



"Just as human beings have found out the same thing—that it doesn't pay to hunt their fellow men. The laws of life as well as the laws of nations are against it."

But the words sounded weak and dim under the weight of the throbbing darkness; and Dan couldn't get away from the idea that the codes of life by which most men lived were forgotten quickly in the shadows of the pines. Even as he spoke, man was hunting man on the distant ridge where Whisperfoot the cougar had howled.

Bert Cranston, head of the arson ring that operated on the Umpqua divide, was not only beyond the pale in regard to the laws of the valleys, but he could have learned valuable lessons from the laws of the hills. The moon looked down to find him waiting on a certain trail that wound down to the settlements, his rifle loaded and ready for another kind of game than deer or wolf. He was waiting for Landy Hildreth; and the greeting he had for him was to destroy all chances of the prosecuting attorney in the valley below learning certain names that he particularly wanted to know.

There was no breath of wind. The great pines, tall and dark past belief, stood absolutely motionless, like strange pillars of ebony. Bert Cranston knelt in a brush covert, his rifle loaded and ready in his lean, dark hands.

No wolf that ran the ridges, no cougar that waited on the deer trails knew a wilder passion, a more terrible blood-lust than he. It showed in his eyes, narrow and never resting from their watch of the trail; it was in his posture; and it revealed itself unmistakably in the curl of his lips. Something like hot steam was in his brain, blurring his sight and heating his blood.

The pine needles hung wholly motionless above his head; but yet the dead leaves on which he knelt crinkled and rustled under him. Only the keenest ear could have heard the sound; and possibly in his madness, Cranston himself was not aware of it. And one would have wondered a long time as to what caused it. It was simply that he was shivering all over with hate and fury.

A twig cracked, far on the ridge above him. He leaned forward, peering, and the moonlight showed his face in unsparring detail. It revealed the deep lines, the terrible, drawn lips, the ugly hair long over the dark ears. His strong hands tightened upon the breech of the rifle. His wiry figure grew tense.

Of course it wouldn't do to let his prey come too close. Landy Hildreth was a good shot too, young as Cranston, and of equal strength; and no sporting chance could be taken in this hunting. Cranston had no intention of giving his enemy even the slightest chance to defend himself. If Hildreth got down into the valley, his testimony would make short work of the arson ring. He had the goods; he had been a member of the disreputable crowd himself.

The man's steps were quite distinct by now. Cranston heard him fighting his way through the brush thickets, and once a flock of grouse, frightened from their perches by the approaching figure, flew down the trail in front. Cranston pressed back the hammer of his rifle. The click sounded loud in the silence. He had grown tense and still, and the leaves no longer rustled.

His eyes were intent on a little clearing, possibly one hundred yards up the trail. The trail itself went straight through it. And in an instant more, Hildreth pushed through the backbrush and stood revealed in the moonlight.

If there is one quality that means success in the mountains it is constant, unceasing self-control. Cranston thought that he had it. But perhaps he had waited too long for Hildreth to come; and the strain had told on him. He had sworn to take no false steps; that every motion he made should be cool and sure. He didn't want to attract Hildreth's attention by any sudden movement. All must be cautious and stealthy. But in spite of all these good resolutions, Cranston's gun simply leaped to his shoulder in one convulsive motion at the first glimpse of his enemy as he emerged into the moonlight.

The end of the barrel struck a branch of the shrubbery as it went up. It was only a soft sound; but in the utter silence it traveled far. The gun barrel caught the moonlight as it leaped, and Hildreth saw its glint in the darkness.

He was looking for trouble. He had dreaded this long walk to the settlements more than any experience of his life. He didn't know why the letter he had written, asking for an armed escort down to the courts, had

not brought results. But it was wholly possible that Cranston would have answered this question for him. This same letter had fallen into a certain soiled, deadly pair of hands which was the last place in the world that Hildreth would have chosen, and it had been all the evidence that was needed, at the meeting of the ring the night before, to adjudge Hildreth a merciless and immediate end. Hildreth would have preferred to wait in the hills and possibly to write another letter, but a chill that kept growing at his finger tips forbade it. And all these things combined to stretch his nerves almost to the breaking point as he stole along the moonlit trail under the pines.

A moment before the rush and whirl of the grouse flock had dried the roof of his mouth with terror. The tall trees appalled him, the shadows fell upon his spirit. And when he heard this final sound, when he saw the glint that might so easily have been a gun-barrel, his nerves and muscles reacted at once. Not even a fraction of a second intervened. His gun flashed up and a little, angry cylinder of flame darted, as a snake's head darts, from the muzzle.

Hildreth didn't take aim. There wasn't time. The report roared in the darkness; the bullet sang harmlessly and thudded into the earth; and both of them were the last things in the world that Cranston had expected. And they were not a moment too soon. Even at that instant, his finger was closing down upon the trigger, Hildreth standing clear and revealed through the sights. The nervous response that few men in the world would be self-disciplined enough to prevent occurred at the same instant that he pressed the trigger. His own fire answered, so near to the other that both of them sounded as one report.

Most hunters can usually tell, even if they cannot see their game fall, whether they have hit or missed. This was one of the few times in his life that Cranston could not have told. He knew that as his finger pressed he had held as accurate a "head" as at any time in his life. He did not know still another circumstance—that in the moonlight he had overestimated the distance to the clearing, and instead of one hundred yards it was scarcely fifty. He had held rather high. And he looked up, unknowing whether he had succeeded or whether he was face to face with the prospect of a duel to the death in the darkness.

And all he saw was Hildreth, rocking back and forth in the moonlight—a strange picture that he was never



He Knew He Had Not Missed.

entirely to forget. It was a motion that no man could pretend. And he knew he had not missed.

He waited till he saw the form of his enemy rock down, face half-buried in the pine needles. It never even occurred to him to approach to see if he had made a clean kill. He had held on the breast and he had a world of confidence in his great, shocking, big game rifle. Besides, the rifle fire might attract some hunter in the hills; and there would be time in the morning to return to the body and make certain little investigations that he had in mind. And running back down the trail, he missed the sight of Hildreth dragging his wounded body, like an injured hare, into the shelter of the thickets.

Whisperfoot, that great coward,

came out of his brush covert when the moon rose. It was not his usual rising time. Ordinarily he found his best hunting in the eerie light of the twilight hour; but for certain reasons, his knowledge of which would be extremely difficult to explain, he let this time go by in slumber. Whisperfoot had slept almost since dawn. It is a significant quality in the felines that they simply cannot keep in condition without hours and hours of sleep. In this matter of sleeping, they are in a direct contrast to the wolves, who seemingly never sleep at all, unless it is with one eye open, and in still greater contrast to the king of all beasts, the elephant, who is said to slumber less per night than that great electrical wizard whom all men know and praise.

The great cat came out yawning, as graceful a thing as trends upon the earth. He was almost nine feet long from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail, and he weighed as much as many a full-grown man. He stood and yawned insolently, for all the forest world to see. He rather hoped that the chipmunk, staring with beady eyes from his doorway, did see him. He would just as soon that Wolf's little son, the bear cub, should see him too. But he wasn't so particular about Wolf himself, or the wolf pack whose song had just awakened him. And above all things, he wanted to keep out of the sight of men.

For when all things are said and done, there were few bigger cowards in the whole wilderness world than Whisperfoot. A good many people think that Graycoat the coyote could take lessons from him in this respect. But others, knowing how a hunter is brought in occasionally with almost all human resemblance gone from him because a cougar charged in his death agony, think this is unfair to the larger animal. And it is true that a full-grown cougar will sometimes attack horned cattle, something that no American animal cares to do unless he wants a good fight on his paws and of which the very thought would throw Graycoat into a spasm; and there have been even stranger stories, if one could quite believe them. A certain measure of respect must be extended to any animal that will hunt the great bull elk, for to miss the stroke and get caught beneath the churning, lashing, slashing, razor-edged front hoofs is simply death, painful and without delay. But the difficulty lies in the fact that these things are not done in the ordinary, rational blood of hunting. What an animal does in its death agony, or to protect its young, what great game it follows in the starving times of winter, can be put to neither its debit nor its credit. A coyote will charge when mad. A raccoon will put up a wicked fight when cornered. A hen will peck at the hand that robs her nest. When hunting was fairly good, Whisperfoot avoided the elk and steer almost as punctiliously as he avoided men, which is saying very much indeed; and any kind of terror could usually drive him straight up a tree.

But he did like to pretend to be very great and terrible among the smaller forest creatures. And he was Fear itself to the deer. A human hunter who would kill two deer a week for fifty-two weeks would be called a much uglier name than poacher; but yet this had been Whisperfoot's record, on and off, ever since his second year. Many a great buck wore the scar of the full stroke—after which Whisperfoot had lost his hold. Many a fawn had crouched panting with terror in the thickets at just a tawny light on the garbled limb of a pine. Many a doe would grow great-eyed and terrified at just his strange, pungent smell on the wind.

He yawned again, and his fangs looked white and abnormally large in the moonlight. His great, green eyes were still clouded and languorous from sleep. Then he began to steal up the ridge toward his hunting grounds. It was a curious thing that he walked straight in the face of the soft wind that came down from the snow fields, and yet there wasn't a weathercock to be seen anywhere. And neither had the chipmunk seen him wet a paw and hold it up, after the approved fashion of holding up a finger. He had a better way of knowing—a chill at the end of his whiskers.

The little, breathless night sounds in the brush around him seemed to madden him. They made a song to him, a strange, wild melody that even such frontiersmen as Dan and Lennox could not experience. A thousand smells brushed down to him on the wind, more potent than any wine or lust. He began to tremble all over with rapture and excitement. But unlike Cranston's trembling, no wilderness ear was keen enough to hear the leaves rustling beneath him.

(To be Continued)

NEWSPAPER WOMAN PLANS LONG TOUR

Lucille Saunders, Formerly of The Bulletin Staff, To Write Magazine Articles On South America.

PORTLAND, Dec. 31.—Miss Lucille Saunders, local newspaper woman, formerly a member of the staff of The Bulletin at Bend, will leave Monday for South America for a two years' absence from the United States, during which she intends to visit every country in the southern continent.

The visit to South America has been a lifelong ambition of Miss Saunders, and to this end she has

At the Churches

Seventh Day Adventist — Sabbath school as usual, 10 a. m. sharp, followed by the quarterly meeting services. The cottage Bible study classes will be held as usual, beginning Tuesday evening and continuing as before.—G. M. Thorp, pastor.

Methodist-Episcopal — On Sunday morning, regular services at 11 o'clock; Sunday evening, 7:30 o'clock, special musical services, under the direction of Herbert Sess, with solos, duets and quartet numbers, featuring selections from "The Holy City."

Sunday school and Epworth league at the usual hours.

Episcopal—Sunday school will be held in Sather's hall at 10:30 a. m. Children are urged to be present for the new grade work.

First Lutheran — S. A. Stenseth, pastor. Sunday school, with Bible class, every Sunday; New Year's day, English service in the morning at 11 o'clock; no service in the morning; Sunday, Norwegian, at 11 a. m.; No evening service Sunday, but in the afternoon at 2 o'clock the pastor will preach at Grange Hall, six miles out of town. The English language will be used.

been devoting her energies for several years, acquiring an intimate knowledge of Spanish and learning the geography and character of the country. During her trip she will write numerous articles for newspapers, magazines and trade publications.

After a stop at Guatemala, Miss Saunders will sail for Bolivia. She has made a complete itinerary of her trip, designed to include practically every state.

Dance the old year out and the new year in. Only one night you can do it—tomorrow night at the gym. Galgano's orchestra.

A small expense in repair work may save you the cost of a new battery. H. R. Riley, Electrical Service Station, 135 Greenwood.—Adv.

Put it in The Bulletin.

MALLORY PLAYERS HAVE REPUTATION

Advance Notices Speak Well of Actors Who Will Appear Here

Tuesday Night in "Vanity."

Clifton Mallory, dramatist and actor, known scarcely less for his own ability in dramatic interpretation than for his five successful plays, is to appear Tuesday evening at the gymnasium, heading his own company of players in presenting a modern morality play, "Vanity."

"Vanity" is a keen satire upon the American craze for keeping up ap-

pearances. Filled with clean humor and presenting many tense dramatic moments, it preaches a powerful sermon, but not at the expense of an interest of keen dramatic delights.

"Vanity," like "Everywoman," that other famous morality play, has been presented successfully from New York city to State college, New Mexico, and from Portland, Ore., to De Funiak Springs, Fla., and in every case Mr. Mallory and his company have been received with words of appreciation by critics.

It costs nothing to have Riley look at your storage battery and see that it is properly charged.—If not, it will freeze and break; this means a new battery. H. R. Riley, Electrical Service Station, 135 Greenwood.—



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