

WINDS of CHANCE

by Rex Beach

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THE STORY THUS FAR

In his quest for gold Pierce Phillips draws to the newly discovered gold fields of the Yukon. Having insufficient money to be admitted by the Canadian government, he hires himself out packing provisions over Chilkoot Pass.

A chance acquaintance with the McCaskey brothers is panned up as a mere incident on the trail. "Polecat Doret, French-Canadian giant, and he are the strongest men on the Pass. Phillips makes an elderly prospector, Tom Linderman, and is asked to share his tent at Linderman. Arriving there they find it occupied by a beautiful Countess Courteau, who tells them her name is Countess Courteau. She shares their tent that night and then Phillips helps her back to Doret's Sheep Camp. Phillips again meets the McCaskey brothers and while in their tent they all are arrested under suspicion of stealing provisions, and brought to a trial at a miner's meeting.

CHAPTER IV

The story of the first trial at Sheep Camp is an old one, but it differs with every telling. In the hectic hurry of that gold-rush many incidents were soon forgotten and such salient facts as did survive were deeply colored for those who told them.

The meeting was quickly organized along formal lines and a committee of three was appointed to conduct the hearing. The chairman of this committee—he constituted himself chairman by virtue of the fact that he was first nominated—made a ringing speech in which he praised his honesty, his fairness, and his knowledge of the law. He complimented the miners for their earnestness in seeking for such a position of responsibility a man of his distinguished qualifications. It was plain that he believed they had chosen wisely. Then, having inquired the names of his two committeemen, he likewise commended them in glowing terms, although of course he could not praise them quite as unstintingly as he had praised himself. Still he spoke well of them and concluded by stating that so long as affairs were left in his hands justice would be safeguarded and the rights of this miserable, cringing trio of thieves would be protected, albeit killing, in his judgment, was too mild a punishment for people of their caliber.

"Hoor! hoor!" yelled the mob.

Pierce Phillips listened to this speech with a keenly personal and yet a peculiarly detached interest. The speaker secured him as unusual, grotesque, and the whole procedure as futile. Under other circumstances it would have been gratingly amusing; now he was uncomfortably aware that it was anything but that. There was no law whatever in the hand save the will of these men; in their hands lay life or death, exonerate or infamy. He searched the faces round about him, but could find signs neither of friendship nor of sympathy. This done, he looked everywhere for a glimpse of a woman's straw-colored hair and was relieved to discover that the Countess Courteau was not in the audience. Doubtless she had left for Doret and was already some distance down the trail. He breathed easier, for he did not wish her to witness his humiliation, and her presence would have merely added to his embarrassment.

The prosecution's case was quickly made and it was strong one. Even yet the damning trickle of rice grains could be traced through the moss and mire directly to the door of the prisoners' tent, and the original package, identified positively by its owner, was put in evidence. This in itself was enough; testimony from the other men who had likewise recovered merchandise they had missed and returned merely strengthened the case and further inflamed the minds of the citizens. When it came time to hear the defense, the McCaskeys stared at Pierce coolly; therefore he climbed to the tent platform and faced his accusers.

He made known his name, his business, the ship which had borne him north. He told how he had landed at Doret, how he had lost his last dollar at the gambling table, how he had appealed to the McCaskey boys, and how they had given him shelter. That chance association, he took pains to explain, had continued, but had never ripened into anything more, anything closer; it was in no wise a partnership; he had nothing to do with them and they had nothing to do with him. Inasmuch as the rice had been stolen during the previous night, he argued that he could have had no hand in the theft, for he had spent the night in Linderman, which fact he offered to prove by two witnesses.

"Produce them," ordered the chairman.

"One of them is still at Linderman, the other was here in Sheep Camp an hour ago. She has probably started for Doret by this time."

"A woman?"

"Yes, sir. I brought her across."

"What is her name?"

Phillips hesitated. "The Countess Courteau," said he. "There was a murmur of interest; the members of the committee conferred with one another.

"Do you mean to tell me that you've got a third witness?" the self-appointed spokesman inquired. His face wore a smile of disbelief; when the prisoner flushed and nodded he called out over the heads of the crowd:

"Countess Courteau! There was no answer. "Do any of you gentlemen know the Countess Courteau?" he inquired.

His question was greeted by a general laugh.

"Don't let him kid you," cried a derisive voice.

"Never heard of her, but I met four kings last night," yelled another.

"Call the Marquis of Queensberry," shouted still a third.

"Countess Courteau!" repeated the chairman, using his hands for a megaphone.

The cry was taken up by other throats. "Countess Courteau!" they mocked. "Come, Countess! Nice Countess! Pretty Countess!" There was a ribald note to this mockery which caused Phillips' eyes to glow.

"She and the count have just left the palace. Let's get along with the hangin'," one shrill voice demanded.

"You won't hang me!" Phillips roared, angrily.

"He not so sure," taunted the acting judge. "Inasmuch as your countess appears to be constituted of that thin fabric of which dreams are made; inasmuch as there is no such animal—"

"Hol' up!" came a peremptory challenge. "M'lord Judge! It was the big French Canadian whom Pierce had met on the crest of the divide; he came forward now, pushing his restless way through the audience. "What for you say dere ain't nobody by dat name, eh?" He turned his back to the committee and addressed the meeting. "What for you back lak dis anyhow? By gosh! I heard 'bout dis lady! She's a' timer lak me."

"Well, trot her out! Where is she?"

"She's on her way to Doret," Pierce insisted. "She can't be far—"

"Polecat Doret was angry. 'I don't listen to no woman be joke 'bout you hear? His boy spit truce. He was in Linderman last night, for I seen him on top of Chilkoot yesterday mornin', wit' pack on his back no beer as a barn."

"Do you know the accused?" queried the spokesman.

"Polecat turned with a shrug. "Nod! Nod! But—yes, I know him. It is. Anybody can tell his honest boy. By Gosh! She's a strong feller, too—pak lak hell!"

Pierce insisted. "She can't be this evidence of faith, inconclusive as it was in point of law. He

In Those Hills



Sam Collins of Lexington, Ky., is the new federal prohibition chief who will direct the government's campaign against the moonshiners in the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Mystery Surrounds This Baby



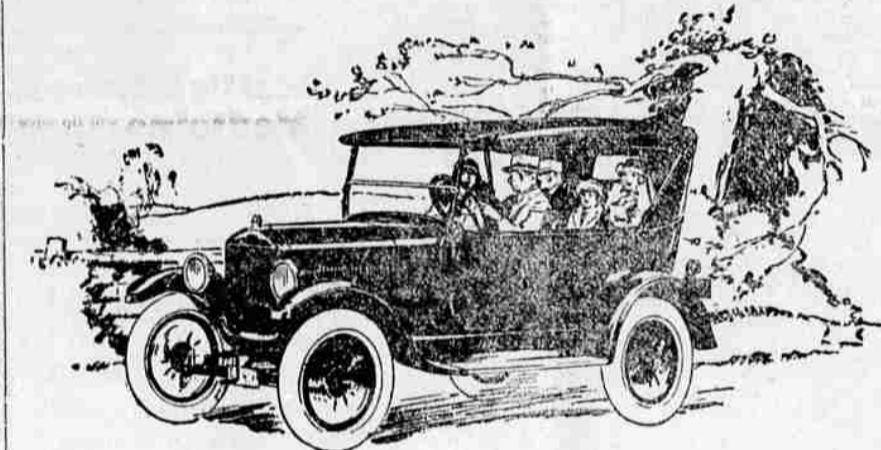
NEA

AUTO TURNS OVER TWICE

ALBANY, Ore.—Mrs. Hubbell Young, daughter of City Recorder and Mrs. F. P. Nutting, narrowly escaped death on the new Alameda-Waldport highway when the car she was driving was crowded from the road by a road grader. The car rolled down an incline, turning over twice.

Mrs. Young sustained a broken thigh bone and other injuries. Her husband and little daughter and sister, Miss Flo Nutting, were uninjured. Mrs. Young was rushed to the Albany general hospital by Dr. R. E. Wallace, who was called from Albany.

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Farm Pointers

For holding up overloaded fruit tree branches in Oregon orchards snags and wiring are more reliable than wooden props which too often get out of position. Some sort of support is essential for all limbs loaded to the breaking point, says W. S. Brown, head of horticulture at the experiment station. About the cheapest supports are forked saplings, but great care is needed in their use to prevent wounding the branches.

Winter protection of the bee colonies in all parts of Oregon will mean more honey next spring. H. A. Scullen of the experiment station reports from many investigations. Cracks in the hives, likely to form in hard weather and cause the bees to knock off honey making next spring long enough to fill them with wax, are prevented by a good coat of paint.

Rotation of crops in all Oregon diversified districts costs little, distributes labor better and is usually

profitable on the soils. It brings increase of humus and nitrogen by turning under clover and different crop residues. The average net profits on the experiment station farm over a period of seven years was \$3.52 per acre—a clear gain of more than \$60 an acre, as well as in improved soils.

Peach blight trouble? Spraying with bordeaux 5-6-50 right after the trees have been stripped of their fruit this fall prevents bud and twig infection sure to start right after the fall rains begin in many Oregon peach districts. Blight is responsible for more damage to peach orchards than any other disease. Directions for preparing and using the bordeaux will be sent by the state agricultural college on request.

INDIAN HELD TO JURY

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.—Wilbur Eggsman, Klamath Indian, who is accused of stabbing Monroe Faithful, another Indian, in a fight over cattle on Sprague river earlier this week, was bound over to the grand jury by United States Commissioner Thomas. He gave bonds of \$1500 pending the grand jury investigation. He was arrested near his ranch yesterday

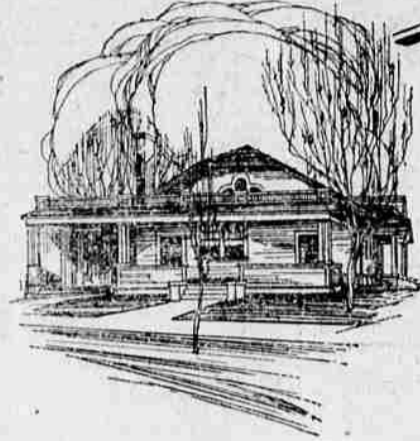
by a deputy United States marshal. Faithful is in a local hospital, but is expected to recover.

Grouse and Deer Season Is Open

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