

## PERUNA A WONDERFUL BOON IN MY OLD AGE.



MRS. MAHALA REID.

Has been a sufferer of Peruna and Manalin for Kidney and Bowel Trouble.

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(Synopsis of Previous Chapters.)

CHAPTER I—John Gale is a trader at Flambeau, a rough outpost of civilization in Alaska. His daughter Neela is a beautiful young girl, generally believed to be a half breed, daughter of Gale and the Indian squaw Alluna, with whom he lives. Some hidden burden weighs continually on the trader's mind, and he views with apprehension the arrival of a squad of soldiers at Flambeau. "That means the law," he says uneasily to Neela, who has become acquainted with and admired by Lieutenant Burrell, commander of the soldiers. It becomes known that Napoleon Doret, an honest, faithful French Canadian employed by Gale, is deeply in love with Neela. One Runnon, a disolute gambler and "bad man," arrives at Flambeau by steamer and in a fight with Burrell is worsted and forced to leave the town. On the departing steamer's deck he menacingly says, "I will return to take a hand in the game." III—Doret gives Neela a handsome silk gown brought by him from Dawson City for her. Arrayed in this, she meets Lieutenant Burrell, who falls madly in love with her, and he wonders if her blood is really tainted. Gale reassures that she is the legitimate daughter of himself and the squaw. IV—Runnon returns with Ben Stark, a professional gambler and man-killer with plenty of money. Stark builds a saloon and dance hall at Flambeau. "No Creek" Lee discovers gold in a valley some miles distant, and Neela persuades Burrell to take her there and locate a claim for her. Their trip requiring a day and a night in the forest. V, VI and VII—Gale, Lee, Runnon and Stark have gone together to the site of Lee's discovery to locate claims. They are met by Neela and Burrell, and a bitter quarrel ensues. Runnon and Stark conspire to rob Neela of her claims. Runnon wants the girl, and Stark finds that Neela has a strange, unexplainable fascination for him. His baby daughter had been stolen years before. Burrell becomes the declared enemy of both Stark and Runnon. A gun held by Gale is discharged, the bullet accidentally, he claims, narrowly missing Stark.

(Continued)

"No, no, no!" she gasped, writhing like a wild thing, but he crushed his lips to hers again and then let her go, whereupon she drew away from him panting, disheveled, her eyes wide and filled with horror. She scrubbed her lips with the back of her hand, as if to erase his mark, while he reached into the canoe and brought forth an ax, a bundle of food and a coffee pot. Then, still chuckling, he gathered a few sticks of driftwood and built a fire. She had a blind instinct to flee and sought for a means of escape, but they were well out upon the bar that stretched a distance of 300 feet to the wooded bank. On one side of the narrow spit was the scarcely moving, half stagnant water of a tiny bay or eddy; on the other the swift, gliding current tugging at the beached canoe, while the outer end of the graveled ridge dwindled down to nothing and disappeared into the river. An instant later, when he turned to the clearer water of the eddy to fill the coffee pot, she seized her chance and sped up the bar toward the bank. The shingle under foot and her noisy skirts betrayed her, and with an oath he followed. It was an unequal race, and he handled her with rough strong hands when he overtook her.

"So! You lied to me! Well, I'm through with this foolishness. If you'll go back on your word like this you'll 'bawl me out' before the priest, so I'll forget my promise, too, and you'll be glad of the chance to marry me."

"Let me go!" she panted. "I'll marry you. Yes, yes, I'll do it, only don't touch me now!"

He led her back to the fire, which had begun to crackle. She was so weak now that she sank upon the stones cowering.

"That's right. Sit down and behave while I make something hot to drink. You're all in." After a time he continued as he busied himself about his task: "Say, you ought to be glad to get me. I've got a lot of money, or I will have, and once you're Mrs. Runnon nobody'll ever know about this or think of you as a squaw."

He was still talking when the girl sprang to her feet and sent a shrill cry out over the river, but instantly he was up and upon her, his hand over her mouth, while she tore at it, screaming the name of Poleon Doret. He silenced her to a smothered, sobbing humble and turned to see, far out on the bosom of the great soiled river, a man in a bark canoe. The craft had just swung past the bend above and was still a long way off, so far away, in fact, that Neela's signal had not reached it, for its occupant had unawaresly to the swiftest channel, his body rising and falling in the smooth, unending rhythm of a master boatman under great haste, his

# The Barrier

By  
Rex Beach

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any or all of the last bullets had taken effect.

Poleon had come, like an arrow, straight for his mark the instant he glimpsed it, an insensate, unreasoning, raging thing that no weight of lead nor length of blade could stop. In his haste he had left Flambeau without weapon of any kind, for in his mind such things are superfluous, and he had never fought with any but those God gave him nor found any living thing that his hands could not master. Therefore he had rushed headlong against this armed and waiting man, reaching for him ever closer and closer till the burning powder stung his eyes. They grappled and fought, alone and unseen, and yet it was no fight, for Runnon, though a vigorous, heavy muscled man, was beaten down, smothered and crushed beneath the onslaught of this great naked fellow, who all the time sobbed and whined and mewed in a pining fury.

They swung half across the spit to the farther side, where they fell in a fantastic convulsion, slipping and sliding and rolling among the rocks that smote and gouged and bruised them. The gambler fought for his life against the naked flesh of the other, against the distorted face that



They grappled and fought, alone and unseen.

snapped and bit like the muzzle of a wolf, while all the time he heard that fearful, inarticulate note of blood hunger at his ear. The Canadian's clenched hands crushed whatever they fell upon as if matted with metal. The fingers were like tearing tongs that could not be loosed. It was a frightful combat, hideous from its inequality, like the battle of a man against a maddened beast whose teeth tore and whose claws ripped, whose every move was irresistible. And so it was over shortly.

Poleon rose and ran to the fallen girl, leaving behind him a huddled and twisted likeness of a man. He picked her up tenderly, moaning and crouching. But as her limp head lolled back, throwing her pale, blind features up to the heavens, he began to cry, this time like a woman. Tears fell from his eyes—burning tears, the agony of which seared his soul. He laid her carefully beside the water's edge, and, holding her head and shoulders in the crook of his left arm, he wet his right hand and bathed her face, crouching over her, half nude, dripping with the sweat of his great labors, a tender, palpating figure of bronzed muscle and sinew, with all his fury and hate replaced by apprehension and pity. The short moments that he worked with her were ages to him, but she revived beneath his ministrations, and her first frightened look of consciousness was changed to a melting smile.

"What happened, Poleon?" she said. "I was afraid."

He stood up to his full height, shaking and weak as the water that dripped from him, the very bones to him dissolved. For the first time he uttered words. "Thank God, he's dead!" and ran his hand up over his wet face.

"Where is he?" She started to her knees affrightedly; then, seeing the twisted, sprawling figure beyond, began to shudder. "He—he's dead?"

"I don't know," said Poleon carelessly. "You feel it pretty good now, eh, w'at?"

"Yes—I he struck me!" The remembrance of what had occurred surged over her, and she buried her face in her hands. "Oh, Poleon, Poleon! He was a dreadful man."

"He don't trouble you no more."

"He tried—he—ugh! I—I'm glad you did it!" She broke down, trembling at her escape, until her selfishness smote her, and she was up and

leaped him on the instant. "Are you hurt? Oh, I never thought of that! You must be wounded."

The Frenchman felt himself over and looked down at his limbs for the first time. "No; I guess not," he said, at which Neela noticed his meager attire, and simultaneously he became conscious of it. He fell away a pace, casting his eyes over the river for his canoe, which was now a speck in the distance.

"No! I'm h-l of a ting for lookin' at," he said. "I'm paddle hard; dat's w'y. Sacre, how I sweat!" He hitched nervously at the band of his overalls, while Neela answered:

"That's all right, Poleon." Then, without warning, her face froze with mingled repulsion and wonder. "Look, look!" she whispered, pointing past him.

Runnon was moving slowly, crawling painfully into a sitting posture, up-lifting a terribly mutilated face, dazed and half conscious, groping for possession of his wits. He saw them and grimaced frightfully, cowering and cringing.

Poleon felt the girl's hand upon his arm and heard her crying in a hard, sharp voice:

"He needs killing! Put him away!"

He stared down at his gentle Neela and saw the loathing in her face and the look of strange ferocity as she met his eyes boldly.

"You don't know what he—what he did," she said through her shut teeth. "He—" But the man waited to hear no more.

Runnon saw him coming and scrambled frantically to all fours, then got on his feet and staggered down the bar. As Poleon overtook him he cried out piteously, a shrill scream of terror, and, falling to his knees, groveled and debased himself like a foul cripple at fear of the lash. His agony dispelled the savage taint of Alluna's aboriginal training in Neela, and the pure white blood of her ancestors cried out:

"Poleon, Poleon—not that!" She hurried after him to where he paused above the wretch waiting for her. "You mustn't!" she said. "That would be murder, and—and—it's all over now."

The Frenchman looked at her wonderingly, not comprehending this sudden leniency.

"Let him alone. You've nearly killed him. That's enough." Whereat Runnon, broken in body and spirit, began to beg for his life.

"W'at's dat you say jus' now?" Doret asked the girl. "Was dat de truth for sure w'at you speak?"

"Yes, but you've done your work. Don't touch him again."

He hesitated, and Runnon, quick to observe it, added his entreaty to hers. "I'm beaten, Doret. You broke me to pieces. I need help—I'm hurt."

"W'at you 'speak' I do wit' 'im?" the Canadian asked, and she answered: "I suppose we'll have to take him where he can get assistance."

"Dat skiff ah! carry all free of us." "I'll stay here," groaned the frightened man. "I'll wait for a steamer to pick me up, but for God's sake don't touch me again!"

Poleon looked him over carefully and made up his mind that the man was more injured in spirit than in body, for outside of his battered muscles he showed no fatal symptoms. Although the voyageur was slower to anger than a child, a grudge never died in him, and his simple, self taught creed knew no forgiveness for such men as Runnon, cherished no mercy for preying men or beasts. He glared toward the

wooded shores a stone's throw above, then back at the coward he had beaten and whose life was forfeit under the code. There was a queer light in his eyes.

"Leave him here, Poleon. We'll go away, you and I, in the canoe, and the first boat will pick him up. Come," Neela tugged at his wrist for fear she might not prevail, but he was bent on brushing away a handful of hungry mosquitoes which, warmed by the growing day, had ventured out on the river. His face became wrinkled and set.

"Blent!" he grunted. "We left 'im here because dere ain't 'nough room in de bateau, eh? All right. Dat's good 'ting. But he's seek man, so mebbe I feel it him nice place for stop till den boats come."

"Yes, yes. Leave me here. I'll make it through all right," begged Runnon. "Better you camp yonder on de point, w'ere you can see de steamboat w'en she comes rou' de bend. Dis is bac place." He indicated the thicket, a quarter of a mile above which ran out almost to the cut bank. "Come, I help you get feet."

Runnon shrank from his proffered assistance half fearfully, but, reassured, allowed the Frenchman to help him toward the shore.

"We tell it de first boat 'bout you an' dey pick you up. You wait here, Neela."

The girl watched her rescuer guide Runnon up to the level of the woods, then disappear with him in the first, and was relieved to see the two emerge upon the river bank again farther on, for she had feared for an instant that Poleon might forget. There seemed to be no danger, however, for he was crushing through the brush in advance of the other, who followed laboriously. Once Runnon gained the high point he would be able to command a view of both reaches of the river and could make signals to attract the first steamboat that chanced to come along. Without doubt a craft of some sort would pass from one direction or the other by tomorrow at latest, or, if not, as Poleon could send back word to him from the first habitation they encountered. The two men disappeared again, and her fears had begun to prey on her a second time when she beheld the big Canadian returning. He was hurrying a bit, apparently to be rid of the mosquitoes that swarmed about him, and

he marked that, in addition to whipping himself with a handful of black-berry bushes, he wore Runnon's coat to protect his shoulders.

"Woo! Those skeeter bug is hun gry," he cried.

"Dis nice bateau," Poleon remarked critically; "I mak' it go fas," and he began to row swiftly, seeking the breeze of the open river in which to shake off the horde of stinging pests that had risen with the sun. "I come way queeck wit'out t'inkin' 'bout gun or skeeter net or not'n." Runnon shivered in his coat, so mebbe I don't look so worse lak I do jus' now, eh?"

"How did you leave him? Is he badly injured?"

"No; I bus' it up on de face an' de rib, but she's feelin' good now. Yes, I'm leave 'im nice place for stop an' wait on de steamboat—plantees spruce boug for set on."

She began to shudder again, and, sensitive to her every motion, he asked solicitously if she were sick, but she shook her head.

"I—I was thinking what—supposing you hadn't come! Oh, Poleon, you don't know what you saved me from." She leaned forward and laid a tiny, grateful hand on the huge brown paw that rested on his arm. "I wonder if I can ever forget!"

She noted that they were running with the current and inquired:

"Where are we going?"

"Waal, I can't put dis boat 'gainst dat current, so I guess we pass on till I fin' my shrim, den blimey we pick it up some steamboat an' go home."

Five miles below his quick eye detected his half submerged "bark" lodged beneath some overhanging fir which from the water's action had fallen forward into the stream, and by rare good fortune it was still upright, although awash. He towed it to the next sand bar, where he wrung out and donned his shirt, then tipped the water from the smaller craft and, making it fast astern of the Peterborough, set out once more. Toward noon they came in sight of a little stern wheeled craft that puffed and pattered manfully against the sweeping current, hiding behind the points and bars and following the slackest water.

"It's the mission boat!" cried Neela. "It's the mission boat! Father Barnum will be aboard."

She waved her arms madly and mingled her voice with Poleon's until a black robed figure appeared beside the pilot-house.

"Father Barnum!" she screamed, and, recognizing her, he signaled back.

Soon they were alongside, and a pair of Siwash deck hands lifted Neela aboard, Doret following after, the palmer of the Peterborough in his teeth. He dragged both canoes out of the boiling tide and laid them bottom up on the forward deck, then climbed the narrow little stairs to find Neela in the arms of a blond priest, white haired priest, the last beloved man on the Yukon, who broke away from the girl to greet the Frenchman, his kind face alight with astonishment.

"What is all this I hear? Slowly, Doret, slowly! My little girl is talking too furiously for these poor old wits to follow. I can't understand. I am amazed. What is this tale?"

Together they told him, while his blue eyes now opened wide with wonder, now grew soft with pity, then blazed with indignation. When they had finished he laid his hand upon Doret's shoulder.

"My son, I thank God for your good body and your clean heart. You saved our Neela, and you will be rewarded. As to this—this man Runnon, we must find him, and he must be sent out of the country."

It required some pressure to persuade the Frenchman, but at last he consented, and as the afternoon drew to a close the little steamboat came snatching and wheeling up to the bar where Runnon had built his fire that morning, and a long, shrill blast summoned him from the point above. When he did not appear the priest took Poleon and his round faced, silent crew of two and went up the bank, but they found no sign of the crippled man—only a few rags, a trampled patch of brush at the forest's edge, and that was all. The springy gave no answer to their cries, although they spent an hour in a scattered search and sounded the steamboat's whistle again and again.

"He's try for walk it back to camp," said Doret. "Mebbe he ain't hurt so much, after all."

"You must be right," said Father Barnum. "We will keep the steamer close to this shore, so that he can hail us when we overtake him."

And so they resumed their toilsome trip, but mile after mile fell behind them, and still no voice came from the woods—no figure lifted them. Doret, insouciant and silent, lounged against the pilot-house, smoking innumerable cigarettes which he rolled from squares of newspaper, his keen eyes apparently scanning every foot of their slow way, but when night fell at last and the bank faded from sight he tossed the last butt overboard, smiled grimly into the darkness and went below.

(Continued on Monday)

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