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CHAPTER XXII (Continued)

Once again he climbed the grade, once again he skirted downward, once again he went sprawling. Nor was his subsequent attempts more successful. After a final ignominious failure to get where he had fetched up and finally took stock of the situation he had done himself. Seriously he announced: "I was mistaken. Women are entitled to vote—they're entitled to anything. I've learned something else, too—Mr. Newton's interesting little theory is all wrong; falling bodies travel fifteen miles, not sixteen feet, the first second."

"The girl demanded her shoes and, without rising, Pierce surrounded them; then he looked, on admiringly while she attached them to her feet and went straggling up the hill to a point much higher than the one from which he had dared to venture. She made a very pretty picture, he thought, for she was vivid with youth and color. She was little and strong and confident, too; she was vibrant with the healthy vigor of the out-of-door."

She descended with a terrific rush, and this time she took the air with grace and certainty. She cleared a very respectable distance and ricocheted safely down the landing-slope.

Pierce applauded her with enthusiasm. "Beautiful! My sincere congratulations, O Bounding Dawn!"

"That's the best I've done," she cried. "You put me on my mettle. Now you try it again."

Pierce did try again; he tried manfully, but with a humiliating lack of success. He was puffing and blowing, his face was wet with perspiration, he had lost all count of time, when his companion finally announced it was time for her to be going.

"You're not very fit, are you?" said she.

Pierce colored uncomfortably. "Not very," he confessed. He was relieved when she did not ask the reason for his lack of fitness. Just why he experienced such relief he hardly knew, but suddenly he felt no great pride in himself for in the life that had brought him to such a state of flabbiness. Nor did he care to have this girl know who or what he was. Plainly she was one of those "nice people" at whom Laure and the other denizens of the flats were wont to sneer with open contempt; probably that was why he had never chanced to meet her. He felt cheated because they had not met, for she was the sort of girl he had known at home, the sort who belittled pretensions and in whom he believed. Despite all his recently acquired wisdom, in this short hour she had made him ever into a boy again, and somehow or other the experience was agreeable. Never had he seen a girl so cool, so candid, so refreshingly unconscious and unaffected as this one. She was as limpid as a pool of glacier water; her placidity, he

imagined, had never been stirred, and in that fact lay much of her fascination.

With her knees slung over her shoulder, the girl strolled along beside Phillips, talking freely on various topics, but with no disposition to chatter. Her mind was alert, incisive, and yet she had that thoughtful gravity of youth, wisdom coming to life. That Pierce had made a good impression upon her she implied at parting by voicing a sincere hope that they would meet again very soon.

"Perhaps I'll see you at the next dance," she suggested.

"Dance?" The word struck Pierce pleasantly.

"Saturday night, at the Bar-rack."

"I'd love to come," he declared.

"No. They're loads of fun. All the nice people go."

"With a smile she was gone, leaving him to realize that he did not even now her name. Well, that was of no moment; Dawson was a small place, and Saturday was not far off. He had heard about these official parties at the barracks and he made up his mind to secure an invitation sufficiently formal to permit him to attend the very next one.

His opportunity came that night when one of the younger mounted police officers paused to exchange greetings with him. Lieutenant Rock was familiar figure on the streets of town and on the trails near by, a tall, upstanding Canadian with a record for unflinching good humor and relentless efficiency. He nodded at Pierce's casual reference to the coming dance at Headquarters.

"I'm about to go," said he. "It's about the only chance we fellows have to play."

When an invitation to share in the treat was forthcoming Pierce told of meeting a most attractive girl that afternoon, and having obtained his hearer's interest, he described the youthful goddess of the snows with more than necessary enthusiasm. He became aware of a peculiar expression upon Rock's face.

"Yes, I know her well," the latter said quietly. "If you mean to say she invited you to the ball?"

"It wasn't exactly an invitation."

"Oh! I see. Well—" Rock shook his head positively—"There's nothing doing, old man. It isn't your kind of a party. Understand?"

"I don't understand," Pierce confessed in genuine surprise.

The officer eyed him with a cool, discerning directness. "We draw the big prize," he said, "and win a camp like this. No offense, I trust." With a smile and a careless wave of the hand, he moved on, leaving Pierce to stare after him until he was swallowed up by the crowd in the gambling-room.

A blow in the face would not have amazed Pierce Phillips more, nor would it have more greatly angered him. No, he was astraiched! These men who treated him with such apparent good-fellowship really despised him; in their eyes he was a renegade; they considered him unfit to know their women. It was incredible!

This was the first deliberate slight the young man had ever received. His face burned, his pride withered under it; he would have bitten out his tongue rather than subject himself to such a rebuff. Who was Rock? How dared he? Rock knew the girl, oh, yes; but he refused to mention her name—was it that name would be alluded to by his, Pierce's, use of it. That hurt most of all; that was the bitterest pill. Society! Castel! On the Arctic Circle! It was to laugh! But Phillips could not laugh. He could more easily have cursed, or cursed, or raved; even to pretend to laugh of such an affront was impossible. It required no more than this show of opposition to fan the embers of his flickering desire into full flame, and now that he was forbidden to meet that flying goddess, it seemed to him that he must do so at whatever cost. He'd go to that dance, he decided, in spite of Rock, he'd go unbidden; he'd force his way in if needs be.

This sudden ardor died, however, as quickly as it had been born, leaving him cold with apprehension. What would happen if he took the bit in his teeth? Rock knew about Laure—those detectable redoubts knew pretty much everything that went on beneath the surface of Dawson life—and if Pierce ran counter to the fellow's warning he would probably speak out. Rock was just that sort. His methods were direct and forceful. What then? Pierce cringed inwardly at the contemplation. That snow-girl was so clean, so decent, so radically different from all that Laure stood for, that he shrank from associating them together even in his thoughts.

Well, he was paying the fiddler, and the price was high. Even he could not deny that the prospect of its continuance, Pierce's rebellion at this discovery, his resentment at the whole situation, prevented him from properly taking the lesson to heart. The horse was dandied, too, by a subtle, natural effort at self-justification. The more he tried his sister, however, the angrier he became and the more humiliating seemed his situation.

He was in no mood to calmly withstand another shock, especially when that shock was administered by Joe McCaskey, of all persons; nevertheless, it came close upon the heels of Rock's insult.

There had not been either brother since their departure for Hunter Creek, therefore Joe's knock came leaving through the window of the cashier's cage was an unexpected surprise.

"Hello, Phillips! How are you making it?" the man inquired. "All right!"

Despite this gruffness, Joe's grin widened. There was nothing of pleasure at the meeting, nor of friendliness behind it, however. On the contrary, it masked both malice and triumph, as was plain when he asked:

"Did you hear about our strike?"

"What strike?"

"Why, it's all over town! Frank and I hit pay in our first shaft—three feet of twenty-cent dirt."

"Really?" Pierce could not restrain a movement of surprise.

Joe nodded and chuckled, meanwhile keeping his malignant gaze oozed upon the younger man's face. "It's big. We came to town to buy grub and a dog-team and to hire a crew of hands. We've got credit at the A. C. Company up to fifty thousand dollars."

There was a brief pause which Pierce broke by inquiring as casually as he could:

"Did Tom and Jerry have any luck?"

"Sure thing! They're fit it, the same as us. You tossed off a home-take, kid. Don't believe it, eh? Well, here's the proof—course gold from Hunter." With an ostentatious flourish the speaker flung down a half-filled paper, together with a bar check. Cash in hand, and

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don't let any of it stick to your fingers." Pierce was impelled to hurl the gold sack at Joe's head, but he restrained himself. His hands were shaky, however, and when he lifted the things he was mortified at smilling some of the precious yellow particles. Identification changed to anger, when the owner cried sharply:

"Hey! Got the cad's eye, have you? Just cut out the slightest-of-hand!"

Pierce smothered a retort; at length he brushed the dust back into the bag and felt the weight upon his scales. But McCaskey ran on with an insolent air at the bar:

"In on you short-weighters. Take your bit out of the drinker, I'm sober."

When Pierce had retied the sack and returned it he looked up and into Joe's face. His own was white, his eyes were blazing.

"Don't pull any more comedy here," he said, quietly. "That short-weight joke doesn't go at the Bar."

"Oh, it don't? Joke!" McCaskey snorted. "I'd give you a joke to split just when you can't get away with it. Well, I've got a lot of crooked children in this town."

"No doubt. It takes a thief to catch a thief."

McCaskey started. His eyes flashed. "That's say," he blurted, abruptly. "I've mean."

The clash, brief as it had been, had excited attention. Rolling the fact that an audience was gathering, the speaker tossed his voice and, thrusting his back, scowling countenance toward the stage-opening, he said: "You needn't point me out of anything. I've got a good memory. Damn good!" After a moment he turned his back and moved away.

When Pierce went off shift he

looked up Lars Anderson and received confirmation of the Hunter strike. Lars was in a holier-than-thou mood and eager to share his triumph.

"I know that was a rich piece of ground," he chuckled, "and I know I was handing those boys a good thing. But a fellow owes something to his friends, doesn't he?"

"I thought you said it was low grade."

"Low grade!" He Lars threw back his head and laughed loudly. "I never said nothing of the kind. I'd knock my own ground? Why, I'd have banked my life on Hunter."

Toward the close of the show Lars found Jim braced against the bar, the face lit up with a smile. He nudged him to take her to supper, he shook his head.

"What's the matter?" she inquired.

"Big Lars never told you Hunter was low grade?" he declared.

"The girl flushed; she tossed her dark head defiantly. "Well, what of it?"

"Simply this—Tom and Jerry and the McCaskeys have struck rich pay."

"Indeed?"

"You told me."

"I told you to expect? What would you get do?" She had a caressing hand upon his arm. "I don't care how much they make or how poor you are."

Pierce glanced her grim. "I care!" he cried, roughly. "I've lost my big chance. They've made their pile and I'm—well, look at me."

"You blame me?"

He stared at her for a moment. "What's the difference whether I blame you or myself? I'm through. I've been through for some time, but—this is certain."

"Pierce?"

Impatiently he flung her off and

strode out of the theater. Laure was staring blindly after him when Joe McCaskey spoke to her. "Have a dance?" he inquired. She undertook to answer, but her lips refused to frame any words; silently she shook her head. "What's the idea? A lover's quarrel?" McCaskey eyed her curiously, then he chuckled mirthlessly. "You can come clean with me. I don't like him any better than you do."

"Mind your own business," stormed the girl in a sudden fury. "That's what I'm doing, and minding it good. I've got a lot of business—with that rat." Joe's sinister black eyes held Laure's in spite of her effort to avoid them; it was plain that he wished to say more, but he hesitated. "Maybe it would pay us to get acquainted, he finally suggested. "Frank and me and the Count are having a bottle of wine upstairs. Better join us."

"I will," said Laure, after a moment. "Together they mounted the stairs to the gallery above."

(To be continued.)

GREELEY BUSINESS MEN HELP HARVESTING CROPS

DENVER (AP)—Winter, depending on the Rocky Mountain regions is causing a scare among farmers in an effort to get their crops under cover before damage from the snow, cold and frost strikes them.

Headed by Mayor W. S. Hayden, more than 100 business men of Greeley, Colo., Tuesday donated shovels and went into the fields of Wood county to help in the potato harvest.

From Helena, Mont., comes word through the Montana co-operative crop reporting service that heavy damage has been done to crops and that the outlook for crops still standing is "doubtful."

"Being mistaken now and then isn't half as big a mistake as never being mistaken."

Filipino Court Will Probe Status of Poker

MANILA (AP)—Meeting with adverse results in the courts in the prosecution of persons arrested on charges of playing poker, the constabulary authorities have concluded that further raids on these games would be useless expenditure of time and money until the question of whether poker is a game of skill or chance is decided by the supreme court.

The courts of first instance have held that poker is a game of skill, while the attorney general has rendered an opinion that it is a game of chance and as such is punishable under the laws.

Brigadier General Rafael Crame, chief of the constabulary, calling the attention of the secretary to the subject, says:

"Since the attorney general in his opinion of several years ago held that poker was a game of chance and punishable, the constabulary were given the authority to apprehend and prosecute all persons engaged in playing poker, and these instructions are still in force. However, since judges have taken upon themselves to acquit persons engaged in poker playing, there seems to be no further need of the constabulary spending time and money in raiding these games. If the men caught will be acquitted."

Steps have been taken to bring a case before the supreme court in order that a final decision on the subject may be obtained.

DEBATE TOPICS STUDIED

PENDLETON, Ore.—Work is being done by all four classes in the Pendleton high school in preparation for the winter's program of debate which will get under way in earnest November 10, 11 and 12, when the class tournaments are to be held. Each class has a different subject for study and debate, and a member of the faculty serves as class coach.

The juniors have as their subject "Resolved, That the United States should own and operate all coal mines in the country."

The seniors are studying the question "Resolved, That a graduated income tax is a desirable feature of a state system of taxation in Oregon." The sophomores will debate the question "Resolved, That the United States should grant the Philippines their independence in five years. The freshmen are laboring over the question "Resolved, That the child labor amendment to the federal constitution should be adopted."

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