

The Voice of the Pack

By EDISON MARSHALL

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SNOWBIRD SAVES DAN.

Synopsis.—Warned by his physician that he has not more than six months to live, Dan Falling 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 Silka 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 Falling plans to live out the short span of life which he has been told is his. From the first Falling'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 Falling, 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. Whispering, the mountain lion, springs on Hildreth and finishes Hildreth and devours him, thus acquiring the taste for human flesh. Dan discovers Cranston in the act of setting a forest fire.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

Dan felt himself straighten; and the color mounted somewhat higher in his brown cheeks. But he did not try to avenge the insult—yet. Cranston was still fifteen feet distant, and that was too far. A man may swing a rifle within fifteen feet. The fact that they were in no way physical equals did not even occur to him. When the insult is great enough, such considerations cannot possibly matter. Cranston was hard as steel, one hundred and seventy pounds in weight. Dan did not touch one hundred and fifty, and a deadly disease had not yet entirely relinquished its hold upon him.

"I do very well, Cranston," Dan answered in the same tone. "Wouldn't you like another match? I believe your pipe has gone out."

Very little can be said for the wisdom of this remark. It was simply human—that age-old creed to answer blow for blow and insult for insult. Of course the inference was obvious—that Dan was accusing him, by innuendo, of his late attempt at arson. Cranston glanced up quickly, and it might be true that his fingers itched and tingled about the barrel of his rifle. He knew what Dan meant. He understood perfectly that Dan had guessed his purpose on the mountain side. And the curl at his lips became more pronounced.

"What a smart little boy," he scorned. "Going to be a Sherlock Holmes when he grows up." Then he half turned and the light in his eyes blazed up. He was not leaning now. The mountain men are too intense to play at insult very long. Their inherent savagery comes to the surface, and they want the warmth of blood upon their fingers. His voice became guttural. "Maybe you're a spy?" he asked. "Maybe you're one of those city rats—to come and watch us, and then run and tell the forest service. There's two things, Falling, that I want you to know."

Dan puffed at his pipe, and his eyes looked curiously bright through the film of smoke. "I'm not interested in hearing them," he said.

"It might pay you," Cranston went on. "One of 'em is that one man's word is good as another's in a court—and it wouldn't do you any good to run down and tell tales. A man can light his pipe on the mountain side without the courts being interested. The second thing is—just that I don't think you'd find it a healthy thing to do."

"I suppose, then, that is a threat?" "It ain't just a threat." Cranston laughed harshly—a single, grim syllable that was the most terrible sound he had yet uttered. "It's a fact. Just try it, Falling. Just make one little step in that direction. You couldn't hide behind a girl's skirts, then. Why, you city sissy, I'd break you to pieces in my hands!"

Few men can make a threat without a muscular accompaniment. His very utterance releases pent-up emotions, part of which can only pour forth in muscular expression. And anger is a primitive thing, going down to the most mysterious depths of a man's nature. As Cranston spoke, his lip curled, his dark fingers clenched on his thick palm, and he half leaned forward.

Dan knocked out his pipe on the log. It was the only sound in that whole mountain realm; all the lesser sounds were stilled. The two men stood face to face, Dan tranquil, Cranston shaken by passion.

"I give you," said Dan with entire

coldness, "an opportunity to take that back. Just about four seconds."

He stood very straight as he spoke, and his eyes did not waver in the least. It would not be the truth to say that his heart was not leaping like a wild thing in his breast. A dark mist was spreading like madness over his brain; but yet he was striving to keep his thoughts clear. Stealthily, without seeming to do so, he was setting his muscles for a spring.

The only answer to his words was a laugh—a roaring laugh of scorn from Cranston's dark lips. In his laughter, his intent, catlike vigilance relaxed. Dan saw a chance; feeble though it was, it was the only chance he had. And his long body leaped like a serpent through the air.

Physical superior though he was, Cranston would have repelled the attack with his rifle if he had had a chance. His blood was already at the murder heat—a point always quickly reached in Cranston—and the dark, hot fumes in his brain were simply nothing more nor less than the most poisonous, bitter hatred. No other word exists. If his class of degenerate mountain men had no other accomplishment, they could hate. All their lives they practiced the emotion: hatred of their neighbors, hatred of law, hatred of civilization in all its forms. Besides, this kind of hillman habitually fought his duels with rifles. Hands were not deadly enough.

But Dan was past his guard before he had time to raise his gun. The whole attack was one of the most astounding surprises of Cranston's life. Dan's body struck his, his fists flailed, and to protect himself, Cranston was obliged to drop the rifle. They staggered, as if in some weird dance, on the trail; and their arms clasped in a clinch.

For a long instant they stood straining, seemingly motionless. Cranston's powerful body had stood up well under the shock of Dan's leap. It was a



The Battles of the Mountains were Battles to the Death.

hand-to-hand battle now. The rifle had slid on down the hillside, to be caught in a clump of brush twenty feet below. Dan called on every ounce of his strength, because he knew what mercy he might expect if Cranston mastered him. The battles of the mountains were battles to the death.

They flung back and forth, wrenching shoulders, lashing fists, teeth and feet and fingers. There were no Marquis of Queensberry rules in this battle. Again and again Dan sent home his blows; but they all seemed ineffective. By now, Cranston had completely overcome the moment's advantage the other had obtained by the power of his leap. He hurled Dan from the clinch and lashed at him with hard fists.

It is a very common thing to hear of a silent fight. But it is really a more rare occurrence than most people believe. It is true that serpents will often fight in the strangest, most eerie silence; but human beings are not serpents. They partake more of the qualities of the meat-eaters—the wolves and felines. After the first instant, the noise of the fight aroused the whole hillside. The sound of blows was in itself notable, and besides, both of the men were howling the primordial battle cries of hatred and vengeance.

For two long minutes Dan fought with the strength of desperation, summoning at last all that mysterious reserve force with which all men are born. But he was playing a losing game. The malady with which he had suffered had taken too much of his vigor. Even as he struggled, it seemed to him that the vista about him the dark pines, the colored leaves of the perennial shrubbery, the yellow path

were all obscured in a strange, white mist. A great wind roared in his ears—and his heart was evidently about to shiver to pieces.

But still he fought on, not daring to yield. He could no longer parry Cranston's blows. The latter's arms went around him in one of those deadly holds that wrestlers know; and Dan struggled in vain to free himself. Cranston's face itself seemed hideous and unreal in the mist that was creeping over him. He did not recognize the curious thumping sound as Cranston's fists on his flesh. And now Cranston had hurled him off his feet.

Nothing mattered further. He had fought the best he could. This cruel beast could pounce on him at will and hammer away his life. But still he struggled. Except for the constant play of his muscles, his almost unconscious effort to free himself that kept one of Cranston's arms busy holding him down, that fight on the mountain path might have come to a sudden end. Human bodies can stand a terrific punishment; but Dan's was weakened from the ravages of his disease. Besides, Cranston would soon have both hands and both feet free for the work, and when it is four terrible weapons are used at once, the issue—soon or late—can never be in doubt.

But even now, consciousness still lingered. Dan could hear his enemy's curses—and far up the trail, he heard another, stranger sound. It sounded like some one running.

And then he dimly knew that Cranston was climbing back his body. Voices were speaking—quick, commanding voices just over him. Above Cranston's savage curses another voice rang clear, and to Dan's ears, glorious beyond all human utterance.

He opened his tortured eyes. The mists lifted from in front of them, and the whole drama was revealed. It had not been sudden mercy that had driven Cranston from his body, just when his victim's falling unconsciousness would have put him completely in his power. Rather it was something black and ominous that even now was pointed squarely at Cranston's breast.

None too soon, a ranger of the hill had heard the sounds of the struggle, and had left the trysting place at the spring to come to Dan's aid. It was Snowbird, very pale but wholly self-sufficient and determined and intent. Her pistol was cocked and ready.

CHAPTER III.

Dan Falling was really not badly hurt. The quick, lashing blows had not done more than severely bruise the flesh of his face; and the mists of unconsciousness that had been falling over him were more nearly the result of his own tremendous physical exertion. Now these mists were rising.

"Go—go away," the girl was commanding. "I think you've killed him."

Dan opened his eyes to find her kneeling close beside him, but still covering Cranston with her pistol. Her hand was resting on his bruised cheek. He couldn't have believed that a human face could be as white, while life still remained, as hers was then. All the lovely tints that had been such a delight to him, the play of soft reds and browns, had faded as an after-glow fades on the snow.

Dan's glance moved with hers to Cranston. He was standing easily at a distance of a dozen feet; and except for the faintest tremble all over his body, a muscular reaction from the violence of his passion, he had entirely regained his self-composure. This was quite characteristic of the mountain men. They share with the beasts a passion of living that is wholly unknown on the plains; but yet they have a certain quality of imperturbability known nowhere else. Nor is it limited to the native-born mountaineers. No man who intimately knows a member of that curious, keen-eyed little army of naturalists and big-game hunters who go to the north woods every fall, as regularly and seemingly as inexorably as the waterfowl go in spring, can doubt this fact. They seem to have acquired from the silence and the snows an impregnation of that eternal calm and imperturbability that is the wilderness itself. Cranston wasn't in the least afraid. Fear is usually a matter of uncertainty, and he knew exactly where he stood.

"Oh, I wish I could shoot you, Beet."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Bull Baiting.

This was a sport once popular in England, but declared illegal in 1835. A bull was attacked by dogs, and sometimes the nostrils of the bull were blown full of pepper to increase his fury. Another form of the sport was to fasten the bull to a stake by a long rope and then set bulldogs at him, one at a time, which were trained to seize the bull by the nose. The bulldog seems to have been developed for this sport from a short-eared mastiff called "blannt."

BOY SCOUTS

(Conducted by National Council of the Boy Scouts of America.)

SCOUT SERVICE

In a report to the national council headquarters, a scoutmaster fills in the blank asking for comment upon his troop's community good turns as follows: "Did everything they could, anywhere," which seems to be typical of the spirit of scouts throughout the country. The jobs aren't always the pleasantest sort either, or the easiest, but when a scout tackles the thing he does it "for all he's worth," with brain and brawn and a right good will. Here are a few little things scouts in Birmingham did, in their "leisure hours." It looks as if these boys were not only going to be good citizens in the future, but are good citizens, here and now.

One scout repaired a bridge, cleaned mud out of two curbs and drained a ditch; half-hour time.

Five scouts removed a large pile of brush where trees had been trimmed up; 15 minutes each.

Five scouts repaired a street where it had washed out by piling rocks and brush and then dirt on top; one hour's time.

Two scouts buried a dead hen, that the city health department would not remove; 30 minutes' time.

Four scouts dug a drainway to let standing water out of the street, and opened up ten sewers and 23 gutters.

Two scouts repaired a bridge and opened four sewers and 20 gutters; ten hours.

One scout cut a dead tree which stood close by the passageway and was very dangerous to those passing; one hour.

Eleven scouts worked two hours getting water out of basement of a church, then built a fire and dried out the place.

Three scouts repaired four sewers, also raked up a lot of leaves from around a house and burned them, as they were dangerous to the community; one and one-half hours.

CHIEF SEA SCOUT REPORTS.

At the last national council meeting the chief sea scout, James A. Wilder, made this report:

"We have found our sea legs. After some backing and filling as to the best methods, we have, with the advice of some 400 executives, and others, settled on the course to be steered. This decision has steadied the seascope program and the taffrail log begins to register more speed. November, 1920, was our banner month, followed by the record breakers, December and January, 1920 and 1921. As we go to press, February, 1921, has already broken the record again. We have registered more ships in the last five months than in the previous three years. This is at the rate of 110 per cent increase annually.

"We have the assurance that the seascope program is being pushed as the official older boy program, in 87 cities. Ship's papers or preliminary steps have already been taken by 104 scout centers. In some cities, notably San Francisco, Honolulu and others, the program has been under way for several years without the registry of a single ship, because of a vote to thoroughly train leadership before admitting boys to membership. The seascope, at the rate we are growing at present, will be 200 "ships" in 1922. If the last four months' increase in our number is maintained we will be, in six months, the largest seamanship training course or "nautical school" in the United States. Swift increase is not expected in the face of such slogans as 'You must know it all the time,' 'Don't start anything you can't finish,' 'Practice makes perfect,' 'No frauds,' 'The ship is what you make her,' 'Don't give up the ship.' Nevertheless, we're already half the size of Annapolis, and as far as plain sailing goes, we are giving the same boat-seamanship program.

"Fifty navy boats have been loaned to bona-fide seascope, according to regulations, and to certain seascope training bases. Five hundred are still available for really determined seascope of schooner (or second) grade.

"The slogan is now, 'run your troop like a ship,' and in a seamanlike manner. Seascope centers are asked to avoid foothold practices, slack seamanship and frauds, and the local shipping committees are required to take a pledge that no boatwork or small boat sailing shall take place until the ship's company have qualified as lifesavers. This waiting game may not spell numbers, but spells quality."

TO KEEP TROOPS GOING.

"I have a question, too, Mr. Cave Scout. This seems about the hardest time in the whole year to keep things going in our troop. There is little doing besides regular meetings." Can anybody help out in this case? "I believe I can, Cave Scout. We had the same trouble in our troop until last winter, when we arranged a scout dinner and invited our dads and mothers. That gave our folks a pretty good idea about what we do in scouting.—Cave Scout in Boys' Life.

POULTRY CACKLES

RIGHT FOWLS FOR BREEDING

Hens Are Preferable to Pullets as They Lay Larger Eggs—Free Range is Favored.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

If cockerels or pullets are used in the breeding flock they should be well matured, poultry specialists in the United States Department of Agriculture advise. Hens are better than pullets. They lay larger eggs, which produce stronger chicks. Yearling and two-year-old hens are better than older ones. Pullets used as breeders should be mated with a cock rather than with a cockerel. If a cockerel is used he should be mated with hens rather than with pullets. As a rule, well-matured cockerels will give better fertility than cocks.

When possible, free range should be provided for the breeding stock. It is better to provide it during the entire fall and winter before the breeding season, but, if this is not possible, free range just preceding and during the breeding season will be of great value. Birds on free



Breeding Flock on Government Poultry Farm, Beltsville, Md.

range will get more exercise and, therefore, will be in better health and will give higher fertility, better hatches, and stronger chicks.

The breeding flock needs careful supervision to make sure that the fowls keep in good breeding condition. The birds and the houses should be examined often to see that they are not infested with lice or mites. Either of these pests in any numbers will seriously affect or totally destroy fertility. Care must be exercised also to see that the mals does not frost his comb or wattles. If these are frosted his ability to fertilize eggs will be impaired and may not be recovered for several weeks. On very cold nights when there is danger of the combs being frosted the males to be used as breeders must be put in a warm place, such as a box or crate of suitable size partly covered by a bag or cloth. The breeding male should be examined occasionally after feeding to see that his crop is full and that he is not growing thin. Some males will allow the hens to eat all the feed, with the result that they get out of condition. If this happens the male must be fed separately from the hens at least once a day.

Provide the breeding stock with comfortable quarters. The house must be draft proof, yet well ventilated and dry. The birds should not be crowded. If the birds are yarded, 4 square feet of floor space per bird should be allowed, but on free range from 3 to 3½ square feet per bird will be enough.

The breeders must be fed so as to keep them in such condition that they will produce eggs. Any good laying ration is suitable for this purpose. Beef scrap should not run above 10 or 15 per cent of the total ration. The birds should be kept in good flesh but should not be allowed to become excessively fat. All whole or cracked grain should be fed in litter. This forces the fowls to exercise by scratching for it. As a supply of green feed is usually lacking late in the winter or early in the spring, sprouted oats, cabbage, mangels, or cut clover or alfalfa should be fed.

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