

BLACK ROCK

A Tale of the Selkirks

By Ralph Connor

We had no difficulty getting them out. Abe began to yell. Some men rushed out to learn the cause. He seized the foremost man, making a hideous uproar all the while, and in three minutes had every man out of the hotel and a lively row going on.

In two minutes more Graeme and I had the door to the ballroom locked and barricaded with empty casks. We then closed the door of the barroom leading to the outside. The barroom was a strongly built log shack, with a heavy door secured, after the manner of the early cabins, with two strong oak bars, so that we felt safe from attack from that quarter.

The ballroom we could not hold long, for the door was slight and entrance was possible through the windows. But as only a few casks of liquor were left there, our main work would be in the bar, so that the fight would be to hold the passageway. This we barricaded with casks and tables. But by this time the crowd has begun to realize what had happened and were wildly yelling at doors and windows. With an ax which Graeme had brought with him the casks were soon stove in, and left to empty themselves.

As I was about to empty the last cask, Graeme stopped me, saying "Let that stand here. It will help us." And so it did. "Now skip for a man came crashing through the window. Before he could regain his feet, however, Graeme had seized him and flung him out upon the heads of the crowd outside. But through the other windows men were coming in, and Graeme rushed for the barricade, followed by two of the enemy, the foremost of whom I received at the top and hurled back upon the others.

"Now, be quick!" said Graeme; "I'll hold this. Don't break any bottles on the floor—throw them out there," pointing to a little window high up in the wall.

I made all haste. The casks did not take much time, and soon the whisky and beer were flowing over the floor. It made me think of George's regret over the "sinful waste." The bottles took longer, and glancing up now and then I saw that Graeme was being hard pressed. Men would leap, two and three at a time, upon the barricade, and Graeme's arms would shoot out, and over they would topple upon the heads of those nearest. It was a great sight to see him standing alone with a smile on his face and the light of battle in his eye coolly meeting his assailants with those terrific, lightning-like blows. In fifteen minutes my work was done.

"What next?" I asked. "How do we get out?"

"How is the door?" he replied.

I looked through the porthole and said: "A crowd of men waiting."

"We have to make a dash for it. I fancy," he replied cheerfully, though his face was covered with blood and his breath was coming in short gasps.

"Get down the bars and be ready."

But even as he spoke a chair hurled from below caught him on the arm, and before he could recover, a man had cleared the barricade and was upon him like a tiger. It was Idaho Jack.

"Hold the barricade," Graeme called out as they both went down.

I sprang to his place, but I had not much hope of holding it long. I had the heavy oak bar of the door in my hands, and swinging it round my head I made the crowd give back for a few moments.

Meantime Graeme had shaken off his enemy, who was circling about him upon

his tip-toes, with a long knife in his hand waiting for a chance to spring.

"I have been waiting for this for some time, Mr. Graeme," he said, sniggering.

"Yes," replied Graeme, "ever since I spoiled your cut-throat game in 'Frisco. How is the little one?" he added sarcastically.

Idaho's face lost its smile and became distorted with fury as he replied, spitting out his words. "She—is—where you will be before I am done with you."

"Ah! you murdered her, too! You'll hang some beautiful day, Idaho," said Graeme, as Idaho sprang upon him.

Graeme dodged his blow and caught his forearm with his left hand and held up high the murderous knife. Back and forward they swayed over the floor, slippery with whisky, the knife held high in the air. I wondered why Graeme did not strike and then I saw his right hand hung limp from the wrist. The men were crowding upon the barricade. I was in despair. Graeme's strength was going fast. With a yell of exultant fury Idaho threw himself with all his weight upon Graeme, who could only cling to him. They swayed together toward me, but as they fell I brought down my bar upon the upraised hand and sent the knife flying across the room and his cry of pain mingled with a shout from below, and there, dashing the crowd to right and left, came old Nelson, followed by Abe, Sandy, Baptiste Shaw and others. As they reached the barricade it crashed down and carrying me with it, pinned me fast.

Looking out between the barrels, I saw what froze my heart with horror. In the fall Graeme has wound his arms about his enemy and held him in a grip so deadly that he could not strike; but Graeme's strength was falling, and when I looked I saw that Idaho was slowly dragging both across the slippery floor to where the knife lay. Nearer an nearer his outstretched fingers came to the knife. In vain I yelled and struggled. My voice was lost in the awful din and the barricade held me fast. Above me standing on a barrel-head was Baptiste, yelling like a demon. In vain I called to him. My fingers could just reach his foot, and he heeded not at all to my touch. Slowly Idaho was dragging his almost unconscious victim toward the knife. His fingers were touching the blade point, when, under a sudden inspiration, I pulled out my penknife, opened it with my teeth, and drove the blade into Baptiste's foot. With a blood-curdling yell he sprang down and began dancing round in his rage, peering among the barrels.

"Look! look!" I was calling in agony and pointing. "For Heaven's sake look, Baptiste!"

The fingers had closed upon the knife, the knife was already high in the air, when, with a shriek, Baptiste cleared the room with a bound, and before the knife could fall, the little Frenchman's boot had caught the unlifted wrist and sent the knife flying to the wall.

Then there was a great rushing sound as of wind through the forest, and the lights went out. When I awoke I found myself lying with my head on Graeme's knees and Baptiste sprinkling snow in my face. As I looked up Graeme leaned over me, and, smiling down into my eyes he said:

"Good boy! It was a great fight and we put it up well!" and then he whispered: "I owe you my life, my boy!"

His words thrilled by heart through and through, and I loved him as only men can love men; but I only answered:

"I could not keep them back."

"It was well done," he said; and I felt proud.

I confess I was thankful to be so well out of it, for Graeme got off with a bone in his wrist broken and with a couple of ribs cracked; but had it not been for the open barrel of whisky which kept them occupied for a long time, offering too good a chance to be lost, and for the timely arrival of Nelson, neither of us would have ever seen the light again.

We found Craig sound asleep upon his couch. His consternation on waking to see us torn, bruised and bloody was laughable; but he hastened to find us warm water and bandages, and we soon felt comfortable.

Baptiste was radiant with pride and light over the fight and hovered about Graeme and me, giving vent to his feelings in admiring French and English epithets. But Abe, was disgusted because of his failure at Slavin's; for when Nelson looked in he saw Slavin's French-Canadian wife in charge, with her baby on her lap, and he came back to Shaw and said: "Come away; we can't touch this;" and Shaw after lookin in agreed that nothing could be done. A baby held the fort.

As Craig listened to the account of the fight he tried hard not to approve, but he could not keep the gleam out of his eyes; and as I pictured Graeme dashing back the crowd thronging the barricade till he was brought down by the hair, Craig laughed gently and put his hand on Graeme's knee. And as I went on to describe my agony while Idaho's fingers were gradually nearing the knife, his face grew pale and his eyes grew wide with horror.

"Baptiste, here, did the business." I said, and the little Frenchman nodded complacently and said:

"Dat's me for sure."

"By the way, how's your foot?" asked Graeme.

"He's fuss rate. Dat's what you call one bite of—of—dat leel bees. He's dere, you put your finer here, he's not dere—what you call him?"

"Flea?" I suggested.

"Out!" cried Baptiste. "Dat's one bite of flea."

"I was thankful I was under the barrels," I replied smiling.

"Out! Dat's mak' me ver' mad. I jump an' swear mos' awful bad. Dat's pardon me, M'sieur Craig heh!"

But Craig only smiled at him rather sadly.

"It was awfully risky," he said to Graeme, "and it was hardly worth it. They'll get more whiskey, and anyway the league is gone."

"Well," said Graeme with a sigh of satisfaction, "it is not quite such a one-sided affair as it was."

And we could say nothing in reply, for we could hear Nuxon snoring in the next room, and no one had heard of Billy, and there were others of the league that we knew were even now down at Slavin's. It was thought best that all should remain in Mr. Craig's shack, not knowing what might happen; and so we lay where, we could rest and we needed none to sing us to sleep.

When I awoke, stiff and sore, it was to find breakfast ready and old man Nelson in charge. As we were seated Craig came in, and I saw that he was not the man of the night before. His courage had come back, his face was quiet, and his eye clear; he was his own man again.

"Geordie has been out all night, but has failed to find Billy," he announced quietly.

We did not talk much. Graeme and I worried over our broken bones, and the others suffered from a general morning depression. But after breakfast as the men were beginning to move, Craig took down his Bible and saying, "Wait a few minutes, men!" he read slowly, in his beautiful clear voice, that psalm for all fighters—

"God is our refuge and strength," and so on to the nobler words—

"The Lord of Hosts is with us: The God of Jacob is our refuge."

How the mighty words pulled us together, lifted us till we grew ashamed of our ignoble rage and of our ignoble depression!

And then Craig prayed in simple, knowledge of failure, but I knew straight-going words. There was ache was thinking chiefly of himself; and there was gratitude, and that was for

(Continued on Page 7)

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Tide Table for August

AUGUST, 1907,				AUGUST, 1907,					
High Water.	A. M.	P. M.		Low Water.	A. M.	P. M.			
Date.	h.m.	ft. h.m.	ft.	Date.	h.m.	ft. h.m.	ft.		
Thursday	1 6:42	6.4	7:01	8.0	Thursday	1 0:51	1.8	12:43	3.2
Friday	2 8:00	6.0	7:53	8.0	Friday	2 2:02	1.5	1:43	2.8
Saturday	3 9:18	5.9	8:52	8.0	Saturday	3 3:10	1.2	2:43	3.2
SUNDAY	4 10:24	6.1	9:47	8.1	SUNDAY	4 4:09	0.8	3:53	3.5
Monday	5 11:18	6.4	10:34	8.3	Monday	5 5:00	0.4	4:50	3.5
Tuesday	6 12:01	6.6	11:15	8.4	Tuesday	6 5:43	0.0	5:38	3.5
Wednesday	7 12:37	6.9	11:58	8.5	Wednesday	7 6:19	-0.2	6:19	3.4
Thursday	8 1:08	7.1	12:33	8.6	Thursday	8 6:52	-0.4	6:54	3.2
Friday	9 1:30	7.3	1:01	8.7	Friday	9 7:22	-0.4	7:28	3.0
Saturday	10 1:53	7.5	1:30	8.7	Saturday	10 7:50	-0.2	8:02	2.7
SUNDAY	11 2:16	7.7	2:00	8.7	SUNDAY	11 8:20	0.0	8:38	2.4
Monday	12 2:38	7.9	2:30	8.7	Monday	12 8:51	0.3	9:12	2.1
Tuesday	1 3:00	8.1	3:00	8.7	Tuesday	1 9:23	0.8	9:54	1.9
Wednesday	2 3:22	8.3	3:30	8.7	Wednesday	2 10:00	1.3	10:45	1.7
Thursday	3 3:44	8.4	4:00	8.7	Thursday	3 10:45	1.9	11:45	1.5
Friday	4 4:06	8.5	4:30	8.7	Friday	4 11:32	2.5	.....	.....
Saturday	5 4:28	8.6	5:00	8.7	Saturday	5 12:20	3.0	.....	.....
SUNDAY	6 4:50	8.7	5:30	8.7	SUNDAY	6 1:10	3.5	.....	.....
Monday	7 5:12	8.8	6:00	8.7	Monday	7 2:00	4.0	.....	.....
Tuesday	8 5:34	8.9	6:30	8.7	Tuesday	8 2:50	4.5	.....	.....
Wednesday	9 5:56	9.0	7:00	8.7	Wednesday	9 3:40	5.0	.....	.....
Thursday	10 6:18	9.1	7:30	8.7	Thursday	10 4:30	5.5	.....	.....
Friday	11 6:40	9.2	8:00	8.7	Friday	11 5:20	6.0	.....	.....
Saturday	12 7:02	9.3	8:30	8.7	Saturday	12 6:10	6.5	.....	.....
SUNDAY	1 7:24	9.4	9:00	8.7	SUNDAY	1 7:00	7.0	.....	.....
Monday	2 7:46	9.5	9:30	8.7	Monday	2 7:50	7.5	.....	.....
Tuesday	3 8:08	9.6	10:00	8.7	Tuesday	3 8:40	8.0	.....	.....
Wednesday	4 8:30	9.7	10:30	8.7	Wednesday	4 9:30	8.5	.....	.....
Thursday	5 8:52	9.8	11:00	8.7	Thursday	5 10:20	9.0	.....	.....
Friday	6 9:14	9.9	11:30	8.7	Friday	6 11:10	9.5	.....	.....
Saturday	7 9:36	10.0	12:00	8.7	Saturday	7 12:00	10.0	.....	.....
SUNDAY	8 9:58	10.1	12:30	8.7	SUNDAY	8 12:50	10.5	.....	.....
Monday	9 10:20	10.2	1:00	8.7	Monday	9 1:40	11.0	.....	.....
Tuesday	10 10:42	10.3	1:30	8.7	Tuesday	10 2:30	11.5	.....	.....
Wednesday	11 11:04	10.4	2:00	8.7	Wednesday	11 3:20	12.0	.....	.....
Thursday	12 11:26	10.5	2:30	8.7	Thursday	12 4:10	12.5	.....	.....
Friday	1 11:48	10.6	3:00	8.7	Friday	1 5:00	13.0	.....	.....
Saturday	2 12:10	10.7	3:30	8.7	Saturday	2 5:50	13.5	.....	.....
SUNDAY	3 12:32	10.8	4:00	8.7	SUNDAY	3 6:40	14.0	.....	.....
Monday	4 12:54	10.9	4:30	8.7	Monday	4 7:30	14.5	.....	.....
Tuesday	5 13:16	11.0	5:00	8.7	Tuesday	5 8:20	15.0	.....	.....
Wednesday	6 13:38	11.1	5:30	8.7	Wednesday	6 9:10	15.5	.....	.....
Thursday	7 14:00	11.2	6:00	8.7	Thursday	7 10:00	16.0	.....	.....
Friday	8 14:22	11.3	6:30	8.7	Friday	8 10:50	16.5	.....	.....
Saturday	9 14:44	11.4	7:00	8.7	Saturday	9 11:40	17.0	.....	.....
SUNDAY	10 15:06	11.5	7:30	8.7	SUNDAY	10 12:30	17.5	.....	.....
Monday	11 15:28	11.6	8:00	8.7	Monday	11 13:20	18.0	.....	.....
Tuesday	12 15:50	11.7	8:30	8.7	Tuesday	12 14:10	18.5	.....	.....
Wednesday	1 16:12	11.8	9:00	8.7	Wednesday	1 15:00	19.0	.....	.....
Thursday	2 16:34	11.9	9:30	8.7	Thursday	2 15:50	19.5		