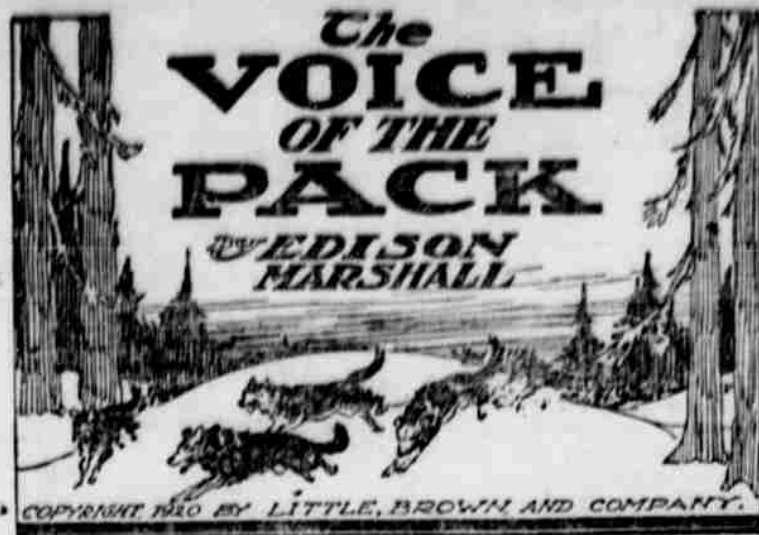




Prologue.

If one can just be close enough to the breast of the wilderness, he can't help but be imbued with some of the life that pulses therein.—From a Frontiersman's Diary.

Long ago, when the great city of Glitchepolis was a rather small, untidy hamlet in the middle of a plain, it used to be that a pool of water, possibly two hundred feet square, gathered every spring immediately back of the courthouse. The snow falls thick and heavy in Glitchepolis in winter; and the pond was nothing more than snow water that the inefficient drainage system of the city did not quite absorb. Besides being the despair of the plumbers and the city engineer, it was a severe strain on the beauty-loving instincts of every inhabitant in the town who had any such instincts. It was muddy and murky and generally distasteful.

A little boy played at the edge of the water, this spring day of long ago. Except for his interest in the pond, it would have been scarcely worth while to go to the trouble of explaining that it contained no fish. He, however, bitterly regretted the fact. In truth, he sometimes liked to believe that it did contain fish, very sleepy fish that never made a ripple, and as he had an uncommon imagination he was sometimes able to convince himself that this was so. But he never took hook and line and played at fishing. He was too much afraid of the laughter of his boy friends. His mother probably wouldn't object if he fished here, he thought, particularly if he were careful not to get his shoes covered with mud. But she wouldn't let him go down to Glitchepolis creek to fish with the other boys for mud cat. He was not very strong, she thought, and it was a rough sport anyway, and besides—she didn't think he wanted to go very badly. As mothers are usually particularly understanding, this was a curious thing.

The truth was that little Dan Failing wanted to fish almost as much as he wanted to live. He would dream about it of nights. His blood would glow with the thought of it in the springtime. Women the world over will have a hard time believing what an intense, heart-devouring passion the love of the chase can be, whether it is for fishing or hunting or merely knocking golf balls into a little hole upon a green. Sometimes they don't remember that this instinct is just as much a part of most men, and thus most boys, as their hands or their lips. It was acquired by just as laborious a process—the lives of uncounted thousands of ancestors who fished and hunted for a living.

It was true that little Dan didn't look the part. Even then he showed signs of physical frailty. His eyes looked rather large, and his cheeks were not the color of fresh skin, as they should have been. In fact, one would have had to look very hard to see any color in them at all. These facts are interesting from the light they throw upon the next glimpse of Dan, fully twenty years later.

Except for the fact that it was the background for the earliest picture of little Dan, the pool back of the courthouse has very little importance in his story. It did, however, afford an illustration to him of one of the really astonishing truths of life. He saw a shadow in the water that he pretended he thought might be a fish. He threw a stone at it.

The only thing that happened was a splash, and then a slowly widening ripple. The circumference of the ripple grew ever larger, extended and widened, and finally died at the edge of the shore. It set little Dan to thinking. He wondered if, had the pool been larger, the ripple still would have spread; and if the pool had been eternity, whether the ripple would have gone on forever. At the time he did not know the laws of cause and effect. Later, when Glitchepolis was great and prosperous and no longer untidy, he was going to find out that a cause is nothing but a rock thrown into a pond of infinity, and the ripple that in its effect keeps growing and growing forever.

The little incident that is the real beginning of this story was of no more importance than a pebble thrown into the snow-water pond; but its effect was to remove the life of Dan Failing, since grown up, far out of the realms of the ordinary.

And that brings all matters down to 1919, in the last days of a particularly sleepy summer. You would hardly know Glitchepolis now. The business district has increased tenfold. And the place where used to be the pool and the playground of Dan Failing is now laid off in as green and pretty a city park as one could wish to see.

Some day, when the city becomes

more prosperous, a pair of swans and a herd of deer are going to be introduced, to restore some of the natural wild life of the park. But in the summer of 1919, a few small birds and possibly half a dozen pairs of squirrels were the extent and limit of the wild creatures. And at the moment this story opens, one of these squirrels was perched on a wide-spreading limb overhanging a gravel path that slanted through the sunlit park. The squirrel was hungry. He wished that some one would come along with a nut.

There was a bench beneath the tree. If there had not been, the life of Dan Failing would have been entirely different. If the squirrel had been on any other tree, if he hadn't been hungry, if any one of a dozen other things hadn't been as they were, Dan Failing would have never gone back to the land of his people. The little bushy-tailed fellow on the tree limb was the squirrel of Destiny!

BOOK ONE

Repatriation.

CHAPTER I.

Dan Failing stepped out of the elevator and was at once absorbed in the crowd that ever surged up and down Broad street. He was just one of the ordinary drops of water, not an interesting, elaborate, physical and chemical combination to be studied on the slide of a microscope. He wore fairly passable clothes, neither rich nor shabby. He was a tall man, but gave no impression of strength because of the exceeding sparseness of his frame. As long as he remained in the crowd, he wasn't important enough to be studied. But soon he turned off, through the park, and straightway found himself alone.

The noise and bustle of the crowd—never loud or startling, but so continuous that the senses are scarcely more aware of them than of the beating of one's own heart—suddenly and utterly died almost at the very border of the park. The noise from the street seemed wholly unable to penetrate the thick branches of the trees. He could even hear the leaves whispering and flicking together, and when a man can discern this, he can hear the cushions of a mountain lion on a trail at night. Of course Dan Failing had never heard a mountain lion. Except on the railroad tracks between, he had never really been away from cities in his life.

At once his thought went back to the doctor's words. They were still repeating themselves over and over in his ears, and the doctor's face was still before his eyes. It had been a kind face; the lips had even curled in a little smile of encouragement. But the doctor had been perfectly frank, entirely straightforward. There had been no evasion in his verdict.

"I've made every test," he said. "They're pretty well shot. Of course, you can go to some sanitarium, if you've got the money. If you haven't—enjoy yourself all you can for about six months."

Dan's voice had been perfectly cool and sure when he replied. He had smiled a little, too. He was still rather proud of that smile. "Six months? Isn't that rather short?"

"Maybe a whole lot shorter. I think that's the limit."

There was the situation: Dan Failing had but six months to live. He began to wonder whether his mother had been entirely wise in her effort to keep him from the "rough games" of the boys of his own age. He realized now that he had been an underweight all his life—that the frailty that had thrust him to the edge of the grave had begun in his earliest boyhood. But it wasn't that he was born with physical handicaps. He had weighed a full ten pounds; and the doctor had told his father that a sturdier little chap was not to be found in any maternity bed in the whole city. But his mother was convinced that the child was delicate and must be sheltered. Never in all the history of his family, so far as Dan knew, had there been a death from the malady that afflicted him. Yet his sentence was signed and sealed.

But he harbored no resentment against his mother. It was all in the game. She had done what she thought was best. And he began to wonder in what way he could get the greatest pleasure from his last six months of life.

"Good Lord!" he suddenly breathed. "I may not be here to see the snows come!" Dan had always been partial to the winter season. When the snow lay all over the farm lands and bowed down the limbs of the trees, it had always awakened a curious flood of feelings in the wasted man. It seemed

to him that he could remember other winters, wherein the snow lay for end less miles over an endless wilderness, and here and there were strange, many-toed tracks that could be followed in the icy downs. But of course it was just a fancy. He wasn't in the least mist about it. He knew that he had never, in his lifetime, seen the wilderness. Of course his grandfather had been a frontiersman of the first order, and all his ancestors before him—a rangy, hardy breed whose wings would crumple in civilization—but he himself had always lived in cities. Yet the falling snows, soft and gentle but with a kind of remorselessness he could sense but could not understand, had always stirred him. He'd often imagined that he would like to see the forests in winter.

In him you could see a reflection of the boy that played beside the pond of snow water, twenty years before. His dark gray eyes were still rather large and perhaps the wasted flesh around them made them seem larger than they were. But it was a little hard to see them, as he wore large glasses. His mother had been sure, years before, that he needed glasses; and she had easily found an oculist that agreed with her.

Now that he was alone on the path, the utter absence of color in his cheeks was startling. That meant the absence of red—that warm glow of the blood eager and alive in his veins. Perhaps an observer would have noticed lean hands, with big-knuckled fingers, a rather firm mouth, and closely cropped dark hair. He was twenty-nine years of age, but he looked somewhat older. He knew now that he was never going to be any older. A doctor as sure of himself as the one he had just consulted couldn't possibly be mistaken.

He sat down on a park bench, just beneath the spreading limb of a great tree. He would sit here, he thought, until he finally decided what he would do with his remaining six months.

He hadn't been able to go to war. The recruiting officer had been very kind but most determined. The boys had brought him great tales of France. It might be nice to go to France and live in some country inn until he died. But he didn't have very long to think upon that vein. For at that instant the squirrel came down to see if he had a nut.

It was the squirrel of Destiny. But Dan didn't know it then.

Bushy-tail was not particularly afraid of the human beings that passed up and down the park, because he had learned by experience that they usually attempted no harm to him. But, nevertheless, he had his instincts. He didn't entirely trust them. After several generations, probably the squirrels of this park would climb all over its visitors and sniff in their ears and investigate the back of their necks. But this wasn't the way of Bushy-tail. He had come too recently from the wild places. And he wondered, most intensely, whether this tall, forked creature had a pocket full of nuts. He swung down on the grass to see.

"Why, you little devil!" Dan said in a whisper. His eyes suddenly



"Why, You Little Devil!" Dan Said in a Whisper.

sparkled with delight. And he forgot all about the doctor's words and his own prospects in his bitter regrets that he had not brought a pocketful of nuts.

And then Dan did a curious thing. Even later, he didn't know why he did it, or what gave him the idea that he could decoy the squirrel up to him by doing it. That was his only purpose—just to see how close the squirrel would come to him. He thought he would like to look into the bright eyes at close range. All he did was suddenly to freeze into one position—in an instant rendered as motionless as the rather questionable-looking stone stork that was perched on the fountain.

The squirrel was very close to him, and Dan seemed to know by instinct that the movement of a single muscle would give him away. So he sat as if he were posing before a photographer's camera. The fact that he was able to do it in itself important. It is considerably easier to exercise with dumb-bells for five minutes than to sit absolutely without motion for the same length of time. Hunters and naturalists acquire the art with training. It was therefore rather cu-

rious that Dan succeeded so well the first time he tried it. He had sense enough to relax first, before he froze. Thus he didn't put such a severe strain on his muscles.

The squirrel, after ten seconds had elapsed, stood on his hind legs to see better. First he looked a long time with his left eye. Then he turned his head and looked very carefully with his right. Then he backed off a short distance and tried to get a focus with both. Then he came some half-dozen steps nearer.

A moment before he had been certain that a living creature—in fact one of the most terrible and powerful living creatures in the world—had been sitting on the park bench. Now his poor little brain was completely added. He was entirely ready to believe that his eyes had deceived him.

Bushy-tail drew off a little further, fully convinced at last that his hopes of a nut from a child's hand were blasted. But he turned to look once more. The figure still sat utterly inert. And all at once he forgot his devouring hunger in the face of an overwhelming curiosity.

He came somewhat nearer and looked a long time. Then he made a half-circle about the bench, turning his head as he moved. He was more puzzled than ever, but he was no longer afraid. His curiosity had become so intense that no room for fear was left. And then he sprang upon the park bench.

Dan moved then. The movement consisted of a sudden heightening of the light in his eyes. But the squirrel didn't see it. It takes a muscular response to be visible to the eyes of the wild things.

The squirrel crept slowly along the bench, stopping to sniff, stopping to stare with one eye and another, just devoured from head to tail with curiosity. And then he leaped on Dan's knee.

He was quite convinced, by now, that this warm perch on which he stood was the most singular and interesting object of his young life. It was true that he was faintly worried by the smell that reached his nostrils. But all it really did was further to incite his curiosity. He followed the leg up to the hip and then perched on the elbow. And an instant more he was poking a cold nose into Dan's neck.

But if the squirrel was excited by all these developments, its amazement was nothing compared to Dan's. It had been the most astounding incident in the man's life. He sat still, tingling with delight. And in a single flash of inspiration he knew he had come among his own people at last. He knew where he would spend his last six months of life.

His own grandfather had been a hunter and trapper and frontiersman in a certain vast but little known Oregon forest. His son had moved to the eastern cities, but in Dan's garret there used to be old mementoes and curios from these savage days—a few claws and teeth, and a fragment of an old diary. The call had come to him at last. Tenderfoot though he was, Dan would go back to those forests, to spend his last six months of life among the wild creatures that made them their home.

(To Be Continued.)

Title Fits the Duties.

The colored caretaker of a small town library boasted the title of "Custodian," which he had embroidered on the front of his cap, a source of lasting pride. Having marked diplomatic ability, he deserved a four-syllable title. One morning while he was sweeping off the front walk a wandering loafer, also of African extraction, paused in front of him and scrutinized the cap closely.

"Cuss-todian!" he ejaculated. "Down wah! I came from they calls common niggers like you janitahs."

"Ye-es," observed the ebony-hued diplomat, pausing a moment from his labors, "dat's all right in Memphis. But on a job like dis, 'custodian' is mo' appropriate. You see, you haf to cuss half de patrons and toady to de rest of 'em."—Judge.

Not All Blind.

Two charming sisters are engaged to two brothers, and their neighbors have been interested in this dual love affair. The young girls live in the second flat of a house on the south side of the street, and the other day the elder sister was stopped in the street by the young second of the family who occupy the second flat in the house just opposite.

"Oh, Miss Mikgs," said the boy, "my papa said last night that someone ought to tell you to pull down the blinds, 'cause if love is blind, the neighbors are not!"—London Tit-Bits.

From Ear to Ear.

Willie was away from home for the first time, staying with some friends. He was allowed to "sit up" for dinner. The servant came round with a plate of slices of melon, and the hostess noticed Willie hesitate about helping himself. "Don't you like melon?" asked his hostess encouragingly. "Very much, thank you," replied Willie, "only they make your ears so wet."

On the Dry Bathing Beach.

Mabel—"That's a lovely bathing suit you're wearing. But aren't you afraid water will take the color out?" Joan—"It might, so I always have it dry cleaned."—Detroit News.

Bulletin "WANT ADS" Bring Results—Try Them.

FOR MERCHANTS ONLY



"MONEY Talks"—according to an old adage, indicating that our cash has human traits.

If it is so, we may have learned the reason for the straying habit of many dollars from this community—they've succumbed to the courtesy and friendliness of our neighbors, the big city merchants and mail order houses.

The city merchants and mail order folks are proving every day that it is profitable to invite OUR DOLLARS over. They do it through advertising.

But the merchants of this community can overcome that—they can establish a more lasting friendship with the community's money—in fact, make regular STAY-AT-HOME DOLLARS—every one.

FIRST—By INVITING the DOLLARS within shopping distance of this center to TRADE IN THIS COMMUNITY.

SECOND—By renewing that invitation through advertising, week after week, month after month, year after year. That's the way the city merchants and mail order folks do it.

THIRD—The invitation is to tell the dollars about the worth-while things that are in your store for them. FOURTH—When the dollars come, remember they will only come back again when well treated.

And there is nothing more invigorating to the activities of any community than pepful HOME-SPENT DOLLARS.

FRANK PRINCE TO HEAD POST

FINANCE OFFICER ONLY NOMINEE FOR COMMANDER OF EX-SERVICE MEN—MANY CANDIDATES FOR OTHER OFFICES.

In reward for his two year's service as finance officer of Percy A. Stevens post No. 4, American Legion, Frank R. Prince was nominated as the only candidate for commander of the post. The naming of candidates to be voted on at the second meeting in December was the chief business before the ex-service men's organization.

When it came to the vice-commandership, there was more competition. Jack Knowles, Earl Houston and P. Pierson being nominated for the position. For adjutant, Frank Knowles was the only nominee. Charles Wilson and K. E. Sawyer are candidates for finance officer and Norman Cobb, Dr. L. W. Gatchell and Paul Hosmer were nominated for historian. No nominations for the position of chaplain were made. For members of the executive committee—five to be elected—nominations, poured in so rapidly that, before they were closed, every member in attendance at the meeting, and a number who were not, had become candidates.

The post decided to put on a series of dances extending into the summer. A plan for a dinner in connection with the election meeting in December was also endorsed.

Want to buy hay, use Bulletin classified ads.

SECTY TO PRESIDENT, WHICH ONE?



Richard Washburn Child and James B. Christian, one of which will very probably be the secretary to President Harding. Mr. Christian (above) was secretary to Mr. Harding during his campaign. Mr. Child is a New York lawyer and writer. Both have been mentioned as probable choice.

TeamWork

We hear much these days about "TEAM-WORK."

Mostly it is used in connection with athletic affairs. We are told of wonderful victories—when every member of a team PULLS TOGETHER—when someone doesn't go off

trying to make a star play, at the expense of the others.

Trouble is that we limit the word to our recreation—sport—athletics. We should follow through; think, use, live team-work in everything we do.

If team-work is a winner in sports, then team-work is good in family affairs—and we all know how the household thrives wherein every member has a shoulder to the wheel.

If team-work is good in the family then it is good in our work—the commercial organization or unit where we earn our daily bread.

If team-work is good in our work—then team-work is good for our neighborhood affairs—our community—our town.

And right there, friends, is where we can make the greatest showing—when we ALL practice team-work in the development and growth of OUR town and county.

When the merchants of this town spend money for advertising space to send you a message of economy—savings—bargains—that message should be read. They've invested thousands of dollars in goods to supply you—and without one guarantee that you will buy.

To earn your money here, then take it to the big city store—or send it to the mail order house—neither of which contributes one cent to the upbuilding of this community—is not team-work. Read the advertisements in this paper today, then patronize our home merchants.

HOME-SPENT DOLLARS mean team-work.