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## The Forest Fire

Green, timber-covered hills; quiet, peaceful homesteads. Cabins housing families just getting on their feet from the depression. Picturesque rail fences zigzagging along shaded, cool roads. The air is still as a summer's sun beats down a cheerful, post-harvest assurance of Nature's providence.

Almost suddenly, however, the still routine of a late season afternoon is broken by the abrupt rising of a column of smoke beyond the hills. The air stirs languidly, live things sniff and become restless. Farmers and miners notice the dark pall that is gathering in intensity as minutes pass and nervously make for their homes and shacks in the green, cool forest.

As leaves increase their motion, almost as if in apprehension, black smoke rolls up nearer crest of the nearby ridge and a faint roar can be heard above the landscape's usual quiet. Horses stand stiff-legged and spread their nostrils as acrid fumes from the gathering fire drift down into the valley. Residents, those fortunate enough to be near home, are hurriedly packing their belongings into cars and trucks, all the time casting worried glances over their shoulders as the skies darken. The black, swirling pall is fire, death-dealing, treacherous forest fire before which every living thing must flee, and be quick about it.

With a burst of fiendish glory the distant roar and crackle suddenly tops the ridge; a deep red flame pierces the black curtain and fire starts its ugly course down the mountainside as the last stragglers flee in terror. Green trees, majestic and imposing, are licked barren in one great motion of the flames as they race through the dense, lush forest that a few moments before was haven for man or beast.

Immense, liquid flames seem to push great troughs into the woods like a man stumbling through a wheat field. The blaze licks out hundreds of yards as a twisting wind sends it through crowns to throw firebrands far ahead of the fire's path. The inferno reaches a cabin, a barn and fence; solid, useful structures one minute, blazing torches of hell the next. Demon fire roars on in its strength scarcely noticing such insignificant things. Across the valley, up the yonder ridge at express train speed, roaring, crackling and sending up mountainous thunderheads of smoke and ashes.

Left behind are the millions of little flames busily engaged in burning out at leisure what the great blaze hurriedly scorched. Hot, smoking ground dotted with illuminated totem poles laboriously

burning from top to bottom. Hollow stumps and trunks snapping and popping as the clean-up flames lag like a countless horde of fleas following behind on the trail of their monstrous home.

Night comes, the fire's wrath is cooled and lulled for a time. Hills are punctured with a myriad of lights, like a great, distant city. Everywhere are bright little fires close to the ground where pitch stumps continue their several-day task of burning to the tips of the deepest root. Black, bleak, barren acres of charcoal and ashes. Death and destruction; ruin and end.

Residents pick their way, fearful of falling snags that send great showers of red sparks high in the air, back to the black cinder piles that mark the lines of what was sweet home a few hours before. Poking around in the hot rubbish for some familiar object that would bring vividly full realization of the personal cost of the holocaust. Frightened children, hysterical women and teeth-gritting men with stern, troubled faces.

As the fire glows and smoulders as if to rest for the night, hundreds of men in dozens of trucks begin to arrive on all sides. There is cheerful, noisy conversation as fire fighters rushed in by a paternal government catch the significance of fire's nightmarish grandeur and don water tanks, shoulder tools and set out for the fire lines. While Gulliver sleeps on his charred laurels swarms of tiny men will work all night in a sweating, earnest effort to tie him down with so many threads he will not be able to rise again with the coming of day. Tiny streams of water are played on inch-high flames as leaves and sticks are raked toward the dozing inferno. Burning snags are felled and fresh earth is turned up to thwart movement of fire. It is man's turn to become overwhelming, and rangers, neighbors and CCC workers are making the most of it.

The long night's battle grows weary, dawn breaks over the hills and deep shadows of the valleys lighten into a smoky haze. Burning coals send out little flames as if in greeting to a new day and renewed activity. The giant fire is getting back his strength as a morning breeze plays through the charred ruins, warning of impending trouble along fire lines.

Another day sees the blazing monster stemmed and hemmed in by man, where the day before humans could but flee before its terror. Stifled and smothered, the flames content themselves with the devouring of logs and stumps, occasionally making threatening gestures at green, virgin timber as crews of men rush to circle the break. The monster is licked, but not until a dozen homes and five thousand acres of forest have been wiped out.

It is a graphic repetition of the battle of life and the elements. Because man permitted a tiny, innocent-looking little flame to go unchecked, that same little flame spread and grew in a few breathtaking moments into a blaze a thousand men could not curb.

It was just another forest fire, in all probability starting from one human's carelessness or indifference to the fragility of nature and man. A terrible scar to be left by a small piece of wood called match, or a cigaret, flipped into the air during some trivial conversation.

## Becoming School Minded



operated by spirits for at least 20 years. This statement may cause you to laugh, but it is so designated in the annals of that state. Just at the moment I cannot recall the name of the man who opened it up and owned it for that length of time, but he was a strong spiritualist and consulted the spirits in everything he did. He claimed they told him where to look for mineral and in after years he was guided solely by their advice. The Highland Mary was a great mine. It laid at the foot of a mountain that rose straight up for 6000 feet above the valley. Over a mile high above the valley it towered and its interior was honeycombed with veins of quartz, rich in gold. When I visited the mine it had been worked for over 20 years by from 100 to 200 miners and they had done a lot of work in that time. But after going through the mine and then coming out and sizing up the immense mountain it would seem as though they had barely scratched it, so vast were its proportions.

But from the first the mine paid beautifully and the miners got good wages and everybody was satisfied. Then came a day when a messenger came bursting into camp with an important message from the spirits. He had nearly rode several horses to death to get there on time. The spirits warned the miners to look out for danger. That was all. The miners looked all around, saw nothing that looked dangerous anywhere, had a hearty laugh among themselves and went on working. But four days later they broke into one of those mountain reservoirs (an immense body of water often found existing in the interiors of the big hills) and the whole outfit barely escaped being drowned. After that experience, they paid a lot more attention to what the spirits said.

Friend Birkenbeuel of Portland says we'd probably be a better barnyard golfer than bass singer if we could get the right pitch.—Weston Leader.

The ratio between gold and silver does not bother us nearly so much as their distance from the home plate.—Weston Leader.

It is usually the public that finds itself in the trough of a strike wave.—Weston Leader.

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## SPIRIT MINE WAS ONE OF RICHEST TELLS REYNOLDS

(Continued from page one)  
so I gradually grew out of the notion. But as to ghosts, I have positively never felt the least bit of fear of them. Many people have tried to teach me this fear, but I simply couldn't learn it.  
What is there about a ghost to terrify anyone? Will we not, all of us, be ghosts some day? I will not deny that there may be certain earth-bound spirits who hang around their old haunts for a time after death, but what of it? They would be powerless to hurt anyone. In all my hunting I have seen but one ghost. Once in Washington I was employed by a large lumber concern, and part of my job was to meet four trains a day, and look after the mail, express and freight. One morning just before daylight I was awakened by a noise that seemed to come from down around the depot. So I dressed hurriedly and started on a trip of investigation.

there who was six feet and six inches tall, a fine clean fellow, who insisted on taking a cold shower bath every morning before breakfast. Summer or winter, he never failed to bathe himself with the coldest water he could get, which he claimed put a lot of pep into him, though I am here to tell you that it would kill an ordinary man as dead as a mackerel to strip off his clothes in winter time and let that ice water run over him for several minutes first thing after getting out of bed. Well, anyway, I was hot-footing it through a narrow passage way on my way to the depot and the fog was so thick you could cut it up with an axe. I couldn't see over four feet ahead of me and was going it blind, when all of a sudden a tall apparition clothed in white loomed up ahead of me and I quickly side-stepped to avoid a collision. "Great grief!" I said to myself, "Here's the first ghost I ever saw, and by cracky it's a big one." But just then the ghost spoke: "Hello, Jack," it said, "what are you doing out so early in the morning?" I took another look and I'll be darned if it wasn't the big logger, whose name was Brown, but I hardly knew him, encased as he was in a long white garment from neck to toes. "Good gosh, Brown," I said, "what do you mean traveling

around here at this time of night, wrapped up in a white sheet, scaring folks to death?" "That's not a sheet," he told me. "It's my nightgown and I have just been out to the bath house for my cold shower."  
"Do you mean to stand there and tell me you wear a nightgown?" I asked him. "You ought to be ashamed, and you a logger, too. Why I never heard of such a thing as a logger owning a nightgown. Well, run along," I told him, "I've got business down at the depot." But the other loggers got a great kick out of it when I told my ghost story at breakfast.  
That is the only ghost I have ever been able to scare up and, believe me, I have devoted quite a lot of time in my life to hunting for them. Mexicans and Indians sized me up as a pretty desperate character because I didn't get all panicky like they did whenever ghosts had been spotted in the vicinity. They simply couldn't understand why I should wish to interview a ghost, even to the extent of hunting for it, instead of running away.  
Speaking of ghosts reminds me of the Highland Mary mine on the headwaters of the Animas river in the San Juan country, Colorado. This is the spirit mine of Colorado, discovered by spirits and

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