

THE BRUTAL FACT

By JOHN G. NEIHARDT.

This is the tale of three men and a legacy not mentioned in the law books. Also, it is another episode out of the big eternal story of the lure of woman. To be sure, the woman does not walk in this scene; but nevertheless she is to be felt moving through the skirting shadows of the tale—like a Greek fate, let us say. Her mother was a Mandan Sioux and her father was French.

his voice was strange and choky—because the wood smoke drifted into his face, perhaps. "Talk about your liquors, fellows! That's the place to get your liquor—at a woman's eyes just as the sun goes down. But it's a long and costly way you get—long and costly. And then—there's the bitter taste, you know—the bitter taste!"

And then, for some reason, he lifted his eyes, scrutinizing the face of Jean. He could not see the tall Dane standing quietly there with the tin cup on his head. Through a writhing, blood-red haze he saw the form of the woman, infinitely alluring, dark, inscrutable as the night, crowned with many stars and scented with the spring.

Now when Mike Fallon came to Fort Aux Cedres, the center of the spring was in the air, and the woman was at Fort Aux Cedres. The latter fact would easily have been enough; but the two together worked magic in the visionary Celtic soul of Fallon. He forthwith saw the woman as she decidedly was not. To him she was the incarnation of the vast summer-scented prairie night, infinitely soothing, though charged with latent lightning—alluring—inscrutable—crowned with midnight and many stars.

He returned to camp and awakened the heavy sleeper with a shout. Fallon yawned, sat up—and found himself blinking down the muzzle of the Dane's rifle thrust in through the entrance.

"Get up and come out of that!" Fallon yawned, sleepily regarding the transformed face of Little Jean. Suddenly he leaped to his feet, staring with frightened eyes upon a face that was no longer Jean's, but that of an avenging fury. Instinctively he glanced about him for his gun. The ominous click, click of

You do not see her so; and perhaps you are right. But your eyes were not at Fort Aux Cedres in that particular springtime.

Now, Mike Fallon was a very good animal—big-boned, deep-chested, lusty; and the woman saw this, as she very often does. Also, Mike Fallon was the best rifle shot in the Northwest country, and this did not displease the woman. Perhaps the intimacy that followed was not quite according to the rules of the game, as we see it; perhaps, because the woman was quite natural, and the man—well, men are pretty much the same.

Still in through the entrance. Fallon pushed on into the twilight of the waste. Suddenly he saw, far up against a gray slope, a green splotch of vegetation. It was like a shoe's sole. He stopped and stared, doubting his eyes. Through the hush he heard the thin tinkle of falling waters. There was a steep declivity to be climbed. He made for it with a cry of "Hi!"

Things went very well for Fallon until the Dane came. The Dane was tall, raven-haired, taciturn, patient, was Jensen. His hair suggested carded flax, and his eyes were of the color of its flower.

It seemed more than a man's noiseless tread. Jensen, invisible thing that hunted him through the wilderness. He thought of his pursuer vaguely, as one might think of fate—fate with the bolt of death in its hand to deliver or withhold. One may think that and not die. But to die—to be like Jensen—to be like Jensen!

He had scrambled half way up the rubble-strewn slope when the report of a rifle boomed down the gulch and set the echoes leaping in the hills. He felt the wind of the shell, and the smitten surface of the slope a foot above his head spewed pebbles over him.

Now it happened with the appearance of the Dane that Fallon was no longer the best rifle shot in the country. Jensen was one of them. He could bore a squirrel's eye at fifty yards quite as often as Fallon. So the two fell to doing shooting stunts with a show of good-natured rivalry, which was not that at all, but a struggle for the mastery. The old hand laws have decided to meet in stunts in these latter days, yet the best of us can feel them striding under our starched shirt fronts now and then.

He relaxed his grip on the rocks and rolling over and over he observed the story of the struggle against irresistible odds. It sickened him.

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But when they had made the supreme test, each shooting a tin cup of whisky from the other's hand at sixty yards, they shook hands and divided the honors between them.

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However, Jensen kept the woman. After that it was "Jensen and Fallon," and very good friends they seemed to be, though Fallon could feel a wee drop of bad blood trickling through his system. "You ain't holding nothing against me, are you, Mike?" the good-natured Jensen would often say. "Cause if you are," he would add generously, "I ain't nallied down here."

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But little Jean managed to separate them until the bad liquor died out. Then she shamed them a bit and flattered them more, deftly touching upon that common weakness of all big men—their bigness—and talked his free-trapping schemes, until the big men shook hands and laughed about it all, and came very near getting drunk again as a mark of reconciliation.

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But the one wee drop of bad blood in Fallon's system had become two drops, nevertheless.

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The winter wore on toward spring, and the drunken quarrel seemed to have been forgotten; for the three played peacefully at cards, made plans for a spring expedition into the Black Hills for country, occasionally Fallon and Jensen would meet in little friendly bouts at marksmanship.

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By and by the long winter frayed out and the grass thrust itself up among the ragged edges. Strange fogs passed across the faces of the sun. Big shadows went walling through the lone firs. And there was a crying of the lone flycatcher, wook-wook-fleeing from the coming mystery. Out in the fog-cloaked days and the thrizzling night grew up the dull booming of the ice-drift in the river. The blue basins of the rain thawed out and washed the last trace of winter from the hills. And then, one day, lo! a lone robin chirped from a oastler's top. And it was April!

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That is the time when the itch for going gets into the quietest feet; the time when one wishes to be precisely where one is not. So little Jean and the Dane and Fallon, being freemen, accountable to none but when the great inscrutable god of wandering foot, set out upon the trail. Into the Northwest they went, driving their pack mules before them. And the two wee drops of bad blood in Fallon's veins seemed to have dwindled to none at all.

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But Jean laughed, and said he reckoned Fallon couldn't miss if he tried.

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Then a ghost walked for Fallon. He smoked very hard for many minutes, blowing rings of meditation into the campfire's glow. At length he spoke, and

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pale and the blood-red splotch of dawn grew up. Then he went into camp. Fallon snored heavily in the tent. Notably the Frenchman collected the powder horns and hung them about his shoulder. He filled a grub sack and strapped it on his back. Then he examined Fallon's rifle and found it empty. Taking the Dane's rifle, he went out to the mules and cut their lariats. He would not need them. He would travel light.

ing of a rifle ball, followed instantaneously by the boom and drawing echo of a distant gun. The powdered stone at his feet leaped up in a spray and struck him in the face. He glanced in the direction of the sound, and saw a splotch of gray smoke drifting across the face of a cliff at least 400 yards away. Instinctively, though vaguely, he recalled the skill of the long-range shot. Then the panic of the morning seized him again. None fears a weapon so much as he who is the master of it. He leaped to his feet and sped to the top of his speed down a dry gulch gutted with the floods of an ancient, long-forgotten rains. The sun was half way down the sky when Fallon stopped and stared about him again.

shot. He marveled at the killing pace set by the refugee. And little by little a sense of sorrow grew up in him. The fierce fire of his Gallic temperament had burned themselves out, and he could feel the chill of regret creeping into his soul. His nights were filled with dreams of a naked man crouching in his own shadow, with a pleading agonizer's face turned upward from a sun-burned gulf. Often through his restless sleep he heard the cry: "Jean, Jean, ain't I had enough?"

ADELINA PATTI'S EARNINGS

Great Vocalist Knew How to Get Big Salaries.

Her Drawing Capacity Justified It, However, and She Spent It Lavishly.

George Middleton, in the Bookman.

Adelina Patti never suffered from the financial timidity of a Jenny Lind. Not only was she a supreme vocalist, but, as Col. Mapleson remarked, "no one ever approached her in the art of obtaining from a manager the greatest possible sum he could by any possibility contrive to pay." But the musical miracle was the spoiled darling of her day, and she never failed to obtain exactly what she wanted. She was first engaged in London, in 1861, by Mapleson, to sing four nights "on approval," and, in case of success, to obtain £40 a week. This contract was not fulfilled, however, for, being hard pressed financially, she had borrowed £50 from a rival manager, and her receipt proved practically a contract. This was the beginning of a career so dazzling that its successive steps are simply a series of increasing bank notes. In 1872 she obtained in London 200 guineas a night, since she insisted on having more than Christine Nilsson, who was receiving £200. She sang twice a week. Ten years later she was given £5000 a night! Her famous contract to sing in America provided that the money should be paid her at 2 o'clock on the day she sang, also a drawing-room and sleeping car to be especially built for her, with conservatory, fernery, &c. Further, there was to be deposited to her credit \$50,000 for payment of the last ten performances—Patti's favorite device. She then received about twenty times what Marie and Grisi got. Her private car, incidentally, cost \$50,000, and contained a silver bath and gold keys to the doors, to say nothing of a \$2,000 piano. Patti only gave to the manager her voice and her costumes. Her drawing capacity justified this. "Lucia," as an example, was sung to an average of \$14,000. "Travinta" drew more, since she sang more notes. It was a frequent occurrence that she received about \$100,000 a night. Patti received 50 cents for each note. This was found to be just 7 1/2 cents a note more than Rosini got for writing the whole opera.



"The tall, patient Dane—the kind, the trusting Dane—waiting bravely for the treacherous blow with the tin cup on his head."

He returned to camp and awakened the heavy sleeper with a shout. Fallon yawned, sat up—and found himself blinking down the muzzle of the Dane's rifle thrust in through the entrance.

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an eager light flashed in his eye—and he fired! The Dane lurched forward and fell upon his face.

Fallon gazed steadily for a moment upon his fallen companion. Then he quietly set down his gun and blew the smoke from the barrel. With open mouth and wide eyes Little Jean stared upon the prostrate man.

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