

WINDS OF CHANCE

by Rex Beach

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CHAPTER XVIII. (Continued.)
Soon the tent strings were drawn and the axman pushed through the door. His arms full of dry spruce wood. He stood smiling down at the face framed snugly in the fox fur; then he dropped his burden and knelt before the stove. In a moment there came a promising crackle, followed quickly by an agreeable flutter which grew into a roar as the stove began to draw.

"Caribou!" Rouletta's eyes were bright with curiosity and an emotion far from material. "Where in the world?"
"Some hippin hunter mak' begg' by golly! His name is dat, too. 'Christina' for you."
Rouletta stirred. There was stubborn defiance in her tone when she said: "I'm going to get up and I'm going outdoors—clothes or no clothes. I'll wrap the robe around me and play I'm a squaw."
She checked "Polson's protest. "Oh, I'm perfectly well, and the clothes I have are thick enough."
"Look out you don't freeze yourself. Dat pretty dress you got to give you challein in August."
The speaker blew upon his fingers and sat back upon his heels, his eyes twinkling, his brown face wreathed in smiles.

"Then I can do it? You'll let me try?" Rouletta was all eagerness.
"We'll talk 'bout dat, himself. First 'ting we goin' have been pot-latch, lak Siwash weddin'."
"Golly! Now run away while I get up."
But the man shook his head. "You be in such hurry. Dat tent warm now. Last night de roover de froze solid so far you look. Pretty queeck people come."
"Do you think they'll have extra clothes—something warm that I can wear?"
"Sure! I fix all dat." Still smiling, "Polson rose and went stooping out of the tent, trying the flap behind him. A few rods distant was another shelter which he had pitched for himself; in front of it, on a pole provision-cache, were two quarters of frozen caribou meat, and seated comfortable in the snow beneath, eyes fixed upon the snow, were several "hunks" of fat, round, round meat. At "Polson's" appearance they began to caper and to fawn upon him.

"Ho, you ole 'fiet!' he cried, sternly. "You lak steel dose meat. I bet! Well, I eat you, 'live.' Stretching on tiptoe, he removed one of the quarters and bore it into his tent. The dogs barked at first outside the canvas, but when they needed the canvas, added, and "Polson set to work with hatchet and hunting knife their bright eyes followed his every move.

"Non!" he exclaimed, with a ferocious frown. "You don't get so much as I'll smell. You 'link ma sour goin' hungry to food loaf-er lak you?" Busy gray tails began to stir, the heads came farther forward, there was a most unmanly licking of chops. "By Gar! You sound lak miner-man eatin' soup. Wat for you 'spec nice grub? You don' work none."
"Polson removed a layer of fat, divided it, and tossed a portion to each animal. The morsels vanished with a single gulp, while the wolfish click of sharp white teeth. "No, I give you nothin'."
For no reason whatever the speaker broke into loud laughter; then, to further relieve his bubbling jorounness, he began to hum a song. As he worked his song grew louder, until his words were audible to the girl in the next tent.

"Oh, la voix du beau Nord qui m'appelle.
Pour venir avec lui le jour.
Et desormais toute peine cruelle
Fuita devant mon chant d'amour.
D'amour, d'amour."
"Oh, the voice of the North is calling me.
To join in the praise of the day.
So whatever the fate that's befalling me,
I'll sing every sorrow away.
Away, away!"

The Yukon stove was red-hot now, and Rouletta Kirby's tent was warm. She seated herself before a homely little dresser fashioned from two candle-boxes, and began to arrange her hair, curiously she examined the comb and brush. They were, or had been, "Polson's"; so was the pocket-mirror hanging by a safety-pin to the canvas wall above. Rouletta recalled with a

smile the flourish of pride with which he had presented to her this ludicrous bureau and its fittings. Was there ever such a fellow as this Doret? Was there ever a heart so big, so kind? A stranger, it seemed to the girl that she had known him always. There had been days—days interminable—when he had seemed to be some dream figure, an indistinct, unreal being at once familiar and unfamiliar, friendly and forbidding; then other days during which he had gradually assumed substance and actuality and during which she had come to know him.

But her return to sanity, Rouletta had experienced periods of uncertainty and of terror, then hours of embarrassment, the mere memory of which caused her to shrink and to hide her head. These were times of which, even yet, she could not bear to think. Here had been a slow recovery and a painful, nay a tragic awakening, but, as she had gained the strength and the ability to understand and to suffer, "Polson," with a tact and a thoughtfulness unexpected in one of his sort, had dropped the character of nurse and assumed the role of friend and protector. That had been Rouletta's most difficult ordeal, the most trying time for both of them. In fact, not one man in ten thousand could have carried off such an awkward situation at a cost so low to a woman's feelings. It was, of course, the very awkwardness of that situation, together with "Polson's" calm, courageous method of facing it, that had given his persistence the strength to meet him halfway and that had made her convalescence anything less than a torture.

And the manner in which he had allowed her to learn all the truth about herself—but by bit as her resistance grew—his sympathy, his repression, his support! He had to know just how far to go; he had spared her every possible heart-ache, he had never permitted her to suffer a moment of trepidation as to herself. No, her first conscious feeling, now that she recalled it, had been one of implicit, unreasoning faith in him. That confidence had increased with every hour; dimly, despair, the wish to die had given place to resignation, then to hope, and now to a brave self-confidence. Rouletta knew that her deliverance had been miraculous and that this man, this total stranger, out of the goodness of his heart, had given her back her life. She never ceased pondering over it.

She was now sitting motionless, calm and level in her mind, when "Polson" came into the tent for a second time and aroused her from her abstraction. She hastily completed her toilette, and was sitting curled up on her bed when the aroma of boiling coffee and the sound of frying steak brought her to her feet. With a noisy clatter she enthusiastically arranged the breakfast dishes.

"How wonderful it is to have an appetite in the morning!" said she; then, "This is the last time you're going to cook. You may chop the wood and build the fires, but I shall attend to the rest. I'm quite able."
"Hien!" The pilot smiles his agreement. "Everybody must work to be happy—even dose dog. Wat you 'link? Dey loaf so long dey begin fight, jus lak 'people." He chuckled. "Pretty queeck we hitch her up de sled an' go fly to Dyon. You goin' henjoy dat, ma sour. Mebbe we meet dose chookakoo-comin' in an' dey holler, 'Hallo, Frenchy! How's 'ting in Dawson?' an' we say, 'Fout! We don' care 'bout Dawson; we goin' home.'"
"Home!" Rouletta paused momentarily in her task.

"Sure! Now—volla; Breakfast she's serve in de baggage car." With a flourish he poured the coffee, saying, "Let's see if you so hungry lak you pretend, or if I'm goin' keep you in bed some more?" Rouletta's appetite was all—yes, more—than she had declared it to be. The liberality with which she helped herself to oatmeal, her lavish use of the sugar spoon, and her determined attack upon the can of "Carnation" satisfied any lingering doubts in Doret's mind. Her predatory interest in the appetizing contents of the frying pan—she eyed it with the greedy hopefulness of a healthy urchin—also was eloquent of a complete recovery and brought a thrill of pride to her benefactor.

"Golly! I mak' bad nurse for hospital," he grinned. "You eat him out of house an' lot." He finished his meal, then looked on until Rouletta leaned back with regretful satisfaction; then upon his break-out.
"Wal, I got more 'spice for you."
"You—you can't surprise a food, and—I feel just like one. Isn't food good?"
Now Rouletta had learned much about this big woodsman's peculiarities, among other things she had discovered that he took extraordinary delight in his so-called "spices." They were many and varied, now a tincture to tempt her palate, or again, a native doll which needed a complete outfit of incense, soap, and parks, and which he insisted he had met on the trail, very numb from the cold; again a pair of rabbit-fur sleeping socks for herself. That crude "dinner," which he had completed without her suspecting him, was another. Always he was making or doing something to amuse or to occupy her attention, and, although his gifts were poor, sometimes absurdly simple, he had, nevertheless, the power of investing them with importance. Being vitally interested in all things, big

or little, he stimulated others to share that interest. Life was an enjoyable game, inanimate objects talked to him, every enterprise was tinted imaginary colors, and he delighted in pretense—welcome traits to Rouletta, whose childhood had been starved.

"What is my new 'spice'?" she queried. But, without answering, "Polson" rose and left the tent; he was back a moment later with a bundle in his hands. This bundle he unraveled, displaying a fire fur parka, the hood of which was fringed with a deep fox-fur lining, the skirt and sleeves of an elaborate checker-board pattern of multi-colored skins. Gray squirrel-tail streamers depended from its shoulders as further ornamentations. Altogether it was a splendid specimen of Indian needlework and Rouletta gaped with delight.

"How wonderful!" she cried. "Is it for me?"
The pilot nodded. "Sure 'ting, de purtiest one ever I see. But look!" He called her attention to a beaver cap, a pair of beaded moosehide mittens, and a pair of small fur boots that went with the larger garments—a together a complete outfit for winter travel. "I buy him from dose hippin hunter. Put him on, queeck."
Rouletta slipped into the parka; she donned cap and mittens; and "Polson" was in raptures.

"By golly! Dat's beautiful!" he declared. "Now you fix for sure. No matter how col' she come, you'll be warm, you don' freeze your nose."
"You're good and true—and—"
Rouletta faltered, then added, fervently, "I shall always thank God for knowing you."
Now above all things Doret dreaded his "sister's" serious moods or any expression of her gratitude; he waved her words aside with an airy gesture and began in a hearty tone:

"We don't stop dis place no longer. Tomorrow we start for Dyon. Wat you 'link of dat, eh? Pretty queeck you be home." When his heater displayed no great animation at the prospect he exclaimed, in perplexity: "You tonny gal. Ain't you care?"
"I have no home," she gravely told him.
"But your people—dey goin' be glad for see you?"
"I have no people, either. You see, we lived a queer life, father and I. I was all he had, outside of poor Danny Royal, and he—was all I had. Home was where we happened to be. He sold everything to come North; he cut all ties and risked everything on a single throw. That was his way, our way—all or nothing. I've been thinking lately; I've asked myself what he would have wished me to do, and—I've made up my mind."
"Say?" "Polson" was puzzled.

"I'm not going outside. I'm going to Dawson. He a thoroughbred. Don't weaken. That's what he always said. Sam Kirby followed the frontier and he made his money there. Well, I'm his girl, his blood is in me. I'm going through."
"Polson's brow was furrowed in deep thought. It cleared slowly. "Dawson she's had city, but you're brave 'll gal and—business is here," he tapped his chest with a huge forefinger. "So long de heart she's pure, not in goin' touch you." He nodded in better agreement with Rouletta's decision. "Mebbe so you're right. For me, I'm glad, very glad, for I 'link my bird is goin' spread her wing; an' fly away south lak all de rest," but now—hien! I'm satisfy! We go to Dawson!"
"Your work is here," the girl protested. "I can't take you away from it."
"Fonny 'ting 'bout work." "Polson" said with a grin. "Plenty tan I try to run away from him, but always he catch up wit' me."
"You're a poor man. I can't let you sacrifice too much."
"Fout!" The pilot opened his eyes in amazement. "Men Dyon! I'm reach feller. Anybody is reach so long as he's well an' happy. Mebbe I sell my claim."
"Your claim? Have you a claim?"
At Dawson?"

The man nodded indifferently. "I stake him lak winter. He's got to claim to look at a piece of snow, nice tree for cabin, dry wood, everything but gold. Mebbe I sell him for cheap price."
"Why doesn't it have any gold?" Rouletta was genuinely curious.
"Why? Because I stake him."
"Polson" laughed heartily. "Dose claim I stake dey never has so much gold you can see wit' your eye. Not one an' I stake 'tousand. Me, I hear dose man talk 'bout million dollar; I'm drinkin' heavy so I 'link I be millionaire, too. But him-by I'm sober ag'in an' my money she's gone. I'm restless feller, I don' stop long no place."
"What makes you think it's a poor claim?"
"Polson" shrugged. "All my claim is poor. Me, I'm outlucky. Mebbe so I don' care enough for bein' reach. Wat I'll do wit' pile of money, eh? Drink him up? Gamble? Dat's fun for while. Every spring I sell my fur an' have been tan; two weeks I'm drunk, but—dat's plenty. Any feller dat's drunk more 'n two weeks is burn. No!" He shook his head and exposed his white teeth in a flashing smile. "I'm enuff for poor man. I mak' long success of dat."
Rouletta studied the speaker silently for a moment. "I know." She nodded her complete understanding of his type. "Well, I'm not going to let you do that any more."

"I don' hurt nobody," he protested. "I sing plenty song an' fight 'll bit. A man must get some fun."
"Won't you promise—for my sake?"
"Polson" gave in after some hesitation; reluctantly he agreed. "Eh hien! Mos' anything I promise for you, ma sour. But—she's got to be mighty poor trip (er, she, string, mebbe I forget dose promise)."
(To be continued.)

Wreckage of Airmail Plane Lost Ten Days



After hundreds of people had searched for him for 10 days in the Pennsylvania mountains, the wrecked plane and dead body of Charles H. Ames, airmail pilot, were found in a dense woods on the side of Mt. Nittany, near Bellefonte, Pa. He apparently lost his bearings in a fog and crashed into the side of the mountain. The plane was found upside down with Ames still in the pilot's seat.

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CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA NO LONGER "FOREIGN"

NEW YORK, (AP)—Christianity is no longer a religion in China which the stigma of "foreign" may be placed, despite the attacks upon it made by some advocates of the "new nationalism," said Ralph A. Ward of Parkersburg, 14 years a Methodist Episcopal missionary in China, in a report to the board of foreign missions here.

Dr. Ward pointed out that many of the leading men of the republic are well known as Christians, and that 2,200,000 Chinese, many of them prominent in public and private life, are enrolled as members of Christian churches.

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