



THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edison Marshall
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(Continued From Our Last Issue)

THE night was chill; she longed for the comfort of the fire. The actual labor of building it might take her mind from her fears for a while. Besides, it might be a beacon light for Ben. She turned at once to the pile of kindling Ben had prepared.

But before she could build a really satisfactory fire, one that would endure the rain, she must cut fuel from some of the logs Ben had hewn down and dragged to the cave. She lighted a short piece of pitchy wood, intending to locate the heavy camp ax. Then, putting on her heavy coat—the same garment of lustrous fur which Ben had sent her back for the day of her abduction—she ventured into the storm.

The rain splashed in vain at her torch. The pitch burned with a fierce flame. But her eyes sought in vain for the ax.

Ben had taken it; he had plainly gone forth after fuel. Trees stood all about the little glade; he couldn't have gone far.

Holding her torch high, she went to the edge of the glade and called into the gloom.

She turned at once to the cave, and piling up her kindling, built a fire just at the mouth of the cave. This fire would serve to keep her direction and lead her back to the cavern.

Then she hunted for pine knots taken from the scrub pines that grew in scattering clumps among the spruce and which were laden with pitch.

One of these knots she put in the iron pan they used for frying, then lighted it. Then she pushed into the timber.



WRENCHING WITH ALL HER FINE YOUNG STRENGTH, SHE LIFTED HIM UPON HER SHOULDER.

Holding her light high, she began to encircle the glade clear to the barrier of the cliffs.

With courage and strength such as she had not dreamed she possessed, she launched forward. But fatigue was breaking her now. The tree roots tripped her faltering feet, the branches clutched at her as she pushed. It was hard to tell what territory she had searched, or how far she had gone.

The flickering light revealed a tree, freshly cut, its naked stump gleaming and its tall form lying prone. Yet beneath it the shadows were of strange, unearthly shape, and something showed stark white through the green foliage. Great branches stretched over it, like bars over a prison window.

Her strength wilted and for an instant she could only stand and gaze with fixed, unbelieving eyes. But almost at once the unquenchable fire of her spirit blazed up anew.

Instantly she was beside the form of her comrade and enemy, struggling with the cruel limbs that pinned him to the earth.

CHAPTER XV

The Conspirators Disagree

The pine knots flickered feebly; and by their light she looked about for Ben's ax. Her eyes rested on the broken gun first; then she saw the blade, shining in the rain, protruding from beneath a broken bough. She drew it out and swung it down.

How and by what might she did not know, but almost at once the man's body was free except for the tree trunk that wedged him against

a dead log toward which he had leaped for shelter.

Seeing that she could not move the tree itself, she thrust with all her power against the dead log beside which Ben lay. In a moment she had rolled it aside.

One of his arms was broken; its position indicated that. Some of his ribs were crushed, too—what internal injuries he had that might end him before the morning she did not know. She worked her shoulder under his body.

Wrenching with all her fine young strength, she lifted him upon her shoulder; then, kneeling in the vines, she struggled for breath. Then, thrusting with her arm, she got on her feet.

At the end of a hundred yards she stopped to rest, leaning against a tree and still holding the beloved weight upon her shoulder. She plunged on, down toward the beacon light.

She lunged on and laid her burden on her bed.

Then she relaxed at his feet, breathing in sobbing gasps. But far distant though Ben was and deep as he slept—just outside the dark portals of death itself—those sounds went down to him. He lay a long time, trying to understand.

On her knees beside him Beatrice saw first flutter of his eyelids. In awe, rather than rapture, her arms crept around him, and she kissed his rain-wet brow. His eyes opened, looked wonderingly into hers.

"The tree got me, didn't it?" he asked.

"Don't try to talk," she cautioned. "Yes—the tree fell on you. But you're not going to die. You're going to live, live!"

He shook his head, the half-smile flickering at his lips. "Let me talk, Beatrice," he said. "It's important—and I don't think—I have much time." Her eyes widened in horror. "You don't mean—"

"I'm going back in a minute—I can't hardly keep awake," he said. His voice, though feeble, was preternaturally clear.

"I believe the tree got me—clear inside—but you must listen to everything I say." She nodded. In that eerie moment of suspense she knew she must hear what he had to tell her.

"Don't wait to see what happens to me," he went on. "I'll either go out or I'll live—you really can't help me any. Where's the rifle?"

"The rifle was broken—when the tree fell."

"I knew it would be. I saw it coming. Beatrice—please, please don't stay here, trying to save me."

"Do you think I would go?" she cried.

"You must. The food—is about gone. Take the pistol. There's six shot or so—in the box. The rifle's broken and we can't get meat. It's just—death—if you wait."

"And leave you here to die, as long as there's a chance to save you?" the girl answered. "You couldn't get up to get water—or build a fire—"

He listened patiently, but shook his head at the end.

He struggled for breath, and she thought he had slipped back into unconsciousness. But in a moment the faltering current of his speech began again.

"Take the pistol—and go," he told her. "You showed me today how to give up—and I don't want to kill—your father—any more. I renounce it all! Exram—forgive me—old Ez that lay dead in the leaves."

Unconsciousness welled high above him, and the lids dropped over his eyes. And Exram, watching high and afar, and with infinite serenity knowing at last the true balance of all things one with another, gave him his full forgiveness.

The trail was long and steep into Back There for Jeffery Neilson and his men.

They had counted on slow travel, but the weeks grew into the months before they even neared the obscure heart of Back There where they thought Ben and Beatrice might be hidden.

The days passed, June and July, ever they moved at a slower pace.

The food stores brought for the journey were rapidly depleted.

No experience of their individual lives had ever presented such a daily ordeal of physical distress; none had ever been so devastating to hope and spirit.

Jeffery Neilson had almost forgotten the issue of the claim by now. He had told the truth, those weary weeks before, when he had wished he had never seen it. His only thought was of his daughter. Yet he dared not turn back. She might yet live, held prisoner in some far-off cave.

At last all three agreed on this point: that they must not turn back until either Ben was crushed under their heels or they had made sure of his death.

They were still partners in their effort to rescue the girl and slay her abductor; otherwise they were at swords' points.

If mental distress and physical discomfort can constitute vengeance, Ben was already avenged.

One rainy, disagreeable morning, as they camped beside the river near the mouth of a small creek, affairs reached their crisis. They had caught and saddled the horses; Ray was pulling tight the last hitch. Chan stood beside him, speaking in an undertone. When he had finished Ray cursed explosively in the silence.

Neilson turned. He seemed to sense impending developments. "What now?" he asked.

"I'm not going on, that's what it is," Ray replied. "Neilson, it's two against one—if you want to go you can—but Ray and I are going back."

"You're going back, eh—scared out?" Neilson commented coldly.

"I'm going back—and don't say too much about being scared out, either."

"And you too, Chan? You're against me, too?"

Chan cursed. "I'd gone a week ago if it'd been me. 'We know the way home, at least.'"

The old man looked a long time into the river depths.

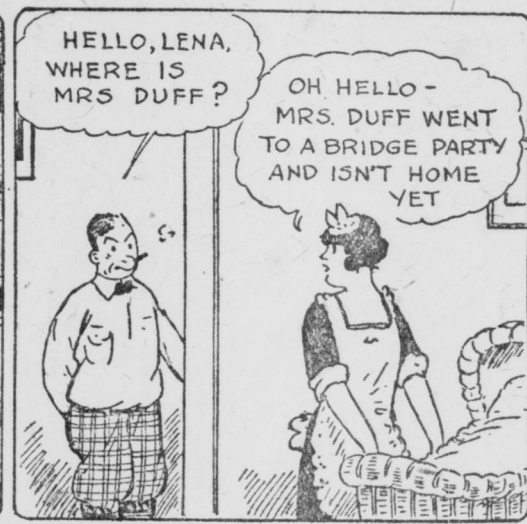
"Then turn the horses around, you cowards!" he answered. "I can't go on alone."

For once neither Ray nor Chan

DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—



A NINETY-SIX TODAY—THAT ISN'T SO BAD—GUESS I'LL HAVE TO TRY IT TOMORROW AGAIN—



HELLO, LENA, WHERE IS MRS. DUFF?

OH HELLO—MRS. DUFF WENT TO A BRIDGE PARTY AND ISN'T HOME YET



HELLO, TOM LOOK AT THE FIRST PRIZE THAT I WON TODAY AT THE BRIDGE PARTY—ISN'T IT PRETTY?

WHO TOOK CARE OF BETTY JANE WHILE YOU WERE AWAY?



LENA TOOK GOOD CARE OF HER—DON'T WORRY! DO YOU EXPECT ME TO STAY HOME EVERY DAY AND PUSH A BABY BUGGY WHILE YOU PRADLE AROUND ON A GOLF COURSE UNTIL DARK?

OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS

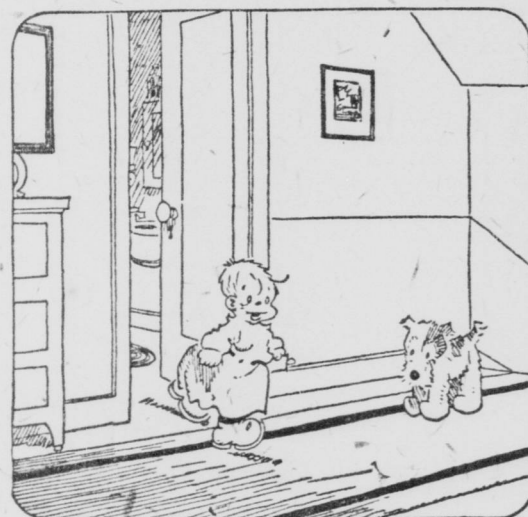


HE CAN'T DENY IT MAMMA, BECAUSE I SAW HIM IN THE WATER AND WHEN I TOLD HIM I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU, HE STUCK HIS TONGUE OUT AT ME.

NOT A WORD OUT OF YOU, JUST BRING ME YOUR FATHER'S RAZOR STRAP.

THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE.

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



WHERE'S POP, FRECKLES?

HE'S 'ROUND HERE SOMEWHERE—HOW DO I KNOW WHERE POP IS ALL THE TIME?



OH, POP—YOU AIN'T VERY STRONG, ARE YA?

NOT VERY STRONG? WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'M NOT?

WHY, EVERY MORNING YOU TRY TO CUT THE SAME STRAP WITH YOUR RAZOR, AN' I JUST NOW CUT IT IN HALF THE FIRST TRY!

THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER—



I HAVEN'T GOT MUCH MONEY—BUT THERE'S BLUE BLOOD IN MY VEINS—

LET'S MARRY, DEAR—I'LL GET A JOB—I'LL WORK, ALTHOUGH IT PAINS—

Blurt This on Your Baritone



MY TEACHERS USED TO TELL ME THAT I HAD A LOT OF BRAINS—

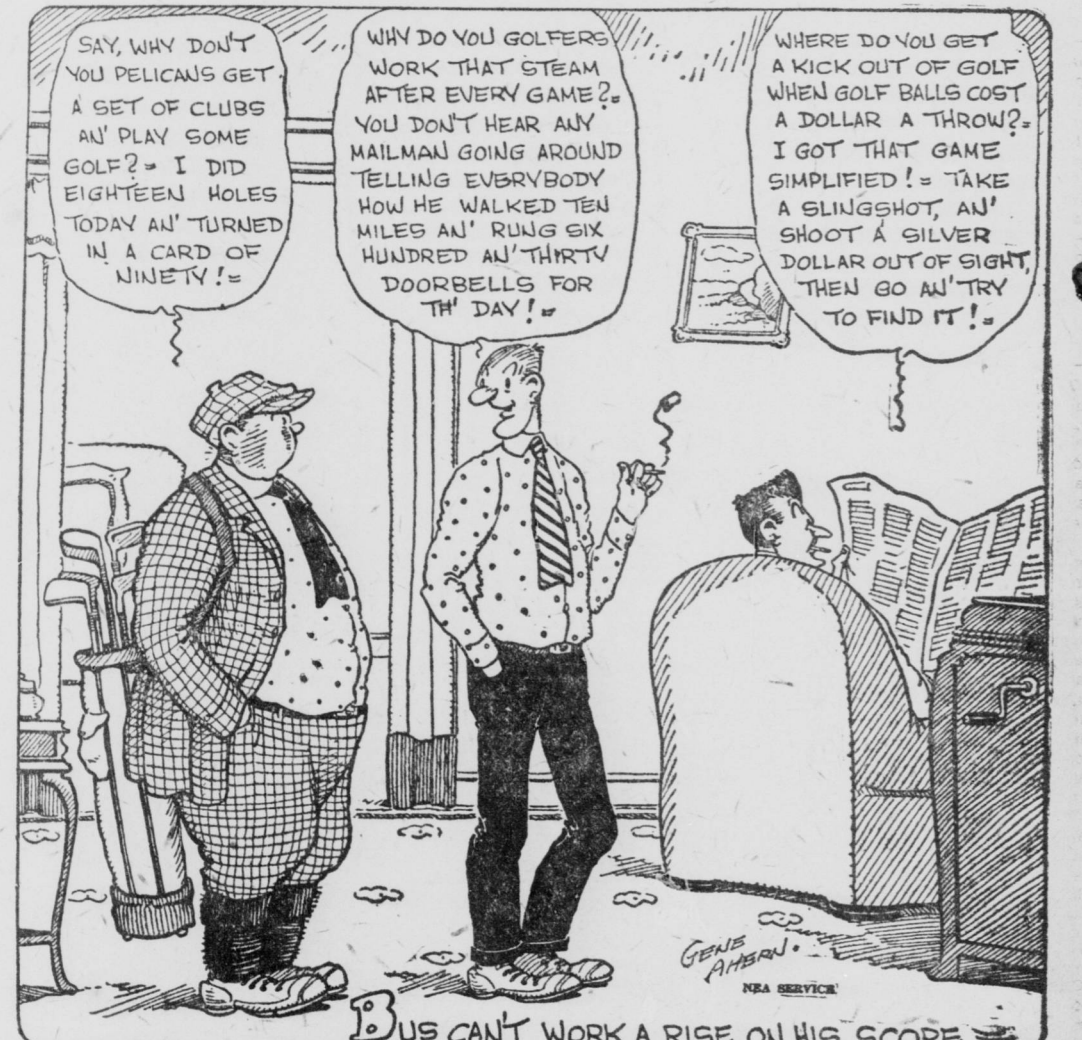
THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER!

THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



LIVERYMAN DAVE WHITAKER PROUDLY CARRIES THAT GOLD WATCH THAT HE GOT IN A TRADE FOR A SORREL HORSE, IN A CHAMOIS SKIN BAG—

OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



SAY, WHY DON'T YOU PELICANS GET A SET OF CLUBS AN' PLAY SOME GOLF?—I DID EIGHTEEN HOLES TODAY AN' TURNED IN A CARD OF NINETY!

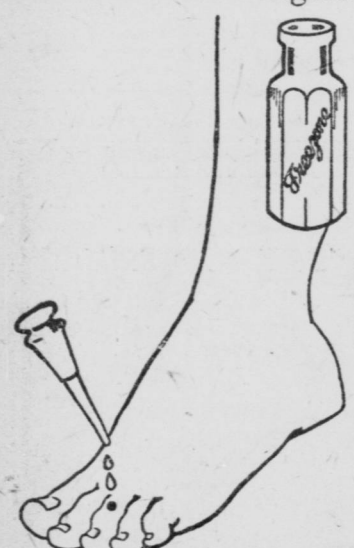
WHY DO YOU GOLFERS WORK THAT STEAM AFTER EVERY GAME?—YOU DON'T HEAR ANY MAILMAN GOING AROUND TELLING EVERYBODY HOW HE WALKED TEN MILES AN' RUNG SIX HUNDRED AN' THIRTY DOORBELLS FOR THE DAY!

WHERE DO YOU GET A KICK OUT OF GOLF WHEN GOLF BALLS COST A DOLLAR A THROW?—I GOT THAT GAME SIMPLIFIED!—TAKE A SLINGSHOT, AN' SHOOT A SILVER DOLLAR OUT OF SIGHT, THEN GO AN' TRY TO FIND IT!

BUS CAN'T WORK A RISE ON HIS SCORE

CORNS

Lift Off with Fingers



Doesn't hurt a bit! Drop a little "Freezone" on an aching corn, instantly that corn stops hurting, then shortly you lift it right off with fingers. Truly!

Your druggist sells a tiny bottle of "Freezone" for a few cents, sufficient to remove every hard corn, soft corn, or corn between the toes, and the calluses, without soreness or irritation—Advertisement.

had outward resentment for the epithet. Secretly they realized that old Neilson was to the wall at last, and like a grizzly at bay, it was safer not to molest him. Chan went down to the edge of the creek to water his saddle horse.

But presently they heard him curse, in inordinate and startled amazement, as he gazed at some imprint in the mud of the shore.

(Continued In Our Next Issue)

Canada has \$50,000 war graves in Clear and unmistakable in the mud. France, England and Belgium.

was, the stale imprint of Ben's canoe as they had landed, and the tracks of both the man and the girl as they had turned into the forest.

The dawn that crept so gray and mysterious over the frosty green of spruce brought no hope to Beatrice, sitting beside the unconscious form of Ben in the cave fronting the glade.

(Continued In Our Next Issue)

PAY IN U. S. LURES GERMAN SERVANTS

NEW YORK, June 19.—Relief appears to be at hand for women who

have been wrestling with the servant girl problem. Europe is beginning to send a new and better supply of domestic workers, evidence of this fact having been furnished a few days ago when the Royal Mail liner Orca brought thirty expert servant girls who had embarked at Hamburg and were readily permitted to pass the portals of Ellis Island.

One of the party, who spoke English, said that she and her companions came from Harthausen, and were not

only proficient in all branches of household work, but were excellent cooks. What was equally important, they had no hankering for city life, but much preferred to find places in suburban or country districts. They had been earning the equivalent of less than \$2 a week in Germany, and when told that many American households would gladly pay \$10 weekly, their surprise was unbounded.

Immigration officials say that the German quota still is far from being

exhausted, and with the outlook in Germany so discouraging, hundreds of servant girls undoubtedly could be induced to emigrate if the prospects and pay in this country were more generally known. While the contract labor law would prevent places being found for them before their arrival, it is believed that some of the social organizations might be allowed to use their influence to bring about the emigration of efficient

household workers.