Toilers of the Columbia

By PAUL DE LANEY

Author of "Lord of the Desert," "Oregon Sketches," and other Pacific Coast Stories

CHAPTER VII.

Toilers of the Columbia.

"How is the storm?"

"Pretty high, father, but not so high as it was a week ago."

"I do not believe I can go today, my child."

"Well, father, I will try it alone. Dan Lapham fishes a trap alone, and I believe I can do so, too."

"Oh, no, my child. Dan is a strong young man. He has not an equal on the bay, and you are my frail little girl. I know you are willing and your strength at times seems to be supernatural, but you could not fish a trap alone. It is out of the question."

"But Dan's trap is near ours. You know he often helps me when you are tired and I would help him this morning in return for his services. You are not able to go, my father."

"But I will go," said the old man as he drew himself feebly from the bed.

"My child, this work is getting too severe for you. For more than a year you have had to pull at the oars and your task has grown greater until your strength is over-taxed. Day by day I grow more feeble and day by day the burden is increased upon your shoulders. If I could only complete the link that still is missing I would place you where you could continue your studies and the old man that I am would spend his few remaining days in comfort as your ward. I know, Sankala, that you would not begrudge me so small an amount if it were yours."

"No, father, it should all be yours. I have only one desire, and that is to place you where you shall have rest. You need rest, father, you need rest. No one nearly so old as you toils on the Columbia, and yet you go day after day, and often when you are too feeble even to stir. Listen, the storm rages this morning! You should not go at all."

Thus spoke Sankala to Ringwold. Another year had passed in their lives. The price of fish had gone down under the hard times and close competition and Ringwold had for many months been unable to make a support for the two alone. In fact, he had struggled beyond his strength to keep Sankala in school and the crash was close at hand. He was now giving out his last strength. Often he would become completely exhausted and lie for a time in the bow of the fishing boat while the girl worked on alone. It was on these occasions that good-hearted Dan Lapham had come to their rescue and assisted poor Sankala to do her work.

She had become hardened to the work, however, and frail as she was she could handle a boat and draw in the web of the fish trap with the skill of the average man. It was not her strength that did it, however. It was her will power and a nimble, quick motion of an expert nature that women possess over men.

Twice this morning had Rinwgold fainted while Sankala was assisting him to dress and she had revived him and carried on the work. The child was accustomed to this and did not realize how serious was the condition of the old man.

When the fishermen reached the beach the waves were coming in with a rush. They threw the drift wood further back with each pulsation. Out in the darkness through the mist and the rain the white caps could be seen leaping about like the salmon they were pursuing. The strongest fisherman paused this morning. They were often compelled to remain ashore until late and even over-day. But this was always a disappointment. The fish ran better when there was a storm and the hard times now urged the toilers on their duty.

While the men were thus pausing from indecision Ringwold and Sankala appeared. Without seeming to notice the disturbed condition of the bay they shoved their boat into the water and while Ringwold steered Sankala threw her oars against the seething current. They gradually mingled with the dark phantoms which danced upon the sea until they were lost from view.

The fishermen had become so accustomed to the dangers of their life that they thought but little about it. What to the stranger would have appeared foolhardy was to them duty and choice. But the storm this morning was unusually high and that intuition akin to the instinct that protects animals from destruction, warned the fishermen to be cautious.

But when Sankala braved the waters with her aged companion the most daring of the fishermen followed. Dan Lapham, smarting under his former timidity, was first seen to shoot out in his boat in pursuit of the two who worked a trap near his own. Then one by one the others followed.

The fish traps were constructed along the entire north shore of the river, which is Baker's bay, from Cape Disappointment to McGowan's Point, a distance of a dozen miles or more. The middle of the river was the dividing line. The river is the dividing line between the two states and the fishermen from the two states claim their rights, even to a hair's breadth.

The fishermen on the north had traps while those on the south had nets. The cannerymen on the south side of the river owned most of the nets and old Seadog owned most of the traps on the north. The fishermen were employed by the day on the nets and given so much for each fish captured. The trappers were employed by the day or worked the traps on shares. All the fishermen used row boats peculiar for their work. Save with rare exceptions the boats were manned by two, both at the nets and the traps. One was called the puller and the other the fisherman. While the latter tended his nets or traps the puller guided the boat to suit the work.

The nets were known as gill nets. These were stretched out their full length in the water, which was many feet and even yards. Floaters were placed along the top of the net at proper distances to hold it in position while sinkers carried the bottom of the net deep into the water. The meshes of the net were of such size as would permit the entrance of the averge fishes head. When once it entered the meshes the gills were fastened and the fish held prisoner until removed by the fishermen.

The traps, one of which Ringwold and Sankala tended, were constructed differently. A large figure was formed in the shallow water by the driving of piles. It represented a heart and on either side extended long wings. The wings enclosed a semi-circle facing the ocean and immediately in the rear of where they come together was the large heart. A netting, called web, was stretched along the piles from the surface of the water to the bottom of the bay. By this means a perfect heart with wings was perfected.

The valve of the heart opened immediately at the conjunction of the wings. This was at the sharp point of the "V" which is formed at the top of the heart.

As a trap for fish it is a success. The salmon come up from the ocean and enter the mouth of the river fresh and strong. They run in great schools and follow the shallow channels laying their spawn as they go farther up the stream.

When the noses of the fish strike the web forming the wings of the heart, they follow the wings to the center. Here they find their way through the opening into the heart. When once into the heart their capture is complete. They circle about the place passing the same apex of the heart through which they entered without ever discovering it as a means of escape, and are thus held as captives until the fishermen take them into their boats.

They sometimes enter these traps by the hundreds within 24 hours. They range in weight from five to 20 pounds and larger.

It was such a trap as this that Sankala and Ringwold tended for old Seadog at wages barely sufficient to sustain them at best.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Morning of Disaster.

"Hello, Captain!"

"Hello, lookout!"

"The sea is high and the fishermen are venturing out."

"All right, I will send out the men."

Cape Disappointment life saving station nestled beneath the rocks of the cliffs that extended far out over the sea.

Many a mariner had met disappointment here. For from the sea the spot looked like a place of refuge from the storm. But he who dared to trust it had often been dashed to death against its walls.

Shaken and addled, as it were, while crossing the river bar, the mightiest rovers of the deep had been broken up here like glass upon the rocks.

It was the treachery of its appearance that gave name to the place. It was the great loss of life that had caused the government to establish a life saving station at the foot of the cliffs.

But the life savers had a double duty to perform. The purpose for which they were originally placed there was insignificant to the duty that later developed. They were provided by the government to watch incoming vessels and save the lives of ship wrecked seamen and travelers on the deep, but later it was found that a hundred calls came from those whose lives were spent on the river to where one came from those who lived on the sea.

Like guardians of children the life savers stood upon watch and as the fishermen came and so were they on duty.

From the early hours of morning until nearly noon, and from early afternoon until late in the evening the fishermen dotted the river in their tiny boats and struggled with their nets verging on the very danger line where ocean and river met. Once across this line and the frail craft of the fisherman was at the mercy of the undertow and many a toiler was dragged to his death ere the government protectors of life could reach the spot in boats prepared for the purpose.

The lighthouse stood upon the highest point of the cape overlooking the sea. Beneath its shadow stood a small structure barely large enough inside for one man to stand, turn about and sit down. It was built of glass save that its framework and roof was made of iron. The glass was thick and almost as strong as iron for it required strength to withstand the terrible storms that beat upon it from the sea.

Its furnishings were a small stove, a stool, a pair of strong glasses and a telephone. It was occupied night and day by one man at a time. One was on watch from noon until midnight and the other from midnight until noon. Not even a light was allowed for it was not needed by day and by night it would blind the watch so that he could not look out upon the ocean and river.

Throughout the day he peered out through his glasses over the sea and river and bay. At night he followed the great revolving light in the lighthouse above his head and watched for objects on the water while he looked further out for the smaller lights of vessels.

It was on the morning that Sankala and Ringwold had put forth into the storm that the conversation took place over the telephone between the lookout and the captain of the life saving crew recorded at the beginning of this chapter.

The lookout had seen the small craft battling with the surf on the bosom of the bay in the dim light shot out from overhead. He could feel the storm blowing against the structure which enclosed him; besides the register showed a high velocity of wind.

It foreboded a day of hard work. Fishermen would venture forth in dangerous storms and this compelled the life savers to stand on constant guard. They would enter their boats and beat along the danger line like sentinels to keep the fishermen from rowing to their death. And in spite of this precaution scores find watery graves at the mouth of the Columbia every year.

As the fishermen fought their way out on this stormy morning the life savers shot out from under the cliffs toward the bar. Here bordering on the danger line themselves they patrolled the river to rescue those less capable than themselves to withstand the receding tide.

"Hello, captain!"

"Hello, lookout!"

"Signal distress off west end of Jetty Sand Spit. A boat is heading for the breakers!"

"Bing, bing, bing!" went three guns.

"Hello, captain!"

"Hello, lookout!"

"Signal distress off Pacific rocks. Boat seems to be capsized and men clinging to upturned hull!"

"Bing, bing!" went two guns.

After a few minuutes pause the captain's 'phone rang again.

"Hello, captain!"

"Hello, lookout!"

"Signal distress off Disappontment rocks! Boat shoving for breakers like a rocket! Girl at the oars; is powerless—think it is Sankala, the old chemist's daughter."

"Bing, bing, bing, bing, bing!" rang out five shots from the cliffs below. This was the most dangerous point at the mouth of the river and was called the hell gap, for it was here that so many fishermen had lost their lives.

The swift receding current formed a sort of maelstrom at the point of the rocks and when once fairly in its clutches boats were swept like chaff into the breakers and disappeared like shot thrown into the water.

The life savers knew the signals as well as their alphabet and rushed to the rescue like firemen to the call of fire. And when the signal came for Disappointment rocks the sturdy boys lying off that point bent to their oars with all their might.

The life savers were divided up into crews and each of these divisions covered given points. The men selected for the most dangerous places were the most experienced and dared the elements as veteran soldiers face the death line in battle.

While the rescuers were hurrying to the calls of distress the captain had ascended to the lookout's station. Day was already dawning and while signals were given at night by the discharge of firearms, they were given in day time with flags from lookout point.

With the advancing day the river and bay presented a busy appearance. A speck here to the natural eye was revealed through the strong glasses to be a fisherman's boat struggling with the nets or waves. Some were going, some were coming. Each was oblivious of the other. One was dashing to its ruin at another point and life savers were going to its rescue, while the men in danger were often unconscious of the fact.

But in the work which was so common as to bring no excitement to the veteran captain of the crew he surveyed the waters as a general does his battlefield.

This morning, however, a change came over his face. He saw a frail fisherman's boat being swept toward Disappointment rocks. Standing up working her useless oars with all her strength was Sankala. The glasses revealed her firm features and while she looked into the jaws of death she was as calm as the rocks which awaited her approach. Ringwold lay motionless in the boat. Whether dead or asleep the glasses did not disclose. It was evident that they had never reached the fish trap for the boat was as empty as it had been when they had first started out.

The captain raised the signal flag high above his head and waved it five times in succession. But here the life boat which was giving Sankala's boat a stern chase, passed behind some rocks that had just hidden her and several seconds must pass before they would appear again.

(To be continued)

Titles of Doubtful Origin.

Continental titles save of the highest sort have been viewed with suspicion in this country, but those of England have been accepted with almost as implicit faith as Bank of England notes inspire. Yet the herald's college lately made the remarkable assertion that many persons are using bogus titles in England and that others are using titles to which they have not established their claim and probably could not bring any satisfactory proofs. And the editor of Dod's Peerage admits that there are between fifty-six and sixty baronets whose claims would not bear too close scrutiny.

For example, an ambitious and retired business man named Smith may find in some secluded part of the country some lands formerly owned by some extinct family of Smiths who had possessed a title. He buys the property, quietly claims descent and coolly assumes the title. In London such a course would probably be exposed, but in the country people are less suspicious. Nor is such imposture, it seems, contrary to English law. It appears also that many of the titles which enjoy long standing were assumed in some such way, perhaps centuries ago, and owe whatever validity they have to long use. A general scrutiny of English titles might be a very painful thing.—Springfield (Mass.) Republican.

Heredity.

Binks—Speaking of heredity, do you remember Forrester, who bought some wild land and turned it into a farm?

Winks—Yes; he was the inventor of a very effective stump puller.

Binks—Just so. Well, his son is a very successful dentist.

An Angry Landlady.

Boarder No. 1—What's that loud thumping noise in the kitchen?

Boarder No. 2—It's the landlady hammering the steak and wishing it was the beef trust.—Chicago Tribune.

Mayor McClellan asserts that he would prefer to be Mayor of Greater New York than Governor of the Empire State.

WELLINGTON'S VIEWS ON ART.

Sir George Hayter, the court painter to the late Queen Victoria, was at one time invited to Strathfield Saye, the home of the Duke of Wellington. The duke had promised him sittings for his portrait. The following extracts from the painter's diary, printed in the London Chronicle, give an amusing glimpse of the duke's ideas on art. He told Sir George that there was one subject for a painting which he would like to see done well, because he considered that it would be a great moral lesson. He said:

"We are informed that all the animals of the creation had been made for our use, but we don't know how to reduce some of them to obedience: the lion, the royal tiger, the hyena, and others; but Van Amburgh has effected this. What I want Landseer to paint for me is Van Amburgh—he is a fine, athletic man—surrounded by the animals he has so well known not only how to render obedient to himself, but also to live in peace with each other; Van Amburgh standing upright, a fine figure of a man, with these animals lying round him, and the lamb at his feet, for he places the lamb between the lion and the tiger, and they dare not touch it.

"This is not all you see. In an adjoining cage these ferocious beasts are together, not injuring each other. This is education; this is the great moral lesson."

Then he lamented that Edwin Landseer's health had not permitted him to paint this picture for him, and repeated the description of Van Amburgh's prowess.

Sir George also says that the duke amused the company very much by an account of his attending divine service in London always at eight o'clock in the morning at the Chapel Royal; that he never found more than the officiating priest and a sort of Abigail, and that he, the duke, always acted as clerk; that he uniformly went through all the responses with a loud voice, even to the amen. He said, "I suppose if the people of London knew that I, his Grace the Duke of Wellington, regularly attended as clerk at the Chapel Royal every Sunday, they would at least not leave room for me even to get in," thus appearing quite aware of his own great popularity, at the same time recognizing in himself the humble Christian who goes to pray and who is willingly clerk in an empty chapel.

HUNGARIANS FOR NEGROES.

Foreigners Becoming Roustabouts on the Mississippi.

It is enough to make all the old Mississippi River men who have passed away and gone to their reward stir in the tomb could they know that Hungarians are to be substituted for negroes as roustabouts on the river. We cannot imagine these silent, taciturn little men of central Europe making the moonlight nights vocal with their minstrelsy on the lower deck, or scrambling with each other for nickels thrown by sportive passengers. Nor shall we believe that the mate dare unwind that panorama of picturesque profanity at his long, wavering, undulating line of roustabouts as they move from deck to shore with the cargo. The darky roustabout hears these objurgations with a joyous and appreciative ear, and welcomes a burst of originality in it by rolling the whites of his eyes expressively at his fellows, or, if it is particularly moving, by a loud "Yah, yah, yah," that is reward enough for the objurgator. What will the Hungarian care for the expletive wit that stirs the responsive negro heart so deeply? He will not understand it, and if he did his perception of the humor of swearing is not of the open and ready nature of that of the sons of Ham. He would get mad about it. Everything is changing on the river. The passengers are not the same, the boats are smaller, the table fare is sadly scant and luxury has long since departed.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Oldest Army Melody

It is the old music, after all, that puts the life into marching feet, for it carries the traditions of marching in its melodies, says the Boston Transcript. One of the oldest of the tunes the bands played on a recent occasion was "The White Cockade." This is a historical melody to Americans, though many Americans may not be aware of the fact. It was the tune to which the farmers who fired the shot heard round the world marched when they determined to force the passage of the bridge at Concord. Possibly it was the only tune which the drummer and fifer of Capt. Isaac Davis' company knew, but the fact that it was played is historical.

The popularity of the tune is proof that a melody made for one party is recognized as good by all if it has the quality of being singable. "The White Cockade" was originally a Jacobite tune, but it made a good march for the descendants of the English Puritans April 19, 1775, when Capt. Davis bade his musicians strike up. As they were the first American force that ever advanced to battle as Americans "The White Cockade" is the oldest melody of the American army.

Keeper of the King's Health.

Sir Francis Henry Laking, to give him his full name, is the most trusted of the King's medical advisers; indeed, he occupies at King Edward's court the same position as did Sir James Reid at that of Queen Victoria. Sir Francis is clean-shaven; he has a keen, open face, and a broad, well-shaped brow. Like most great physicians, he has a hobby, that of collecting geological specimens.

Romeo and Juliet Up to Date.

"Romeo! Romeo!" sobbed the swarthy Juliet. "They will notta letta us love-a ana more. My people tella me I mus' notta marry you."

"What I care?" replied Romeo, savagely, "I will t'rowa deesa bomb on da frou' porch. I will blowa youra people all over deesa ward."—Newark News.

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