THE FIGHTER

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

Author of "Caleb Conover, Railroader," "Dr. Dale," "On Glory's Trail," etc.

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(Continued.)

"I'd as lief be a germ aquarium as a germ cemetery" decided the girl, drinking deep of the cold, limpid water. "Is there any fishing in this pond, I wonder?"

"Well," drawled the guide, piqued that his medical advice should have gone for naught, "there'll be better fishin' to-night than there is just now. There's pretty sure to be a heavy mountain fog after a day like this. And those fogs get so thick, around here, sometimes, that the fish can't tell the difference between the fog and the water. And they swim right up into the tents. I've caught 'em that way dozens of times. Forrest Bird and 'Smiling' Kelly was telling me they came here once and—"

"Was it that sort of a bait you used?" asked Desiree innocently, pointing to a flask-neck that had worked its way into view from the pocket of the guide's jacket as he leaned over the fire.

He shoved back the offending flask; grinning sheepishly.

"Because" went on Desiree with the same wide-eyed innocence, "I've always heard it attracted more snakes than fish. Isn't it lucky there are no snakes in the Adirondacks?"

Rex sniffed longingly at the candy-box lying on the pile of wraps near the fire. Then he looked at Desiree and waved his tail with an air of disinterested friendliness. After which he resumed his study of the box.

"It will make you quite ill if you eat candy before dinner, Rexie," the girl told him.

The dog seemed impressed; for he moved away from the coveted treasure. But he eyed Desiree so sadly that she relented. Opening the box she searched till she found a chocolate wafer and tossed it to Rex. He caught it in mid-air. Caleb absent mindedly helped himself to a piece of candy from the open box.

"There was a young man so benighted," she admonished Conover,

"He never knew when he was slighted.
He'd go to a party
And eat just as hearty
As if he'd been really invited.

"And the moral of this is:—Wait till people say 'Please have some' before you dip in. Where are your manners, Caleb? Now, what are you looking at?"

"Say, but you're pretty to-day!" remarked Conover, his glance roving appraisingly over her trim figure in its roughing costume, and at the tanned, eager little face. "As pretty's you can be."

"I suppose everyone is," laughed Desiree, in embarrassment; noting Mrs. Hawarden's air of seeming not to have heard the bald praise. "Oh, see the beautiful green caterpillar that's come to our party! And a whole army of nice hungry aunts! There's a spider too. Do drive him off, Jack! Don't kill him, though. It's bad luck. For the spider, anyway."

"Avant, dread monster of the wilderness!" declaimed Jack; brushing the offender away.

Dinner and a long lazy afternoon. A row of exploration about the pond's edge, a visit to the island; a ramble through the woods;—and nightfall found the campers eating a firelight supper with the crass hunger of the unaccustomed outdoor sojourner. Then a short, yawn-punctuated chat around the campfire, and the signal for bed.

It is one thing for a man of cities to be delightfully sleepy after his first long day in the woods. It is quite a different matter for him to be able to fall asleep on a many-projectioned bed of balsam, while a guide snores raucously on one side of him and second man tosses in uneasy, muttering slumber on the other. After counting up to one hundred, and keeping tabs on a flock of visionary sheep as they leaped an equally mythical wall (and hoping in morbid disgust that some of them would fall and break their imaginary necks,) Conover rose quietly, pulled on such garments as he had removed, groped about till he found his thick waterproof coat and stumbled out into the open. He kicked the fire's smoulding logs into a blaze and looked at his watch. It was barely nine-thirty. He took out a cigar and prepared to sit down beside the logs and smoke himself sleepy again.

Then she came.

He was not surprised. Even before he turned his head or noticed the fall of her light feet on the mold, he somehow knew she was drawing near. He looked around to find her close behind him. Her hair was caught up loosely, and shimmered like a rust-shot aureole in the waning firelight. She wore the sweater and walking skirt of the afternoon. But her high boots had been changed for moccasins.

"I couldn't sleep," she whispered, clasping the hands he held out to her. "All the forest and the silences seemed calling to me. Besides, Mrs. Hawarden sleeps so,—so audibly. All at once, I felt you were out here. So I came. Is it very late?"

"No," he answered in the same key, "Not much mor'n half past nine. Sit down here an' I'll get a blanket to wrap 'round you. I ought to send you back, so's you won't catch cold. But it's—somehow it's so good to have you right here by me. This time to-morrow night I'll be glad to remember it."

"Don't get me any wrap," she forbade, stretching out her hands to the blaze he was again stirring into life. "I'm warm enough. And you'd fall over something and swear and that would wake somebody. Then I'd have to go back to the stuffy tent."

Rex, curled up asleep on the far side of the fire, lifted his head; wakened by the sibillant whispering. Seeing Desiree, he began to smite the earth resoundingly with his wagging tail.

"Hush!" whispered the girl, raising her finger in warning; as the collie's sleepy, golden eyes blinked more and more friendly greetings and the bushy tail increased the tempo of its beats. Mistaking her gesture, Rex rose with lazy grace, stretched himself, alternately, fore and aft, collie-fashion; and picked his way daintily across the cleared space to Desiree's side. He lay down at her feet, thrusting his cold nose affectionately into the hollow of her hand.

"What a gorgeous night!" murmured Desiree looking up at the black, star-strewn sky, "And we were going to waste it in sleep! The woods are calling. The dryads and fauns want us to come to their enchanted dell and dance with them. Shall we?"

Understanding not a tithe of her words the man nevertheless caught the flickering light of adventure in her eyes.

"I'm always game for anything you put a name to" he made answer, "I'm kind of heavy for dancin'. But if it'll be any sort of pleasure for you, I might have a try at it."

"Hush!" she warned, "If you speak as loudly as that you'll be sure to wake them. Isn't this fun?" she went on with a happy little laugh, "I feel as if we'd run away from school and were going to be scolded terribly hard when we get back. I dare you,—oh, I dare you! I double-dare you!"

"To what?" he demanded, infected by the sudden rush of mischief to her face and voice, "I'll do anything you say. Want me to haul out Steve Martin an' Jack an' lick 'em for you, or set fire to the old lady's tent?"

"Neither," she decreed sternly; adding with perverse wistfulness, "Though it would be interesting to see how Mrs. Hawarden's airy dignity would sustain her in a blazing tent. No, no. What I was going to dare you to do is much less spectacular. Nothing more exciting than a walk."

"A walk?" echoed Conover, "Why, it's near ten o'clock, an' cold as charity. Besides, it'll be all dark an' damp in the thick part of the woods."

"But I'm sure we'll run across a ring of fairies,—or a satyr, at the very least. Oh, the night is throbbing with magic! And these forests are calling. Shan't we answer the call?"

"Sounds to me more like Katydids," he demurred, "But, if you like, we can take a stroll. We'll be back in half an hour or so, an' that ought to be early enough, even for old Mrs. Propriety in there," with a nod toward Mrs. Hawarden's tent, "But you'll want some wrap, won't you?"

"No. I'm warm as toast. This sweater's so wudgy and soft; and it's as thick as thick can be. Come along!"

Laughing excitedly under their breath, after the manner of schoolboys making safe escape to truancy, the two stole away on tiptoes from the radius of fire shine. Rex, waking again at their departure, sighed as devotion dragged him from sleep and warmth; and trotted along solemnly in the wake of the two truants.

Before them lay a natural vista winding between ranks of black trees. Starlight filtered through, giving an uncanny glimmer to the still darkness.

"It is like breaking into fairyland!" gasped the girl, tense and vibrant with the hushed wonder of it all, "We are mortals. We have no right in Oberon's domain. But he sees what very very nice, harmless mortals we are. So he doesn't change us to bats or fireflies. He just lets us trespass all we want to. And perhaps he'll even let us see a real fairy. An elf, anyway."

Caleb laughed, in sheer happiness. Of her Oberon rigmarole he grasped little. But he saw she was in childishly wild spirits, and the knowledge of her joy thrilled him. The cold bit deeper as they struck rising ground and followed the glimmering forest-vista upward. Both instinctively quickened their pace to keep from shivering. But mere cold could not quench Desiree's pleasure in the simple escapade.

"We are runaway slaves!" she cried, her mood shifting from fairyland to a newer fantasy, "We are escaping from a fearsome Simon Legree named Conventionality! Conventionality is a wicked master who has whipped us and plied chains on us ever since we were born. And now we've put him to sleep in two tents and we're running away from him. He'd be furious if he woke up. But he's snoring very industriously. And he surely won't wake,—in either tent—for at least an hour. And by that time we'll be safe back again with our chains all nicely riveted on. And he'll never even guess we once ran away from him. No,—I'd rather think we're running away forever and ever and ever,—and then some more after that. And he'll never find us, no matter how long he hunts. We'll spend the rest of our life in the enchanted woodland, and live on berries and nuts. And our faithful hound who's followed us from slavery will catch venison for us. And—and if you ask him very politely, Caleb, perhaps he'll catch a tripe sandwich sometimes for you."

"Still remembering' that awful break of mine?" chuckled Caleb, as unreasonably excited as she. "That ain't fair!"

"It, wasn't a break!" she pronounced judgment. "It was a smashing blow at our Simon Legree, Conventionality. You are a hero. Not a lowly squidge See how silver the light is getting! I'm sure that means we're on the courtyard of the fairy palace. I shouldn't be one atom surprised if—"

With a little cry of alarm she clutched Caleb. From almost under her feet a partridge whirred upward, his beating wings rattling through the stillness like double castanets. Rex, with one staccato growl deep down in his throat, gave chase. But as the bird utterly refused to fly fair, and even resorted to unsportsmanlike rocketings that carried it far up through the treetops, the pursuit was quickly over. Rex, his ruff a-bristle, strutted back to the girl, walking on the tips of his toes and casting baleful glances of warning to left and right at any other lurking partridge that might be tempted to brave his ire.

"What was it? What was it?" demanded Desiree, startled far out of her fit of eerie gaiety.

"May be 'twas one of those fairies or satires you was hopin' would drop in on us," suggested Caleb, unkindly. "It was a reel treat to see how glad you was to meet him."

"You're horrid!" declared the girl, "As if any self-respecting fairy would jump up with a noise like ten gatling guns! I—Oh, the silver is turning gray. It's fog! The fog Steve Martin said we'd have to-night. And it's coming down around us like, like a Niagara of—of—"

"Of pea soup," supplemented Conover. "It's thick enough to cut. An' ten minutes ago the sky was perfec'ly clear. Best get back to the camp, before the measly stuff makes us lose our way. Then we would be in a sweet fix."

Backward they turned upon their tracks. Already the guiding tree vistas were wiped out. The two walked rapidly, pushing along with no better guide than their sense of general direction. For a full half hour they walked; Caleb helping Desiree over a series of fallen trees, gullies and boulders that neither had noted during their outward journey.

Then, out of breath, Desiree halted. "We're not going the right way!" she exclaimed. "We're going up-hill. I know we are. I can tell by the feeling. And the camp lies down by the pond."

They struck off at another angle. After ten minutes of fast, difficult walking, through the water-thick mist, Desiree came again to a halt.

(To be Continued.)

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WANTED—Housekeepers to try "Infusoria Cream." The finest and best silver polish known. Guaranteed harmless. Ask your dealer for it. S26 §*p

TO RENT—Typewriters, Underwood, Remington, Smith, Oliver, etc., at Mullins' Typewriter Exchange, 159 State St. B 20 *tf

DOOR AND WINDOW SCREENS made tao order. Old screens repaired in all kinds of wood and finish. Estimates furnished. Henry C. Hoffman & Co., 255 Water St. R16 *tf

PEOPLE SAY to go to the Bridgeport Household Supply Co. and trade with them. It is true because Mr. Berger gives you all accommodations. 1346 Main St., near Arch St. P18 *

UPHOLSTERING — Mattress making and steam feather renovating, Ernest Ortlepp, 171 Burroughs St. Telephone 312-2. U 13 *tf

SHOW CASES—Cigar combination and silent salesman, store and office fittings. Cabinet work of all kinds designed and made. Hoffman Show Case Co., 256 Water St. R14 *tf

LADIES' ATTENTION—Ladies will avoid worry by using our remedy for delayed period, and which is the only reliable monthly remedy for sale. Thousands of testimonials we have from our patrons to prove it. Positively refuse all others, no matter what they claim, trial sent free. Paris Chemical Co., Milwaukee, Wis. T23 *tf

MONEY TO LOAN

MONEY LOANED on household goods, also on second and third mortgages on property, to be repaid in small weekly payments. Strictly confidential. Bridgeport Loan Co., Room 110, Warner Building, 83 Fairfield Ave. B 13 * tf.

MONEY ADVANCED TO CONDUCTORS, engineers, firemen, trainmen, clerks, letter carriers, mail clerks, school teachers, bookkeepers, cashiers, mechanics and others. Strictly confidential. Heffron Co., Room 301 Meigs Bldg. G17 *tf

NOTES OF SALARIED PEOPLE and business concerns bought without security. Cheapest rates, easiest payments. Offices in 66 principal cities. D. H. Tolmon, Room 47, 46 Cannon St. S13 tf*

LAUNDRIES

OPEN AIR DRYING—Family washing, ironing taken by week. Park City Hand Laundry, 483 Newfield Ave. Telephone 1316-5. U 9 § * p

SHOES

NEW AND SECOND HAND Shoes for sale. Repairing neatly and promptly done at lowest prices. Nathan Hartman, 72 State street. A 1 tf

BIRDS

LOUIS COURTNEY, dealer in imported canaries, foreign song and Aviary birds and talking parrots and paraquets. Birdseeds, foods, gravel, etc. Birds boarded and conditioned. 114 Wall St., upstairs. Open evenings. R 3 § *

RAILROADS

New York New Haven and Hartford RAILROAD

JUNE 6, 1909
Trains Leave Bridgeport as Follows:

FOR NEY YORK—*4:44, $*5:16, †5:43, †6:24, †7:17, *7:48, †8:25, *8:51, 9:06, *10:00, *11:05 A. M.—*12:28, *1:49, *2:27, 3:00, *4:13, 5:07, *5:27, 6:12, *6:29, *7:22, *8:11, *9:27, 9:48 P. M.—SUNDAYS—*4:44, *5:16, †8:25, $10:00 A. M.—†12:10, *2:22, *2:27, *4:13, 5:07, *5:27, †6:45, *7:22, *8:11, *9:27, 9:42 P. M.

FOR WASHINGTON, via Harlem River—*12:30 (daily) A. M.; *1:18 P. M.

FOR NEW HAVEN—*12:32, *1:41, 6:50, 7:56, *9:21, 9:25, *10:44, *11:33 A. M.— 12:16, *12:30, 1:50, *2:29, *s3:23, 3:29, 3:46, *4:25, 4:57, 5:37, z6:01, *6:32, 7:01, *7:32, *9:39, †11:54 P.M.—SUNDAYS—*12:32, *1:41, 8:13, 9:43, *10:43, *11:33 A. M.—*2:29, *4:25, *6:32, 7:18, *7:32, 8:47, *10:03 P. M.

FOR BOSTON, via New London and Providence—*1:41, 6:50, *11:33 A. M.—*2:29, *3:46, *4:25, *6:32 P. M.—SUNDAYS—*1:41, *11:33 A. M.—*2:29, *4:25, *6:32 P. M.

FOR BOSTON, via Hartford and Willimantic—*9:21 A. M.—*3:29 P. M.

FOR WINSTED and Intermediate Stations—5:00, 7:00, 9:35 †11:40 A.M.—2:35, *5:51, 7:40 P. M.—SUNDAYS—8:30 A. M.—6:45 P. M.

FOR WATERBURY, ANSONIA, DERBY and Intermediate Stations—5:00, 7:00, 8:00, 9:35, 11:40 A. M.—2:35, †5:54, 7:40 P. M.—SUNDAYS—8:30, 10:50 A. M.—6:45, 8:50 P. M.

FOR GT. BARRINGTON, LENOX, PITTSFIELD, ETC.—7:00, 9:50 A. M.—4:33 P. M.—SUNDAYS—8:30 A. M.

FOR DANBURY, NEW MILFORD ETC., via Brookfield Junction—7:00 9:50 A. M.—4:33, 6:36 P. M.—SUNDAYS—8:30 A. M.—7:48 P. M.

FOR LITCHFIELD, ETC.—9:50 A. M.—4:33 P. M.—SUNDAYS—8:30 A. M.

s Saturdays, z Except Saturday via Hawleyville.

*Express trains. †Local Express

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