stuck fast to a picket as I alighted below. At dawn, bootless and hatless, I came in sight of Fort Gibraltar and Father Holland, who was scanning the prairie for my return, came running to greet me.

"The tip-top o' the mornin' to the renegade! I thought ye'd been scalped—and so ye have been—nearly—only they mistook y'r hat for the wool o' y'r crown. Boots gone too! Out wid your midnight pranks."

A succession of welcoming thuds accompanied the tirade. As breath returned, I gasped out a brief account of the night.

"And now," he exclaimed triumphantly, "I have news to translate ye to a sivinth hiven! Och! But it's clane cracked ye'll be when ye hear it. Now, who's appointed to trade with the buffalo hunters but y'r very self?"

It was with difficulty I refrained from embracing the bearer of such good tidings.

"Be easy," he commanded. "Ye'll need these demonstrations, I'm thinkin'—huntin' one lass and losin' y'r heart to another."

We arranged he should go to Fort Douglas for Frances Sutherland and I was to set out later. They were to ride along the river-path south of the forks, where I could join them. I, myself, picked out and paid for two extra horses, one a quiet little cayuse with ambling action, the other a muscular broncho. I had the satisfaction of seeing Father Holland mounted on the latter setting out for Fort Douglas, while the Indian pony wearing an empty sidesaddle trotted along in tow.

The information I brought back from Fort Douglas delayed any more hostile demonstrations against the Hudson's Bay. That very morning, before I had finished breakfast, Governor McDonell rode over to Fort Gibraltar, and on condition that Fort Douglas be left unmolested gave himself up to the Nor'westers. At noon, when I was riding off to the buffalo hunt and the Missouri, I saw the captain, smiling and debonair, embarking—or rather being embarked—with Northwest brigades, to be sent on a free trip two thousand five hundred miles to Montreal.

"A safe voyage to ye," said Duncan Cameron, commander of Nor'westers, as the ex-governor of Red River settled himself in a canoe. "A safe voyage to ye, mon!"

"And a prosperous return," was the ironical answer of the dauntless ruler over the Hudson's Bay.

"Sure now, Rufus," said Father Holland to me a year afterwards, " 'twas a prosperous return he had!"

Fortunately, I had my choice of scouts, and, by dangling the prospects of a buffalo hunt before La Robe Noire and Little Fellow, tempted them to come with me.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW A YOUTH BECAME A KING.

When the prima donna of some vauntful city trills her bird-song above the footlights, or the cremona moans out the sigh of night winds through the forest, artificial townsfolk applaud. Yet a nesting-tree, a thousand leagues from city discords, gives forth better music with deeper meaning and higher message—albeit the songster sings only from love of song. The fretted folk of the great cities cannot understand the witching fascinations of a wild life in a wild, free, tameless land, where God's own hand ministers to eye and ear. To fare sumptuously, to dress with the faultless distinction that marks wealth, to see and above all to be seen—these are the empty ends for which city men engage in a mad, feverish pursuit of wealth, trample one another down in a strife more ruthless than war and gamble away gifts of mind and soul. These are the things for which they barter all freedom but the name. Where one succeeds a thousand fail. Those with higher aims count themselves happy, indeed, to possess a few square feet of canvas, that truly represent the beauty dear to them, before weeds had undermined and overgrown and choked the temple of the soul. That any one should exchange gilded chains for freedom to give manhood shoulder swing, to be and to do—without infringing on the liberty of others to be and to do—is to such folk a matter of no small wonderment. For my part, I know I was counted mad by old associates of Quebec when I chose the wild life of the north country.

But each to his taste, say I; and all this is only the opinion of an old trader, who loved the work of nature more than the work of man. Other voices may speak to other men and teach them what the waterways and forests, the plains and mountains, were teaching me. If "ologies" and "ics," the lore of school and markets, comfort their souls—be it so. As for me, it was only when half a continent away from the jangle of learning and gain that I began to stir like a living thing and to know that I existed. The awakening began on the westward journey; but the new life hardly gained full possession before that cloudless summer day on the prairie, when I followed the winding river trail south of the forks. The Indian scouts were far to the fore. Rank grass, high as the saddle-bow, swished past the horse's sides and rippled away in an unbroken ocean of green to the encircling horizon. Of course allowance must be made for a man in love. Other men have discovered a worldful of beauty, when in love; but I do not see what difference two figures on horseback against the southern sky-line could possibly make to the shimmer of purple above the plains, or the fragrance of prairie roses lining the trail. It seems to me the lonely call of the meadow-lark high overhead—a mote in a sea of blue—or the drumming and chirruping of feathered creatures through the green, could not have sounded less musical if I had not been a lover. But that, too, is only an opinion; for one glimpse of the forms before me brought peace into the whole world.

Father Holland evidently saw me, for he turned and waved. The other rider gave no sign of recognition. A touch of the spur to my horse and I was abreast of them, Frances Sutherland curveting her cayuse from the trail to give me middle place.

"Arrah, me hearty, here ye are at last! Och, but ye're a skulkin' wight," called the priest as I saluted both. "What d'y' say for y'rself, ye belated rascal, comin' so tardy when ye're headed for Gretna Green—Och! 'Twas a lapsus linguae! 'Tis Pembina—not Gretna Green—that I mean."

Had it been half a century later, when a little place called Gretna sprang up on this very trail, Frances Sutherland and I need not have flinched at this reference to an old-world Mecca for runaway lovers. But there was no Gretna on the Pembina trail in those days, and the Little Statue's cheeks were suddenly tinged deep red, while I completely lost my tongue.

"Not a word for y'rself?" continued the priest, giving me full benefit of the mischievous spirit working in him. "He, who bearded the foe in his den, now meeker than a lambkin, mild as a turtle-dove, timid as a pigeon, pensive as a whimpering robin that's lost his mate——"

"There ought to be a law against the jokes of the clergy, sir," I interrupted tartly. "The jokes aren't funny and one daren't hit back."

"There ought to be a law against lovers, me hearty," laughed he. "They're always funny, and they can't stand a crack."

"Against all men," ventured Frances Sutherland, with that instinctive, womanly tact which whips recalcitrant talkers into line like a deft driver reining up kicking colts. "All men should be warranted safe, not to go off."

"Unless there's a fair target," and the priest looked us over significantly and laughed. If he felt a gentle pull on the rein, he yielded not a jot. Unluckily there are no curb-bits for hard-mouthed talkers.

"Rufus, I don't see that ye wear a ticket warranting ye'll not go off," he added merrily. Red became redder on two faces, and hot, hotter with at least one temper.

"And womankind?" I managed to blurt out, trying to second her efforts against our tormentor. "What guarantee against dangers from them? The pulpit silenced—though that's a big contract—mankind labeled, what for women?"

"Libeled," she retorted. "Men say we don't hit straight enough to be dangerous."

"The very reason ye are dangerous," the priest broke in. "Ye aim at a head and hit a heart! Then away ye go to Gretna Green—och! It's Pembina, I mean! Marry, my children—" and he paused.

"Marry!—What?" I shouted. Thereupon Frances Sutherland broke into peals of laughter, in which I could see no reason, and Father Holland winked.

"What's wrong with ye?" asked the priest solemnly. "Faith, 'tis no advice I'm giving; but as I was remarking, marry, my children, I'd sooner stand before a man not warranted safe than a woman, who might take to shying pretty charms at my head! Faith, me lambs, ye'll learn that I speak true."

As Jack MacKenzie used to put it in his peppery reproof, I always did have a knack of tumbling head first the instant an opportunity offered. This time I had gone in heels and all, and now came up in as fine a confusion as any bashful bumpkin ever displayed before his lady. Frances Sutherland had regained her composure and came to my rescue with another attempt to take the lead from the loquacious churchman.

"I'm so grateful to you for arranging this trip," and she turned directly to me.

"Hm-m," blurted Father Holland with unutterable merriment, before I could get a word in, "he's grateful to himself for that same thing. Faith! He's been thankin' the stars, especially Venus, ever since he got marching orders!"

"How did you reach Fort Gibraltar?" she persisted.

"Sans boots and cap," I promptly replied, determined to be ahead of the interloper.

"Sans heart, too," and the priest flicked my broncho with his whip and knocked the ready-made speech, with which I had hoped to silence him, clean out of my head. Frances Sutherland took to examining remote objects on the horizon. Hers was a nature not to be beaten.

"Let us ride faster," she suddenly proposed with a glance that boded roguery for the priest's portly form. She was off like a shaft from a bowstring causing a stampede of our horses. That was effective. A hard gallop against a stiff prairie wind will stop a stout man's eloquence.

"Ho youngsters!" exclaimed the priest, coming abreast of us as we reined up behind the scouts. "If ye set me that gait—whew—I'll not be left for Gretna Green—Faith—it's Pembina, I mean," and he puffed like a cargo boat doing itself proud among the great liners.

He was breathless, therefore safe. Frances Sutherland was not disposed to break the accumulating silence, and I, for the life of me, could not think of a single remark appropriate for a party of three. The ordinary commonplaces, that stop-gap conversation, refused to come forth. I rehearsed a multitude of impossible speeches; but they stuck behind sealed lips.

"Silence is getting heavy, Rufus," he observed, enjoying our embarrassment.

Thus we jogged forward for a mile or more.

"Troth, me pet lambs," he remarked, as breath returned, "ye'll both bleat better without me!"

Forthwith, away he rode, fifty yards ahead, keeping that distance beyond us for the rest of the day, and only calling over his shoulder occasionally.

"Och! But y'r bronchos are slow! Don't be telling me y'r bronchos are not slow! Arrah, me hearties, be making good use o' the honeymoon—I mean afternoon, not honeymoon. Marry, me children, but y'r bronchos are bog-spavined and spring-halted. Jiggle-joggle faster, with ye, ye rascals! Faith, I see ye out o' the tail o' my eye. Those bronchos are nosing a bit too close, I'm thinkin'! I'm going to turn! I warn ye fair—ready! One—shy-off there! Two—have a care! Three—I'm coming! Four—prepare!"

And he would glance back with shouts of droll laughter. "Get epp! We mustn't disturb them! Get epp!" This to his own horse, and off he would go, humming some ditty to the lazy hobble of his nag.

"Old angel!" said I, under my breath, and I fell to wondering what earthly reason any man had for becoming a priest.

He was right. Talk no longer lagged, whatever our bronchos did; but, indeed, all we said was better heard by two than three. Why that was, I cannot tell, for, like beads of a rosary, our words were strung together on things commonplace enough; and fond hearts, as well as mystics, have a key to unlock a world of meaning from meaningless words. Tufts of poplars, wood islands on the prairie, skulking coyotes, that prowled to the top of some earth mound and uttered their weird cries, mud-colored badgers, hulking clumsily away to their treacherous holes; gophers, sly fellows, propped on midget tails, pointing forepaws at us—these and other common things stole the hours away. The sun, dipping close to the sky-line, shone distorted through the warm haze like a huge blood shield. Far ahead our scouts were pitching tents on ground well back from the river to avoid the mosquitoes swarming above the water. It was time to encamp for the night.

(To be continued.)

Frequent Train Service to Hutchinson via "The Milwaukee."

Last spring "The Milwaukee" put on an additional train between St. Paul and Hutchinson. The service via that line to Hutchinson is now very frequent and convenient. The full schedule including the new train is as follows: Leave St. Paul 8:20 a. m., 4 p. m. and 6:50 p. m.; leave Minneapolis 9 a. m., 4:40 p. m. and 7:35 p. m. Leave Hutchinson, returning, 7:30 a. m., 9:30 a. m. and 2:55 p. m.—all daily except Sunday. Purchase tickets to Hutchinson via "The Milwaukee."

Street Fair, Red Wing, Minn., Oct. 1, 2 and 3.

The Chicago Great Western railway will on Sept. 30th, Oct. 2nd and 3rd, sell round trip tickets for one and one-third fare.

For further information inquire of A. J. Aicher, City Ticket Agent, corner Nicollet avenue and Fifth street, Minneapolis.

You hardly realize that it is a medicine. when taking Carter's Little Liver Pills; they are very small; no bad effects; all troubles from torpid liver are relieved by their use

On the Forecastle Deck

By MORGAN ROBERTSON

Copyright, 1901, by S. S. McClure Co.

"Who goes on lookout?"

I am the man, and I call out my name.

"Watch out for a flashing white light on the port bow. Relieve the wheel and lookout. That'll do the watch."

A man goes aft to the wheel, the watch goes below, and I climb the steps to the forecastle deck, where my predecessor is waiting at the capstan.

"Keep your eyes peeled for a flashlight ahead and to port. Pass the word along."

"All right. Go below—but what do they expect it is?"

"Don't know. Some lighthouse; we're on soundings."

He is gone. I rub the sleep from my eyes and scan the clear-cut horizon ahead. There is no sign of a light, and I pace up and down, and back and forth from cathead to cathead, with an occasional glance over the sea. It is a beautiful night—the kind that brings meditation and retrospection. The full moon hangs in the southern sky, and depending from it to the horizon is a darkening of the deep blue, which can only be likened to a shadow, or a curtain of shade. From a point a hundred yards from the ship to the base of this curtain extends a glittering, narrowing track of liquid fire. There are a few stars shining faintly in the flood of light; there is wind, a soughing breath aloft, just strong enough to belly the canvas; overboard is a tinkling, musical wash of water, accentuated to a rhythmical crash under the bow as the ship buries her cutwater, and losing volume on the way aft to revive in the swirling cross-currents of the wake. I can hear the murmur of my watchmates' voices amidships, and the regular thumping of the mate's bootheels on the poop. He is pacing up and down like myself, perhaps from habit, perhaps to waken himself; for we have all lost much sleep lately.

But I am wide awake—the moonlight and its memories have banished sleep—and I halt in my walk to lean over the capstan, with no fear of the drowsiness which usually attends the first half hour of the watch on deck at night. It was just such a night as this when I once walked through a lane with a girl and stopped at the gate of a flower-filled yard. And though my eyes are mechanically fixed upon the horizon ahead and to port, watching for that flashing white light, my mental vision is taken up with the image of the girl. She is facing me, one small hand resting on the gate, one small foot peeping from beneath her dress, the color gone from her cheek and the tears starting in her eyes. In the strong moonlight I can see the womanly pity and regret in her sweet face, the twitching at the corners of her mouth and the slow, troubled nodding of her head. She is saying: "No, no, I am not for you. We are not alike. You must go your way and I must go mine. We cannot even be friends, for there is no middle ground."

And that is why I am back before the mast this night, hanging over the capstan, watching for a flashing white light and thinking of her. The rebellious heart in my breast chokes me, and the rebellious brain in my head throbs in pain while it tries to formulate the reason of it all—why I, who must love her through life, am debarred on this account alone from her friendship, from her society—from even her acquaintance—I, who would give my all for a smile—for a glance of recognition, must not know her, speak to her, nor meet her. The stranger yet unborn is nearer to her than am I, and of the millions of human beings in the world she is farthest removed from me.

Because, for certain temperaments, there is no middle ground.

It is bitter speculation, and not all men have known it. In my own case I can only work out the problem to this: I love because I can apreciate—I lose because I love too much.

A twinkle of light shows on the dark line of horizon. I stand erect to make sure, and it is gone. As I watch it sparkles again.

"Flashing white light on the port bow, sir," I sing out, glad of the relief to my bitterness of mind—gratified that I had been the first to see it.

"All right."

I watch the light. It is not regular in its coming and going; it has a refulgence uncommon in beacon lights; it leaps to a flare and sinks to a glow; it expands to a nebula and breaks up into fragments.

"Keep her away for that light," I hear the mate call to the man at the wheel; then, to the third mate, "Rouse out all hands; send up a rocket or show a torch. That's a ship a fire."

A ship afire. I turn and look again. There is no mistake—the mate is right. I can clearly make out two slim spars and a black funnel, sharply cut in the reflection. The blaze is aft and the steamer is heading toward us, while from our change of course she takes a position from two points on the port bow to one directly ahead. As though the powers behind the wind had taken direct cognizance of the extremity, the breeze freshens with our change of course and we rush down the wind with breaking seas curling under our counter. Yards are square as before, for the change merely brings the wind from slightly on one quarter to slightly on the other. Soon we can make out the shape and position of deckhouses and the infinite shadow of hull beneath. Over the sparkling flare and left behind by her motion stretches a canopy of smoke, and there is a black thickening and rise of her sheer forward which can be nothing but closely packed human beings.

The watch below is out. Men are elewing up the courses; others are dancing aloft to the foreyard with hoisting tackles; aft, the third mate and the ship's boys are clearing away a quarter boat, and amidships the carpenter is sending up rockets. But I am on lookout, and until called down or relieved, can take no part in this.

With the increase of wind comes a lowering of temperature and a darkening of the sky. I shiver, and buttoning my jacket snug to my throat, resume my walk back and forth from cathead to cathead. A glance aft shows me the southern sky shaded with an almost opaque curtain of cloud; the moon is nearly obscured; a few flakes of snow brushed my cheek; a keener edge comes to the pressure of wind, and aloft the aeolian song of a new-born gale wails in the rigging. There will be trouble and grief to-night, I know—boat work in a snow storm and rising sea.

"Keep a good lookout for'ard, there," roars the mate from amidships, and I answer, thankful with a sailor's irresponsibility, that mine is the easiest duty on board.

Fast as we are charging toward the flaming craft, the snow squall is faster, and soon details are hidden; nothing but a red glow guides the man at the wheel, and toward this we rush at ten knots, while the blaze itself approaches at an equal speed, until again details are shown us. She is still head to wind; but engines have stopped, and steam is escaping in a muffled roar. The fire has reached the engine room, and we are just in time. To our ears against the gale come screamings and shoutings, and we see frantic waving of hats.

"Check in starboard port fore and cro'jack braces," calls the skipper from the poop. "Leave the main yards square till we try her. Down wi' the wheel. Starboard—hard over."

Around we come with the swinging of the yards until the canvas on the main is aback; the helmsman is given a course and the ship is tried. A little manipulation of the main yards satisfies the skipper, and we lie steady on the port bow of the steamer, drifting bodily to leeward, with vicious seas from squarely abeam pounding our weather side. We are hove to, with our starboard foreyardarm directly over the boats on the forward house. A skilful maneuver; but ours is a skilful skipper.

"Over with the boats!"

They are already cleared away, turned on their keels, and the yardarm tackles hooked to the ringbolts. Up they rise, one at a time, with two men in each to unhook and drop the boat back to the main channels. Outbound they swing, until the two end tackles from the fore and main yards can take their weight, and they descend to the water. One at a time the three boats are launched to the tune of the mate's roaring orders, and not a man is hurt or a drop of water shipped. A skilful job; but he is a skilful mate.

Aft, the ship's boys, under the third mate, have lowered the lee quarterboat, and are off with a hurrah, just ahead of the first whaleboats from forward. Then follow the rest; four boats' crews are racing to leeward to save life, cheering as they disappear in a thick smudge of snow from which they may not return. As the third mate is in the quarterboat, the other three must be in charge of the second mate and the two boatswains, leaving the first mate aboard; for I hear again his thundering voice from the poop: "Keep a good lookout for'ard, there!"

I answer again, and watch in the direction of the steamer. The towering flame seems to cut the snow in a line with my eyes; for, though I can see her distinctly, and apparently can see the crisping sea beneath my line of sight, the boats are invisible. I look slowly around at the invisible wall of gray, and see nothing but our spars and deck-fittings. No prompt report from a lookout could save a ship hove-to in this snow should anything under sail or steam come out of that gray wall; yet I am on lookout, and my duty is to watch. But I would rather now be in one of those boats, cheering with the rest as I pull to save life.

A rocket rises from amidships at regular intervals. We have a lazarette half full, and the carpenter does not spare them. Up they go, whizzing and sputtering, high above the royal yards before they turn down and burst. It is this bursting in mid-air that is depended upon to show our direction to the boats; it can be seen through snow and fog that would obscure the fiery line of ascent.

I turn to the burning steamer. She is now on our starboard bow, drifting to leeward at a lesser rate than ours; for we are under sail. She is pointing our way, nearly end on, and the flames amidships are lapping the bridge near the foremast—this from the change of head to beam wind. The black thickening at the forward rail is now thicker, and I can plainly see little dots and spots descending from it—people jumping, probably into our boats.

This is soon confirmed. The dots and spots cease dropping, and a faint cheer comes over the sea. Rocket after rocket goes aloft until a rousing hail to starboard indicates the return of the first boat. It is the quarterboat She comes ghost-like and immense out of the snow, and the third mate sings out:

"Women and children, sir. Let's have a bosun's-chair."

The boat comes around to the lee side. Four men have been left aboard and the bosun's-chair is already rigged. Down it goes from the lee main yard and brings up a woman. Down again; up with another. Then comes a man, with a child in his arms; then more men. The steward ministers unto them and the boat disappears into the gray.

The other boats heave in sight, one by one, and discharge their living freight, then—back to the steamer, and back to the ship. The decks are filling with men and boys, and here and there a woman or a child. Some seek the shelter of the forward house, and stare to windward at the red glare upon the gray wall. One slight figure leaves this group, steps upon the fore hatch and looks steadily up at me.

We are drifting faster than the blazing steamer; she is now on our port bow, and our distance is increasing, but, as I watch, the black line on her forward rail grows thinner and thinner, while boat after boat comes out of the snow and returns to her. Then they come, the four together, and I hear the joyful hail of the second mate: "Got 'em all, sir. Good thing, too. There's powder in her hold."

I step to leeward and look down on the confusion below, where three boats endeavor to keep clear of each other while a fourth unloads. Then I return to the capstan, where, facing me in the flurry of snowflakes, is a slight figure—a woman. One small hand rests upon the capstan, one small foot peeps from beneath her dress. I had seen this attitude in a girl at a gate in the moonlight. The parallel is more complete—there is the same slow, troubled nodding of the head. It is more than complete; it is the girl. For, though I cannot distinguish her features, I know her voice when she speaks.

"You would not come home, so I come to you. Why would you not come? I waited so long."

I spring toward her and she advances, her head still slowly nodding. I forget the situation—the storm, the crowded decks, my position on lookout, our isolated prominence in full view of those who would look and I extend my arms.

But a suden lighting up of the dull-hued blanket of sea and sky startles us both. Then comes gray darkness and on the port bow is a faint point of light where had shown the flare of the burning steamer, then a shock and a report like the boom of nearby thunder, and, with the point of light fast fixed in my eyes, I hear a thundering voice from the poop: "Keep a good lookout for'ard, there!"

A shiver, colder than the snow, passes through me; the girl seems to move away into nothingness; the gray of the snow-filled air changes to the clear brightness of a moonlit sky, and I am hanging over the capstan, still gazing at a point of light burning steadily on the port bow. It bursts into a flare for a second, then subsides to its steady glow.

"Aye, aye, sir," I manage to answer, while my brain reels and my legs quiver under my weight. "Flashing white light on the port bow, sir."

"All right—all right. Keep your eyes open on lookout, there." But he does not come forward.

* * * * * *

I have slept on lookout. How long I do not know, until a watchmate appears within call and I hail him.

"How many times did the mate sing out to keep a good lookout?"

"Once. He saw the light 'fore you did. Been asleep?"

"About a second or two."

Dreams are curious in that they require no time that can be measured by finite units. That call from the mate to "keep a good lookout for'ard, there," which I heard twice at different times in my dream was the call which wakened me. A dream is an instantaneous photograph, not a moving picture of sequences, and I had long known it. But what I do not know, and what I shall learn when I reach shore, is the inner meaning of that dream. I shall be there in a month, when the moon will again be full; and I shall seek a quiet country village that I know, a lane in that village, a gate in the lane, a house behind the gate—a girl in the house. I shall ask her if at half-past 12 of this night she did not dream of storm and fire and rescue at sea.

I shall also ask her something else.

UNCLE SAM'S MONOGRAM WHISKEY

The nearer you get to it through actual acquaintance the more you respect its qualities and rely upon its absolute purity.

ST. PAUL—GEO. BENZ & SONS—MINNEAPOLIS.

PIMPLES POSITIVELY CURED.

With my scientific treatments, specially prepared for each individual case, I speedily and permanently cure blackheads, large pores, pimples, and all disorders affecting the skin, the scalp and nervous system, at your home. Consultation in person or by letter is free and strictly confidential.

JOHN H. WOODBURY D. I., 163 STATE ST., cor. Monroe, CHICAGO.

PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM

Promotes the growth of the hair and gives it the lustre and silkiness of youth. When the hair is gray or faded it BRINGS BACK THE YOUTHFUL COLOR. It prevents Dandruff and hair falling and keeps the scalp clean and healthy.

BARBERS' SUPPLIES AND CUTLERY. Shears, Razors and Clippers ground.

R. H. HEGENER, 207 NICOLLET AVENUE.

NORTH-WESTERN LINE

C. ST. P. M. & O. RY.

Ticket office, 418 Nicollet. Phone 240, main.

†Ex. Sun. Others daily.	Leave	Arrive
Badger State Express—Chi'go, Milw'kee, Madison	7:50 am	10:45 pm
Chicago—Atlantic Express	10:40 pm	11:55 am
Chicago—Fast Mail	6:25 pm	9:00 am
North-Western Limited—Chi'go, Milw'kee, Madison	7:30 pm	8:15 am
Wausau, F.duLac, Greenbay	6:25 pm	9:00 am
Duluth, Superior, Ashland	†8:10 am	†5:20 pm
Twilight Limited—Duluth, Superior, Ashland	4:00 pm	10:30 pm
Su City, Omaha, Deadwood	†7:10 am	3:00 am
Elmore, Algona, DesMoines	†7:10 am	†8:05 pm
St. James, New Ulm, Tracy	9:30 am	8:05 pm
Omaha Express—Su. City, Omaha, Kan. City	9:30 am	8:05 pm
New Ulm, Elmore	4:20 pm	10:35 am
Fairmont, St. James	4:20 pm	10:35 am
Omaha Limited—Su. City, Omaha, Kan. City	8:00 pm	8:00 am

Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Ry. — THE MILWAUKEE LINE

Office, 328 Nic. Phone 122. Milwaukee Depot.

Leave.	*Daily. †Except Sunday.	Arrive.
* 7:50am	Chicago, La Crosse, Milw'kee	*10:50pm
* 3:00pm	Chicago, La Crosse, Milw'kee	*12:30pm
* 6:25pm	Chicago, La Crosse, Milw'kee	* 3:20pm
*7:30pm	Chicago-Pioneer Limited	*8:20am
* 3:45pm	Chic'go, Faribault, Dub'que	* 9:20am
† 3:00pm	.Red Wing and Rochester.	†12:30pm
† 7:50am	LaCrosse, Dub., Rk. Island	†10:50pm
* 7:50am	Northfield, Faribo, Kan.Cy.	* 6:15pm
† 9:00am	.... Ortonville, Milbank	† 5:45pm
* 7:35pm	Ortonville, Aberdeen, Fargo	* 6:55am
† 7:15pm	.Northfield, Faribo, Austin.	†11:20am
† 4:40pm	....Hutchinson, Glencoe....	† 9:45am

Trains for Hotel St. Louis, Minnetonka, leave Milwaukee Station: †5:00 pm. Returning, leave Hotel St. Louis, †7:45 am.

NORTH COAST LIMITED — NORTHERN PACIFIC

	Leave	Arrive
Electric Lighted—Observation Cars to Portland, Ore., via Butte, Missoula, Spokane, Seattle, Tacoma	* 10:10 am	* 1:45 pm
Pacific Express — Fargo, Jamestown, Bozeman, Helena, Butte, Spokane, Seattle, Tacoma, Portland	* 11:15 pm	* 7:05 am
Fargo and Leech Lake Local — St. Cloud, Little Falls, Brainerd, Walker, Bemidji, Fargo	† 9:05 am	† 5:10 pm
Dakota & Manitoba Express — Fergus Falls, Wahpeton, Moorhead, Fargo, Crookston, Grand Forks, Grafton, Winnipeg	* 8:40 pm	* 6:40 am

"DULUTH SHORT LINE"

Leave		Arrive
†8:15 am *2:00 pm *10:30 pm	DULUTH & SUPERIOR	*7:55 am †3:30 pm *7:00 pm

*Daily. †Ex. Sunday.

TICKET OFFICE—19 NICOLLET BLOCK. MILWAUKEE STATION, Minneapolis. UNION STATION, St. Paul.

THE GREAT NORTHERN

Office, 300 Nic. Phone, main 860. Union Depot.

Leave.	*Daily. †Ex.Sun. ‡Sun. only.	Arrive.
† 9:00am	St. Cloud, Fer. Falls, Fargo	† 5:35pm
† 9:00am	..Willmar via St. Cloud...	† 5:35pm
*9:50am	FLYER To Montana & Pacific Coast	*2:00pm
† 9:43am	Willmar, Su F., Yan., Su City	† 5:02pm
† 5:10pm	Elk River, Milaca, Sandst'ne	† 9:35am
† 6:10pm	..Wayzata and Hutchinson..	† 8:55am
* 9:03pm	..Minn. and Dak. Express..	* 7:00am
* 7:40pm	Fargo, Gd. Forks, Winnipeg	* 7:12am
	EASTERN MINNESOTA.	
† 9:20am	...Duluth, West Superior...	† 6:00pm
*11:50pm	...Duluth, West Superior...	* 6:10am

Sleeper for 11:50 train ready at 9 p. m.

CHICAGO GREAT WESTERN RY. "The Maple Leaf Route."

City Ticket Office, 5th & Nicollet, Minneapolis. Depot: Washington & 10th Ave. S.

†Ex. Sunday. Others Daily.	Leave For	Arrive From
Kenyon, Dodge Center, Oelwein, Dubuque, Freeport, Chicago and East..	7:40 am 7:35 pm 10:45 pm	10:35 pm 8:25 am 1:25 pm
Cedar Falls, Waterloo, Marshalltown, Des Moines, St. Joseph, Kansas City.	10:00 am 7:35 pm 10:45 pm	8:00 pm 8:25 am 1:25 pm
Cannan Falls and Red Wing	7:40 am † 5:30 pm	8:00 pm †10:25 am
Northfield, Faribault, Waterville, Mankato	†7:40 am 5:30 pm	†10:35 pm 10:25 am
Mantorville, Kenyon	5:30 pm	10:25 am

Minneapolis & St. Louis R. R.

Office, Nic. House. Phone 225. St. Louis Depot.

†Ex. Sunday. Others Daily.	Leave.	Arrive.
Watertown & Storm Lake Express	† 9:20 am	† 5:21 pm
Omaha, Des Moines, Kansas City, Mason City and Marshalltown	† 9:35 am	† 6:50 pm
Estherville Local	5:50 pm	9:24 am
St. Louis & Chic'go Limit'd	7:35 pm	8:05 am
Omaha and Des Moines Limited	8:35 pm	7:25 am

Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie

Office, 119 Guaranty Building. Telephone 1341. Depot, 3d and Washington Aves S.

Leave.	*Daily. †Except Sunday.	Arrive.
* 6:40pm	....Pacific Coast Points....	* 9:10am
* 6:35pm	...Atlantic Coast Points...	* 9:30am
	Depot 5th and Washington Aves. N.	
† 9:40am	..... Dakota Express	† 4:20pm
† 8:15am	.... Rhinelander Local	† 5:45pm

Burlington Route. Office, 414 Nicollet Ave. Phone 543. Union Depot.

Leave for	Terminal Points.	Ar. from
7:30am	Chicago—Except Sunday.	1:20pm
7:30am	St. Louis—Except Sunday.	....
7:20pm	Chic. and St. Louis—Daily.	8:25am

WISCONSIN CENTRAL RAILWAY CO.

Office, 230 Nicollet. Phone 1936. Union Depot.

Leave.	All Trains Daily.	Arrive.
7:25 am	..Chicago and Milwaukee..	8:50 am
7:05 pm	..Chicago and Milwaukee..	5:35 pm