



The VOICE OF THE PACK

EDISON MARSHALL

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TO SHOOT OR BLUFF?

Synopsis.—Warned by his physician that he has not more than six months to live, Dan Felling sits idly on a park bench, wondering where he should spend those six months. Memories of his grandfather and a deep love for all things of the wild help him in reaching a decision. In a large southern Oregon city he meets people who had known and loved his grandfather, a famous frontiersman. He makes his home with Silas Lennox, a typical westerner. The only other members of the household are Lennox's son, "Bill," and daughter, "Snowbird." Their abode is in the Umpqua divide, and there Felling plans to live out the short span of life which he has been told is his. From the first Felling's health shows a marked improvement, and in the companionship of Lennox and his son and daughter he fits into the woods life as if he had been born to it. By quick thinking and a remarkable display of "nerve" he saves Lennox's life and his own when they are attacked by a mad coyote. Lennox declares he is a reincarnation of his grandfather, Dan Felling I, whose fame as a woodsman is a household word. Dan learns that an organized band of outlaws, of which Bert Cranston is the leader, is setting forest fires. Laundry Hildreth, a former member of the gang, has been induced to turn state's evidence. Cranston shoots Hildreth and leaves him for dead. Whisperfoot, the mountain lion, springs on Hildreth and finishes him.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

And as for Whisperfoot—the terror that choked his heart with blood began to wear off in a little while. The man lay so still in the thickets. Besides, there was a strange, wild smell in the air. Whisperfoot's stroke had gone home so true there had not even been a fight. The darkness began to lift around him, and a strange exultation, a rapture unknown before in all his hunting, began to creep into his wild blood. Then, as a shadow steals, he went creeping back to his dead.

Dan Felling had been studying nature on the high ridges; and he went home by a back trail that led to old Bald mountain. The trail was just a narrow serpent in the brush; and it had not been made by gangs of laborers, working with shovels and picks. Possibly half a dozen white men, in all, had ever walked along it. It was just the path of the wild creatures, worn down by hoof and paw and cushion since the young days of the world.

It was a roundabout trail home, but yet it had its advantages. It took him within two miles of Snowbird's lookout station, and at this hour of day he had been particularly fortunate in finding her at a certain spring on the mountain side. It was rather a singular coincidence. Along about four he would usually find himself wandering up that way. Strangely enough, at the same time, it was true that she had an irresistible impulse to go down and sit in the green ferns beside the same spring. They always seemed to be surprised to see one another. In reality, either of them would have been considerably more surprised had the other failed to put in an appearance. And always they had long talks, as the afternoon drew to twilight.

"But I don't think you ought to wait so late before starting home," the girl would always say. "You're not a human hawk, and it is easier to get lost than you think."

And this solicitude, Dan rightly figured, was a good sign. There was only one objection to it. It resulted in an unmistakable inference that she considered him unable to take care of himself—and that was the last thing on earth that he wanted her to think. He understood her well enough to know that her standards were the standards of the mountains, valuing strength and self-reliance above all things. He didn't stop to question why, every day, he trod so many weary miles to be with her.

She was as natural as a fawn; and many times she had quite taken away his breath. And once she did it literally. He didn't think that so long as death spared him he would ever be able to forget that experience. It was her birthday, and knowing of it in time he had arranged for the delivery of a certain package, dear to a girlish heart, at her father's house. In the trying hour he had come trudging over the hills with it, and few experiences in his life had ever yielded such unmitigated pleasure as the sight of her, glowing white and red, as she took off its wrapping paper. It was a jolly old gift, he recollected—and when she had seen it, she fairly leaped at him. Her warm, round arms around his neck, and the softest, loveliest lips in the world pressed his. But in those days he didn't have the strength that he felt he could endure

the same experience again with no embarrassment whatever. His first impression then, besides abounding, incredible astonishment, was that she had quite knocked out his breath. But let it be said for him that he recovered with notable promptness. His own arms had gone up and closed around her, and the girl had wriggled free.

"But you mustn't do that!" she told him.

"But, good Lord, girl! You did it to me! Is there no justice in women?"

"But I did it to thank you for this lovely gift. For remembering me for being so good—and considerate. You haven't any cause to thank me."

He had many serious difficulties in thinking it out. And only one conclusion was obtainable—that Snowbird kissed as naturally as she did anything else, and the kiss meant exactly what she said it did and no more. But the fact remained that he would have walked a good many miles farther if he thought there was any possibility of a repeat.

But all at once his fantasies were suddenly and rudely dispelled by the intrusion of realities. Dan had been walking silently in the pine needles. As Lennox had wondered at long ago, he knew how by instinct; and instinctively he practiced this attainment as soon as he got out into the wild. The creature he had heard was fully one hundred yards distant, yet Dan could hear him with entire plainness. And for a while he couldn't even guess what manner of thing it might be.

A cougar that made so much noise would be immediately expelled from the union. A wolf pack, running by



Dan Saw His Purpose.

sight, might crack brush as freely; but a wolf pack would also bay to wake the dead. Of course it might be an elk or a steer, and still more likely, a bear. He stood still and listened. The sound grew nearer.

Soon it became evident that the creature was either walking with two legs, or else was a four-footed animal putting two feet down at the same instant. Dan had learned to wait. He stood perfectly still. And gradually he came to the conclusion that he was listening to the footfall of another man.

But it was rather hard to imagine what a man might be doing on this lonely hill. Of course it might be a deer hunter; but few were the valley sportsmen who had penetrated to this far land. The footfall was much too heavy for Snowbird. The steps were evidently on another trail that intersected his own trail one hundred yards farther up the hill. He had only to stand still, and in an instant the man would come in sight.

He took one step into the thickets, prepared to conceal himself if it became necessary. Then he waited. Soon the man stepped out on the trail.

Even at the distance of one hundred yards, Dan had no difficulty whatever in recognizing him. He could not mistake this tall, dark form, the soiled, slouchy clothes, the rough hair, the intent, dark features. It was a man about his own age, his own height, but weighing fully twenty pounds more, and the dark, narrow eyes could belong to no one but Bert Cranston. He carried his rifle loosely in his arms. He stopped at the forks in the trail and looked carefully in all directions. Dan had every reason to think that Cranston would see him at first glance. Only one clump of thicket sheltered

him. But because Dan had learned the lesson of standing still, because his olive-drab sporting clothes blended softly with the colored leaves, Cranston did not detect him. He turned and strode on down the trail.

He didn't move quite like a man with innocent purposes. There was something stealthy, something sinister in his stride, and the way he kept such a sharp lookout in all directions. Yet he never glanced to the trail for deer tracks, as he would have done had he been hunting. Without even waiting to meditate on the matter, Dan started to shadow him.

Before one hundred yards had been traversed, he could better understand the joy the cougar takes in his hunting. It was the same process—a cautious, silent advance in the trail of prey. He had to walk with the same caution, he had to take advantage of the thickets. He began to feel a curious excitement.

Cranston seemed to be moving more carefully now, examining the brush along the trail. Now and then he glanced up at the tree tops. And all at once he stopped and knelt in the dry shrubbery.

At first all that Dan could see was the glitter of a knife blade. Cranston seemed to be whittling a piece of dead pine into fine shavings. Now he was gathering pine needles and small twigs, making a little pile of them. And then, just as Cranston drew his match, Dan saw his purpose.

Cranston was at his old trade—setting a forest fire.

For two very good reasons, Dan didn't call to him at once. The two reasons were that Cranston had a rifle and that Dan was unarmed. It might be extremely likely that Cranston would choose the most plausible and effective means of preventing an interruption of his crime, and by the same token, prevent word of the crime ever reaching the authorities. The rifle contained five cartridges, and only one was needed.

But the idea of backing out, unseen, never even occurred to Dan. The fire would have a tremendous headway before he could summon help. Although it was near the lookout station, every condition pointed to a disastrous fire. The brush was dry as tinder, not so heavy as to choke the wind, but yet tall enough to carry the flame into the tree tops. The stiff breeze up the ridge would certainly carry the flame for miles through the parched divide before help could come. In the meantime stock and lives and homes would be endangered, besides the irreparable loss of timber. There were many things that Dan might do, but giving up was not one of them.

After all, he did the wisest thing of all. He simply came out in plain sight and unconcernedly walked down the trail toward Cranston. At the same instant, the latter struck his match.

As Dan was no longer stalking, Cranston immediately heard his step. He whirled, re-organized Dan, and for one long instant, in which the world seemed to have time in plenty to make a complete revolution, he stood perfectly motionless. The match flared in his dark fingers, his eyes—full of singular conjecturing—rested on Dan's face. No instant of the latter's life had ever been fraught with greater peril. He understood perfectly what was going on in Cranston's mind. The fire-bred was calmly deciding whether to shoot or whether to bluff it out. One required no more moral courage than the other. It really didn't make a great deal of difference to Cranston. But he decided that the killing was not worth the cartridge. The other course was too easy. He did not even dream that Dan had been shadowing him and had seen his intention. He would have laughed at the idea that a "tenderfoot" could thus walk behind him, unheard. Without concern, he scattered with his foot the little heap of kindling, and slipping his pipe into his mouth, he touched the flaring match to it. It was a wholly admirable little piece of acting, and would have deceived any one who had not seen his previous preparations. Then he walked on down the trail toward Dan.

Dan stopped and lighted his own pipe. It was a curious little truce. And then he leaned back against the great gray trunk of a fallen tree.

"Well, Cranston," he said civilly. "The men had met on previous occasions, and always there had been the same invisible war between them."

"How do you do, Felling," Cranston replied. No perceptions could be so blunt as to miss the premeditated insult in the tone. He didn't speak in his own tongue at all, the short, guttural "Howdy" that is the greeting of the mountain men. He pronounced all the words with an exaggerated precision, an unmistakable mockery of Dan's own tone. In his accent he threw a tone of sickly sweetness, and his laconic was all too plain. He was simply calling Felling a milk-sop and a white-fever; just as plainly as if he had used the words.

The eyes of the two men met. Cranston's lips were slightly curled in an unmistakable leer. Dan's were very straight. And in one thing at least, their eyes looked just the same. The pupils of both pairs had contracted to steel points, bright in the dark gray of the irises. Cranston's looked somewhat red; and Dan's were only hard and bright.

Snowbird to the rescue.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Has to Be Clever.

"She's a clever conversationalist." "She has to be, to cover up her breaks her husband makes."

ON THE FUNNY SIDE



HER EXACT WORDS.

Bill—So you asked the sweet little thing to marry you?
Gill—Yes, I did.
"And she said 'yes,' I suppose?"
"No, she didn't."
"Oh, she said 'no,' did she?"
"Not exactly."
"Well, what did she say, then?"
"She said: 'Nothin' doin'.'"

Evidently, Not by the Senses.

An American was with a gushing enthusiasm describing his new car to an English visitor. "It runs so smoothly," he said, "you can't feel it. Not a bit of noise, you can't hear it. Perfect ignition, you can't smell it. And speed, why, it simply whizzes, you can't see it."
"My word!" exclaimed the astonished Britisher. "How do you know the bally thing is there?"—Boston Transcript.

Telephone Nightmares.

Church—I understand an arrangement has been patented so that when a person is talking on the telephone the face of the person one is talking to is reflected on a mirror in front of them, even if the person being talked to is miles away.
Gotham—Well, I hope to gracious if that is so some people I happen to know will never telephone me.

Strong-Arm Methods.

"Politics is a game of give and take," remarked Mr. Wapples.
"I'll subscribe to the first part of your statement," said Mr. Graboon, who had just had an experience with an alert "money digger." "I don't particularly object to giving, but I do object to the kind of back talk I have to take for not giving more."—Birmingham Age-Herald.



WHAT OFFICERS ARE FOR

"So you've elected a new set of officers."
"Yes. Now all we've got to do is to sit back and kick about the way they do things."

Cheerful.

It may be that I shall not do a single thing worth while. But while my skies above are blue I'll try to show a smile.

Best He Could Do.

"Good heaven, Dick! Tan shoes with evening dress—that's awfully bad form!"
"I know it, but stocking feet with evening dress is worse."—Boston Transcript.

An Optimist.

"I'm sorry to see you here," said the friend of a convicted bank embezzler.
"Oh, there isn't much change, after all," said the prisoner, cheerfully.
"No?"
"You see, I had been shut up in a cage and looking through bars for years before I came here. These bars are just a little thicker, and instead of being brass they are steel."

Tragic.

He (during quarrel)—Then why did you marry me?
She—Just to get even with that hateful Maud Brown and to make her cry her eyes out because I took you away from her.
He—Good heavens, woman, what have you done? Why, I married you just because she threw me over.

Hard Work.

"Is that new hired man a hard worker?"
"I'll say he is," replied Farmer Corntassel. "I don't know anybody that work seemed to go harder with than it does with him."

A Matter of Taste.

The Equestrienne—Oh, I'm so furious with myself!
"Why?"
"For liking so much the kiss Jack Thrasher made me take in the park this morning."—Judge.

Of Course Not!

Staff Officer (benevolently to little girl)—And what is your name, my dear?
Modern "Little Dear"—If you know you shouldn't speak to a lady without being introduced.

Gives Tanlac Credit For Splendid Health



T. J. PARKER
4246 Juneau Street, Seattle, Wash.

"I used to think all the Tanlac testimonials were exaggerated, but I have felt thankful a thousand times I ever believed in it strong enough to give the medicine a trial," said T. J. Parker, well-known salesman for Gately's Clothing Store, residing at 4246 Juneau St., Seattle, Wash.

"Several years ago I commenced having periodic spells of sickness and a few months ago I had an attack that I thought would finish me. When I did finally get up, I was scarcely able to go. I had no appetite and what little I forced myself to eat caused so much gas on my stomach I could hardly get my breath.
"At night I was often so bloated I couldn't breathe while lying down and just had to sit up and struggle for air. At times I had cramps so bad I could hardly endure it.

His Method.

Two negro men were discussing the eloquence of a certain member of the faculty of an educational institution for negroes in a southern state.

"That Professor Biggs sure does like to use high soundin' words, don't he?" asked one of them.

"Maybe dat's jest an affectation on his part," said the other darky. "Some folks do like to put on airs in talkin'."
"No, I don't figure it out dat way," said the other. "I kinder thinks he uses them big words because he's afraid dat if people knew what he was talkin' about they'd know he didn't know what he was talkin' about."—Harpers Magazine.

Steady Stream.

A Brazilian living in New York has invented a machine to cast piston rings at a rate of 18,000 to 20,000 a day by whirling molten metal into shape by centrifugal force.

A Kentucky journal mentions a "yawning old well" in that state. Somebody must have been boring it.

"My liver was sluggish and sometimes I got so dizzy I would nearly fall. I felt tired and miserable all the time, couldn't even sleep and for days at a time I wasn't able to go to work."
"Well, a friend of mine finally got me to try Tanlac, and it certainly has done a good job for me. My appetite is fine now and although I am eating just anything I want and as much as I please, my stomach never gives me the least trouble. I have picked up in weight, my strength has come back to me, and I am now enjoying the best of health."
"All the men at the store know Tanlac put me back on my feet, and I am glad to give this statement for what it may be worth to others."
Tanlac is sold by leading druggists everywhere.—Adv.

Wisdom is the knowledge of knowing what to do next.—E. Markham.

ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE DOES IT

When shoes pinch or corns and bunions ache, get a package of ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE, the antiseptic powder to be shaken into the shoes. It takes the sting out of corns and bunions, gives instant relief to Smarting, Aching, Swollen feet. 1,000,000 pounds of powder for the feet were used by our Army and Navy during the war.—Adv.

What Alcobronze is.

Possessing the luster and color of gold, stronger, tougher, and harder than ordinary bronze, a new alloy of copper and aluminum bids fair to have a wide use. The new metal has been named Alcobronze.

It is stated by its sponsors that the new alloy can be wrought, forged, or rolled without deterioration. It also resists the action of the air, acids, and salt water. This makes it particularly suitable for forgings, propellers, and other ships' parts.—Popular Science Monthly.

Marrying an heiress is almost as unsatisfactory as any other get-rich-quick scheme.

It's So Easy to Make the Change

There's no bother and no sacrifice in turning away from the ills which sometimes come from tea and coffee, when you decide on

POSTUM CEREAL

Then you have a rich, full-bodied table beverage which fully satisfies the taste—and there's no ingredient to harm nerves or digestion. Thousands have changed to Postum as the better meal-time drink and they don't turn back.

Suppose you try the change for ten days—and note the result.

"There's a Reason" for Postum

Made by Postum Cereal Co., Inc., Battle Creek, Mich.