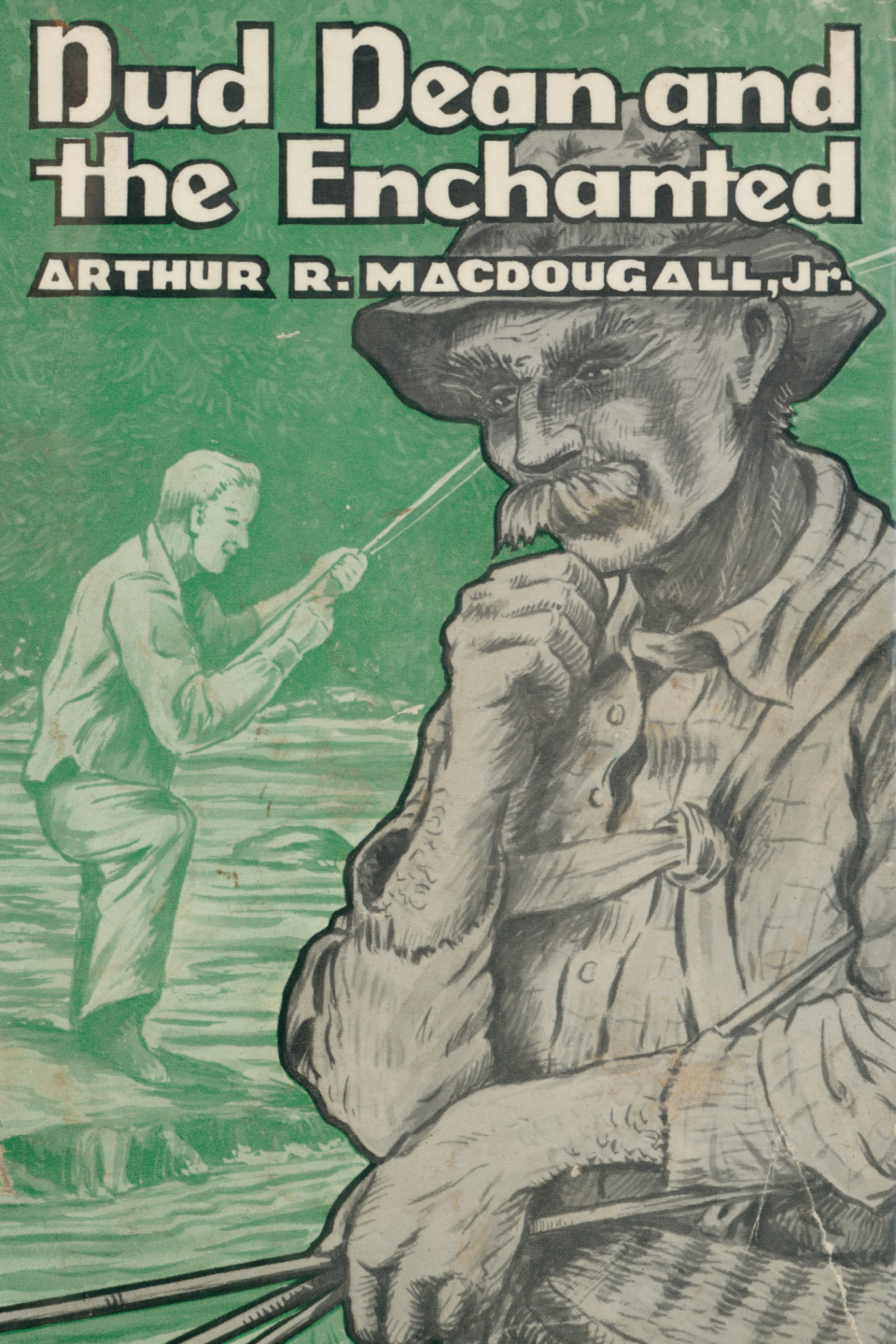


Dud Deane and the Enchanted

ARTHUR R. MACDOUGALL, Jr.



DUD DEAN AND THE ENCHANTED

by

ARTHUR R. MACDOUGALL, JR.

That beloved old guide, Dud Dean, is here again, with all his sly, dry Maine humor, and his irrepressible fondness for rod and reel. The near-legendary fishin' philosopher spins some of his wittiest yarns in this never-before-published collection.

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The Dud Dean tales are different. In them the hand of the expert fisherman does not show heavily, but

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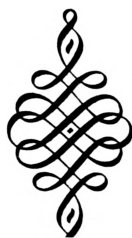
DOC BLAKESLEY, ANGLER

FAR ENOUGH FOR ALL THE YEARS

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Manchester, Maine

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TO THE LATE
REEVE HOOVER,
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AND
DUD DEAN'S FRIEND

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DUD DEAN AND THE ENCHANTED

WHO IS DUD DEAN?

I AM WRITING this in my shanty-study on Wyman Lake. I can hear the pleasant sound of lake water laving against the shore. The table on which I write is a small island of light. We have electric lights now, but I wrote many of the Dud Dean stories in this study by the light of an oil lamp, and I have lighted it again because it suits my whim. Beyond the direct glow of the lamp are the shadows and the firelight that is leaking through the ashpit damper and the joints of the cast iron stove. I am interrupted now and then by a scrupulously tidy deer mouse who patters over the floor in a white vest and a brown jacket. And I have heard the sliding skitterings by a family of flying squirrels on the shingled roof.

I am not progressing at this assignment to write about my beloved old friend, Dud Dean. And while I sit here, half lost in reverie, I hear a great horned owl call on the timbered mountain to the east. And I know that the belated moon is rising. "Who, who, whoo?" He reminds me that I have set myself the task of answering the question that so many from far and wide have put to me: "Who is Dud Dean?"

From an objective point of view, that is a simple question to answer, and my hesitancy has puzzled some persons. But that isn't a simple question to answer

from my point of view. I can say quickly that the various guides who professed to be Dud Dean were not my old friend. They were professional guides who tried to profit through their pretense — or they only flattered themselves. Then again, I have believed that Dud Dean was plainly revealed in the stories that have been published in the magazines and, later, in the books. But that was not enough, and I am attempting in this book to answer the question.

To help me get on with it, I have imagined that the shanty-study was crowded with old-time neighbors of mine. I will not name them now, but I have fished with these men in many wildland waters. They are witnesses that the little deer mouse cannot see. And I have put the question to them: "Who is Dud Dean?" And they agree that I should "Tell folks who do not know Dud Dean, and can only know him through the books, that he always had the edge on the rest of us when it come to takin' a trout with a fly; try to explain how he loves this part of Maine the way we all do, only somehow in a deeper way; tell them about his big-hearted regard for his feller men; and tell them that he's the famous guide amongst us fellers in the upper Kennebec, becuz he is all of us at our best plus his own self."

God be thanked for these good neighbors. The sum total of all they suggest would be the man, Dud Dean.

When Dud talks about trout, he means *Salvelinus fontinalis*, the fish that cannot survive civilization. Of course it is apparent to some of us that there are other organisms which are threatened by this *tour de force*, now complete with bombers, rockets, and split atoms.

But, alas, *Salvelinus fontinalis* goes first — just as the “noble redman” went, when he fell over our fences and broke his neck. For trout cannot live in water that is spread out under the sun, or in sewerage-polluted streams that flow slinking and stinking out to sea. This fish, the native eastern brook trout, grows big in clean inland lakes, where the shadows of the forest lie along the shores, and the clear waters churn in the wind.

My neighbors were right. Dud Dean is the master among us at the art of angling with a fly, but I am surprised that he has so little to say about *how* to catch trout. He knows hundreds of fly patterns by their first names — the wet flies, the dry patterns, the streamers and the bucktails. But he boasts of only a few — the montreats, the parm belle, the brown hackle, and the like. These are the old, old patterns that he has used for years. And for Dud, all the rest are the occasionals.

I know that he ties flies, and that he has invented patterns that have proved to be cunning devices for catching trout, but I never heard him talk about how to tie a fly. When he tells of trial and error, of lines, leaders, reels, and rods, it is as though he assumed that all men who talk his language know as much, or more, than he does about angling with a fly.

Therefore Dud does not talk about *how* to fish, *where* to fish, *when* to fish, or “*why* do you fish the way you fish, when the way I fish is so much more efficient.”

When the formidable Mrs. Kelly, who reminded Dud of Tennyson’s brook because she ran on forever, demanded that he explain why or how it happened that she lost the only trout she hooked during that after-

noon at East Carry Pond, Dud said, "It's hard to tell, but whom the Lord chastens, He does."

And once he said to me, "To tell the truth, if I knew all erbout fishin' fer trout, I'd give it up and tackle sun-thin' more int'resting."

Dud Dean is a friendly man, a modest man, and a man of parts.

There are a meaning and a faith in Dud's talk about trout fishing that are precious for good living. He will say that a man's motto should be, "Go fishin' now! and then later on if yer git the chance." But he has much more in mind than the fun of the occupation, although he would be the last man to minimize even that healthy exhilaration.

I know full well, however, that one might miss the clew, because Dud himself seems to cover it. Consider the way he talks about *trout*. If one were inclined, as I presume one is not, to be a person who thinks that there are no ends for angling but the inert and too quickly tainted protoplasm, he might be misled by Dud's praise of the brook trout. And then, indeed, he might suspect that Dud was a little too extravagant.

"A trout is a beautiful fish in action . . . Nobody enjoys salmon fishin' more'n I do, but a trout is a *trout*. He don't splurge. He knows tricks, but he ain't tricky. It's safe to say that ye'll beat him, if your riggin' holds out, and ye've got more brains than he has, which ain't always the case."

When Dud told Dick Lord about the time "the sun stood still," Dick asked, "How many fish did you get?"

"They was *trout*," replied Dud. In other words, what

did it matter how many we caught? Trout are quality, not quantity. Dud describes a large trout from Moxie Lake as “bluish erlong the lateral line, an’ spotted as red as the devil’s diamonds.” On the other hand, when speaking of a beautiful specimen from the clear waters of the East Branch, he said it was, “all silvered and dotted ’ith the color of Mayflowers that grow at the edge of snow.” And he said of an unusually impressive specimen of *fontinalis* that lay inert and within reach of the landing net, “Go ahead an’ laugh at me, but fer a few seconds it seemed to me that the gold and pink tints on him was a-stainin’ the water where he lay.”

Of course, all of Dud’s neighbors feel as he does about this trout — that is, each in his own way. They are sure that there is no fish that compares with their trout. “A trout is a great fish, mister.” And all of them know what Bert McMaster meant when he exclaimed, “Jist think of a man who never caught a trout. Ain’t it a sight!”

Dud says, “If I sh’ud live to be a hundred, that hain’t long e-nough to fish — not when yer deduct eight months of winter out of the year.”

But for all that, Dud has more than catching trout in mind. We should not be misled by his talk about the supremacy of the trout, or his praise of angling as an experiential delight.

Trout are an embodiment. Trout are a symbol. You see, trout are the epitome of the wilderness. And Dud asserts that there is an antiseptic cleanness in the ancient earth, a neatness that puts our town and city sanitation to shame. And the crux of it is that when one angles for trout, he is fishing for a share of it all. I will say no more

about this mysticism, because I fear that I could not put it into words. The angler's avocation is a pleasant one. He goes out to that realm where man was first at home. He should find trout, but more than trout.

If I should declare that there is a poetic aptitude in Dud, I might create a false image in many a mind. There is a depth of feeling in these men who have "slept out under the stars" (a common expression among them) that one seldom encounters among men who always have lived in towns, where the sidewalk mind and talk are presumed to be the normal standard of manly expression. Two of our New England poets, Coffin and Frost, have only carried on where men like Dud Dean leave off.

Dud has shared with me some of his thoughts about the hugeness of the night. In the first place, a man must have known night as it encamps against one in the wilderness. Then the night seems to be omnipresent, while the spirit of man is small. Dud tells about being lost with companions in the night. They sat down to wait for the morning light. "So we sot. It was still in them woods. And it was as dark as underground. It made a man feel unimportant without anybody's help. Nobody said anything. I watched the lantern burnin' low, and when it sputtered out, it struck me that it was a little tin symbol of all man's efforts to get erlong in the Almighty's night of all time."

I remember that Nancy Dean said, in a moment of wifely impatience, "The trouble with Dudley is that he makes jokes of serious things." Dud protested. "It ain't so," he said. "I make jokes the most serious things."

In the same account of the lantern burning out in the black dark night, Dud tells about the bobcat (Bay Lynx) that the eccentric hound, Vinegar, treed. One of the night hunters tried to shoot the wildcat which had taken refuge in a "birch as big as a barrel and taller than a tree ought to be." Dud says that the cat jumped from the tree to disappear "like the night had reached out an' taken him off." That is Dud's way to tell about the vast unknown that advances on a man where there are no street lights.

I know that Dud enjoys the angling or the hunting with the gusto of a rugged, healthy man, but when he talks, and his talk turns to reminiscence, he is not much concerned with the bare tale of the adventure. He wants us to feel the earthy background of it. Then he tries to clothe the mystic experience with words.

Of course, Dud's poetry is uttered without a thought that it is poetry. He sees the great white cumulous clouds, while lying flat on his back, and they are "far-off glaciers sliding down the roof of the world." When he tells of the day Olivet Bumpus and Atterly Dumstead would have drowned in the Kennebec, but for Dud's intervention, he remembers that "all the sky was blue and white — white, where big, tumbled clouds rolled by, and blue where cloud an' wind seemed to be subtracted, leavin' only God's old-fashioned quietness."

To Dud, the little inland sandpiper, who is the angler's most constant companion on the river, comes "skimmin' erlong, folds his wings, and runs down the floatin' boomlogs, duckin' his head an' repeatin', 'Tis deep, tis deep.'" Even the grey old boom built of

spruce and pine logs, “stretches down the river like sunthin’ tuggin’ to be off and gone.”

“The moon came up, lookin’ thin and pale as a second cousin’s sympathy.” Or, in another story, it “rolled out as big as a barrel,” or it was “one of them big, lonely moons that swum up and filled the whole sky to the east.”

“Take the Kennebec, up where it’s the Kennebec, and not two-thirds man’s filth as it is when it gits to Merrymeeting Bay. My heart goes out to the Kennebec, like a bride adorned to meet a photographer. And the best of it all is the East Branch, set to right by the hills that ferever fence it in. All the way from Injun Pond to where the west branch butts in, it is as wild as an untamed hoss, and as purty as a violet. And if them comparisons sound far-fetched, they hain’t in actual geography.”

“Crotch, I loved it thar then, an’ I do now. Lookin’ up the river, from the top of the ledge, yer c’ud see a mile of blue water. It was almost purple that day, and it fell all over itself a-sweeping down to Stan’ Up Pool. You c’ud hear it talking about June in Maine. Of course the black flies was thar to remind a man that life is no bed of nurs’ry rimes, but even at that the birds disputed any notion that the earth warn’t good enough fer even pessimists.”

But Dud’s near-the-earth poetic insights are not for the comfortably pleasant alone. His appreciation includes the uncomfortable. The dour weather is part of the beloved whole. Walking through the wet dripping hardwoods, he sees them, “as tall as a fable, an’ as old

as Nokomis"; and the monotonous rain is "like the roof of the world was leakin' on us."

So Dud would add, "It's a great world, mister." He loves it all as I, for one, could not. The "inconvenient" and the "uncomfortable" are all of a tune with the "pleasant" and the "cozy." For a man must be realistic. If the ill and the evil were left out, then Dud wants to know how a man could appreciate the good. And I think that is why he once suggested that I write my next story about outdoor adventure in a leaky woodshed with my feet in a tub of water.

I have fished with Dud during the chilliest, dampest, meanest days two men ever spent in a boat, but Dud punctuated the hours with his happy stories and chuckles. And that, to me, was nothing less than a triumph of the spirit over the flesh and all that plagued it.

One might contrast Dud's criticism of barbed wire (pronounced "bobwire") with his toleration of black flies. His comment on barbed wire, the night of Maine's considerable, but not too violent, earthquake has amused me ever since I heard it. "Right now," said Dud, "I want to say that no man knows what an earthquake is like, unless he has climbed over a bobwire fence in the midst of it. Even the end of the world w'udn't put that stuff outer business." But black flies and mosquitoes are factors in the benign scheme of things. And "forty below is to keep a man hustling so he won't freeze to death." For if you miss the uncomfortable parts of life, "yer won't know where yer are when you git to heaven." So, mark you, "It's a great world, mister!"

A man must not mix sentimentalism with his evalua-

tions of realities. Dud says that sentimentalism must be avoided, because Nancy says that sentimentalists are long on good intentions, but short on brains. But in the same moment, Dud assures us that he "ain't ever taken to folks that can't muster a moderate (a very useful Yankee adjective) enthusiasm when life bangs its fists on their front doors." And he declares that his heart "never warms to a person who instinctively reduces the high min-its in life to the commonplace." And I remember that once he spoke of persons whose cup never ran over, "becuz they had cracked it themselves." And, "If they don't let me inter heaven," he says, "it'll be all right, becuz I already know what it's like."

To sum all this, Dud Dean is a lover of the earth and the wildlands. And I shall not abuse the verb if I say that the wildlands love Dud. And so do I! He is not typical, but he is an example of the best manhood Maine has mothered.

Dud is a lover of women and men. I put it that way, because some misguided reader has presumed that Dud Dean was too critical of women in general. When one says that Dud is a lover of his fellowmen, the statement is not narrowly made, because Dud Dean is not narrowly made. Of course it is a sundry lot of women whom Dud calls on the stage of his memory — for the fun of it. There is Mrs. X, who is a mountain of protoplasm and a molehill of virtue. There is Helen of Troy, of whom Dud does not speak reverentially. But Helen is only an allusion. He says that she had a face that launched a thousand ships, and that if her face was like Olivet Bumpus's, no wonder they launched. Some of

those ladies whom Dud mentions are only vague apparitions, like that bearded lady at the carnival. Dud declares that she dared Nat Brown to kiss her, and that Nat refused to do so on the grounds that it would be tempting providence. And there was the lady of West Athens, who is described in one of Dud's almost too broadly humorous moods as having Solidity for a first name. It was she who climbed an apple tree to escape a provoked bull moose. "The limb Solidity stood on cracked off. Down she goes, and landed a-straddle that moose. Thar's two accounts of the end. Some say the moose rode her across the lot, an' didn't git rid of her until he fell over a stun wall. Others declare that when she landed on him the moose's back broke." That, I think, is an improbable story, but one should remember that Dud does not like moose. He describes a moose as an animal whose face is all nose.

The Governor's wife suffered the cruel arrows of adversity, when Dud introduced her to the little pond on Coburn Mountain. The Governor was a jovial man, who shouted, "The Campbells are coming, hurrah hurrah!" when the trout began to rise. But his wife was called upon to endure more than she could endure when Dud and the Governor tried to net her handsome trout. They lost her trout. And they upset the raft from which she had been fishing in shallow water. She called Dud a great lout, or a louse. He couldn't tell which, because the lady had lost her false teeth during the excitement. And she shook her fist at the Governor. And Dud did not say that he blamed her in the least.

No lady suffers more in the tales from Dud's mis-

chievous humor than Mrs. Kelly, the wife of the resourceful Professor Kelly. Even Olivet Bumpus comes out much better in the long run than Mrs. Kelly. The professor introduced his wife to Dud Dean, and Dud reported that she unbent an inch, "but I c'ud see it almost cracked her." And then, "What she said nettled me, but I tried to remind myself that the mills of the gods grind on, high water and low water, an' that they grind the dirt exceedingly small."

I am fond of Olivet Bumpus, who set out to inveigle the artless Atterly Dumstead's money for the school where, as Dud said, she taught "English as it is talked in some colleges." Olivet was trapped in an amazing situation — amazing, because, as Dud said, "She was an old maid by trade," who was determined to go "down the path of grammatical glory that leads to a pension." In the end Dud tells us with a quiet grin, half apologetic and half proud, that he was their best man.

Let no one be misled. Dud is laughing through these tales. And Dud is quick and eager in his praise of women who have won his generous admiration. "A mean woman," he says, "is as mean as a mean man, and a good woman is as good as a good man, if not better." Of Diana Deems's mother, he said, "Her mother was one of them real folks that the Lord taketh a great delight in, I bet." As for Nancy, who is Dud's wife, she is his standard of the perfect.

An example of Dud's insight and tolerance is manifest in his lifelong association with the taciturn and melancholy Matthew Markham. No two men were ever less alike, or closer friends. I was a long time learning to ap-

preciate Mat, and I know that I would not have discovered the real Mat but for Dud's loyal fondness for the man whose lifelong success as a guide is due to his efficient service, rather than to his social qualities, which to the casual acquaintance seem to be almost nil.

One of my proud moments ticked off when Mat introduced us to people whom he was guiding at Moosehead Lake. "This here," he said, "is Dud Dean, best all round guide on the Kennebec Waters, exceptin' me. An' this other feller is Arthur Macdougall. He's jist a friend of ours."

Mat's rare figures of speech are grindstone sharpened. Mat thinks that talk is "jist a waste of time, gittin' a man nothin' but trouble." But when he is moved to talk, I listen. When Mat told me the story of "Business is Business," he painted a tersely abbreviated word picture of the early morning on Pierce Pond. He said, "The fog was as thick as a grey shirt." That figure of speech is Mat's. It talks as Mat thinks — no frills and no nonsense.

Dud taught me that when one angles for trout, he may witness the very eternities. They rise, as it were, to a man's casting. But to Mat, angling (and that is a word he would disdain) is a dum serious business, and that's all. The harder you work at it, the more trout you'll get. Nevertheless, for all his narrowly concentrated and abbreviated thoughts and reactions to human experience, Mat has his moments of homespun wisdom.

When he and the sophisticated Joseph Danner argued the evening out about the old superstition that to shoot a white deer is to invite "the blackest luck," Mat grew

weary of Danner's dialectics. "We're mortals," he said to Danner. "A college eddication don't alter that one ten thousand of an inch, but you city squirts want to come up here and tell us folks that has learned things the hard way that what we know is true ain't so. And then, like dumb fools, ye're surprised if we don't swallow it."

When, by the vagaries of chance, Mat was tricked into shooting the white buck, he solemnly announced to Danner and me, "This is a danged deceitful world, where a feller with the best of intentions is apt to be led astray, but a man has to take his own consequences. What's done is done, an' who in God's world can change it?"

A man has to take his own consequences. That isn't gospel, but it is true. So Mat's lugubrious philosophy of living seems to have reconciled itself, and Mat has found his own contentment, even though it appears to be mildewed. God bless Mat. He is, at odd times, the funniest man I know, because he is humorless. And I am moved to place him first among the company of fellows whom Dud calls up to star his stories.

Bill X is an incurable poacher. Jeremy Holt's young preacher friend delivered the best damn sermon Jeremy ever heard. Lily Fingers was a poet and an artist with a fly rod. A skunk outraged the Reverends Donald R. and Nelson G. after they had enraged the skunk. The Duke and his valet got more than enough of roughing it north of Moosehead. And there was that character who tried to outrun an earthquake. And there were many more. And verily Dud Dean is friend to all of

them, except such specimens as the Angler from Athens and Bill X. Dud's chuckling appreciations of his friends have taught me a wholesome tolerance. I have learned the lesson slowly: a man may fail to meet my small standards, and still be a man for all that, as lonely Bobby said.

Jeremy Holt confesses to Dud, "My conscience is bothering me like an ingrowing toenail. Here I sit, a man who has broke the Ten Commandments uphill and down. Of course I never robbed no widows and orphans, but I plucked their men ahead of time. I'm a skinflint, Dud — just a miserable old trader."

I know that Jeremy Holt told the truth about himself. He *is* an old trader. But when that is settled, he unfolds a plan to pay for a friend's vacation, when Dud is to be employed to guide this less affluent neighbor to good trout fishing and recreation. And while one is trying to think his way through this confusion of sinfulness and kindness, there is Jeremy's blunt description of Mrs. Holt: "My wife is an old-fashioned person. She gits up Sunday mornings and gives me hell, *et cetera*. When she has worked herself into the right frame of mind, she goes to church."

Dud has his own rendering of Jesus' text about the folks with eye trouble. According to Dud, one should not attempt to remove the sawdust from his neighbor's eye while "thar's a sawlog in his own." And we are, as Mat declares, "all mortals," but for all the idiocyncrasies and egotisms there is goodness in us.

Bill X, who appears for a manhandling in "Dead-water Doings," and a merciless revealing in "A Duplici-

ous Incident,” offends all sense of good sportsmanship, and whines about his consequences; but the fellow reveals the parts of a man he might have been, if other, better, influences had been operative in his life.

Bill X says, “A man always has to make sure that none of them stinkers [wardens] is sneakin’ around. I thought that the coast was clear, near as I c’ud tell. But I listened some more. Ever notice how much a man can hear on a night like that? [Mark this.] Maybe ye’ll hear an owl off in the woods, er somebody shootin’ a gun, but most of the sounds come a-whisperin’ and a-rustlin’. The night feels like silk.”

Bill X is a primitive character, smudged and soiled, but there, deep within, is the pathos of wasted human stuff. There was a quality in him. So a man might come to a true prospective in a thousand years, which in God’s sight is but as yesterday when it is past. Don’t change the old word in the King James translation of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. It is the right word: *charity*.

It may be that some of Dud’s methods of narration and description are a little too broad, if one is squeamish. But I think that his humor is circumspect, whatever Nancy, his wife, and Leah, my wife, think about it. The reader should be fair, both to the subject of Dud’s humor and to Dud, particularly to Dud. For an example, when Dud attempted to teach the impatient Olivet Bumpus to cast a fly, she *sniffed*. And Dud tells us that he would rather break all the rules of grammar (which of course Olivet would not!) and some of the Ten Commandments, than to be guilty of sniffing. His patience

was greatly tried, and he confesses that his sense of humor failed him, and that it seemed to him "Olivet jist sniffed her nose till it twitched like a rabbit's, if yer can imagine a nose like hers on a rabbit." Now, that is rough, but we should remember that Olivet was *sniffing*.

Some of those figures of speech are not as gentle as the real Dud. Some of them are almost rabbled. Olivet Bumpus had been advised not to come out on the boom in the Kennebec River, but she disregarded Dud's advice. Then she fell off at a most inopportune time. Dud says that there was "a tremendous splash, as if an imported cow had fell off a gangplank." Nancy would not have approved of such unrestrained humor, but I do.

Palander Tate's mare ran away when she and Palander met the Dumstead automobile in which Dud and the chauffeur and Atterly and Olivet were riding. Palander was thrown from the wagon, and the mare and the equipage disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust. Dud climbed out, and remarked to Palander, who had scrambled to his feet, "That's a smart mare ye've got."

"Yer mean," said Palander, "that she *was* smart, but now it w'udn't be safe fer the Apocalypse to ride behind her." I find it funny to imagine the Tate's mare running away with the Apocalypse. Of course, Palander meant the four riders of the Apocalypse.

Dud is fond of the broad and careless talk of men who care more for the immediate force of a figure of speech than for the nicer literary devices. These men are talkers, and their object is to express the thing in talk — not in composition.

But there is pure wit in Dud. I know that, because it has been pointed out to me. The skunk that had a skunk's way with the Reverends Donald R. and Nelson G. at Big Dimmick Pond "was a little cuss, but awful potent." In the story, "Once In The Stilly Night," the raccoon hunters were lost, gave it up, and laid down to wait for daylight. Dud tells us, "When I woke up, it was rainin' a little. The other rarecoon hunters was sleeping. It's kinda funny to watch the rain fall on a face that don't know it."

Dud does put words into the mouths of men who had a part in the events that are the substance of his tales. Unless one knows the man, he cannot be sure that Dud is trying to remember what the person said concerning a given situation. Dud may be improvising the dialogue as he goes along. It is all of the mood and the method of the story teller. The method is to borrow a figure of speech, or the report of an incident, to summarize the situation with a few words, and then to get on with the rest of the story, which is the principal project.

But the sharp edges of Dud's speech are dulled if one does not know the sources from which he draws so many of his similes and metaphors. To appear to be "as solemn as a spruce pa'tridge on the tip of a witch hazel bush," is to appear very solemn indeed, but one must have known the spruce partridge to get the full meaning of Dud's figure. Moreover, why did Dud choose to perch the bird on the tip-top of a witch hazel bush? The spruce partridge is apt to place herself on the top of any bush, and to look down on one, swaying and pleased with herself, but why not on the terminal shoot of a

spruce or a white pine? I think that I know the answer. The witch hazel blooms in October, and so the incongruity of the figure is emphasized: a queer bird on a queer bush.

When Dud says, "And it was still as a snowstorm," he does not mean the snowstorm in town or city, where the snowplow rumbles and business plunges on. He means a snowstorm in the wilderness where the innumerable white flakes weave a blanket of silence. If a man shouts in such a storm, when the evergreens are blanketed with snow, his voice dies at the end of his nose. And a shot fired is only a flat "punk" in the gunner's ears. Snow is the color of stillness, not black.

Dud is sometimes guilty of inexact quotations. A more literary minded scholar than I am might be shocked at his easy references to Biblical and classical sources, but such independence pleases me, for I know that such departures from the text are deliberate.

"I felt as sad as the children of Israel, when they hung their harps on the alder bushes beside the waters of Babylon." The alder is the common streamside shrub on the upper Kennebec waters.

I have been disappointed when readers of the Dud Dean tales have revealed the fact that they were patronizing Dud; that they had accepted him as a crude, unlettered character. Dud, and men like him, are not illiterate. They attended the rural schools of Maine. They read easily, and a few of them read considerably. Of course it is their colloquial conversation that leads the illiterate reader astray. A few nights ago, a native of Solon, a neighbor whom I have known for years, intro-

duced me to a man from New Jersey. He said to the out-of-stater, "Maybe you've read some of this fellow's stories about Dud Dean. He's got a lingo all his own."

Oh no, brother! It isn't my lingo. Nor is it Dud's. Such an assumption amuses me, because we are all more or less inclined to speak colloquially when we are not being self-consciously careful of our pronunciations. There is an instinct in us to talk as easily as possible, just as we unthinkingly relax when we sit down, or walk with as little effort as possible. Therefore we are all apt to drop our *g*'s, and to use various lazy short cuts, particularly grammatical improvisations. Colloquialism is general throughout the world. Of course we have our locality twists, but the principle is the same. Dud talks the way we talk in the upper Kennebec when we are only talking for the fun of it, although of course Dud's talk is that of the older school.

I have not attempted a slavish phonetic reproduction, because if one did that the printed page would be bore-some with those free and easy variations of the king's English, which the kings didn't talk. But I have tried to indicate the flavor and the spice of Dud's talk. If someone is silly enough to assume that such talk is freakish, I wonder where he has lived — in a glass showcase, perhaps.

At any rate, Dud and his kind of men are not illiterate. They are not scholars — that's all. There are a few classical and literary allusions which appear in Dud's talk. And that usually surprises the pedant. When Dud told me about his friend Sam Hill and the days when he and Sam were courting girls, he recalled that Sam's

girl was, according to Sam's tell, "as good looking as Helen of Troy, and as virtuous as the lily maid, Elaine." But he is not above referring to Mark Anthony as a "feller who got inter trouble with a game warden." I heard him say, at least once, "When morning came, it was one of them rosy-fingered dawns that old Greek feller keeps everlastingly talkin' erbout in a book Nancy thinks I sh'ud read." That is evidence that Dud has read Samuel Butler's translation of the *Odyssey*. And when we were hunting ducks along the little bog ponds near the Old Bluff road, Dud described the water in which he had waded as "colder'n a Eyetalian hell." And of course that is Dante. So there we have references to Tennyson, Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, — and there are others in Dud's offhand, careless talk.

But those classical tag ends are only by-the-ways. Dud's figures are drawn from his everyday scene, and therefore are as innocent of the literary as his talk. I would not have mentioned them but for that fact that persons have supposed that Dud was a rude, illiterate fellow. How rich is his everyday scene! There are such figures as these in his drawling talk:

"As nervous as a setter pup p'intin' at a bull moose, as excited as a grocer weighing out a pound of prunes, as cool as a dog's nose, as grim as the letters on a tombstone, as easily as a bear cub slides down an old stub, as smart as a school teacher on hossback, as black as the tip of a weasel's tail, as surprised as the hen that laid a doorknob, as foolish as a rabbit in a bird cage, and as tired as a man who's hoed corn all day."

God bless these old pastmasters at telling tales, who

were the guides and outdoorsmen of Maine. Some of them were runners-up to the skillful writers in our English language, although their stories were told for the fun of the telling.

Dud Dean's stories led me into a less involved and a more elementally real world. Dud possessed the key that opened closed doors. He led me from the small interiors into the outdoor immensities. In all his tales, I have camped, fished, or hunted, and rested me beside the still waters and in the green pastures of the Maine wilderness country. The love of the earth, the gossip of the far-called rivers, and this company of men and women, are mine in Dud Dean.

I have been saying that Dud is a laughing mystic, a droll commentator, an unschooled naturalist, and an angler with flies and rod. But I am dismayed to find that I have not answered that question in a way that will satisfy people who want to shake Dud Dean's hand — who want me to point out the very house in Bingham where the man lives.

About the Stories

The first Dud Dean story was published in *Field & Stream* twenty-four years ago. And this is the fourth book of successive stories.

My pedantic and sophisticated acquaintances have been troubled about these Dud Dean stories. They tell me that the tales are vexatiously inconsistent. The principal difficulty seems to be with the "dialect."

I am uncomfortable in being so abrupt, but it should be at once apparent that these stories are not dialect

tales. And it would be evident to anyone who had devoted a little time to the study of dialect and colloquialism. And, incidentally, there is an excellent text: *The English Language In America*, by Dr. George Philip Krapp.

A Phi Beta Kappa once edited a Dud Dean story for a magazine. The Phi Beta Kappa was sure that if Dud said "yer" (for you) in one sentence, he must say "yer" forever and ever, and that if he dropped the "w" from *with* ('ith) he must continue to do so world 'ithout end, and that if he lost the "d" in *and*, it must always be an *an*'. That is, the man's speech must be consistently the same. But are we to suppose that the Phi Beta Kappa's speech is always so consistent?

I have noticed that Dud drops his consonants, whenever it is euphoniously convenient; but that occurs in relation to his own soft, slow articulation, and Dud does not consistently avoid the consonants. There are times when he stresses them, as if he felt that in so doing he emphasized the part the word played.

If one followed Dud and attempted to express colloquialisms that are often colored by his own enunciations, only the most keen and literate reader could follow the printed adaptations. And I have deliberately avoided many of them. For example, Dud often pronounces "to" *ter*. "I want ter know!" Or, "I wanter know." But is there any sense ter writing it so? There isn't, because ninety-nine of us, when reading aloud, would call "to" *ter*. I have tried to indicate the flavor of his speech. As for that which is often called dialect, it is, in principle, general colloquialism, because real dialect appears only where people are isolated.

Dud, and men like him, went to the old Red School-houses. They went "through the grades." They talk as they talk, not because they know no better, but because they have devised a way to articulate with little effort. That would be apparent to anyone who had ever received a letter from Dud or anyone like him. The letter would be painstakingly correct.

Since so much of Dud's talk is characterized by his idiosyncracies of tone and emphasis, it is difficult to convey the quality without obscuring the meaning. I regret that, because it is a charming and restful experience to hear him.

And finally, it should be understood that Dud's speech is not characteristic of the people who live on the upper Kennebec. I have treasured the amusement I have known while listening to Dud and Nancy Dean. Dud's wife, who is literally the joy and pride of his life, was a country schoolmarm and she clings to a chastely grammatical and carefully pronounced speech. And there you have the contrast in one household. And there are all the intermediates. But men like Mat Markham, and others, talk more or less as Dud speaks.

I am grateful to Dud. He helped me to find a less boring and disappointing world. And by his unassuming humility and sympathetic charity, he set me an example.

ARTHUR R. MACDOUGALL, JR.

DUD DEAN AND THE ENCHANTED

THE LADY was a most alert and intelligent person. I met her at a bookstore in modern Babylon, where she presided over books, clerks, and cash registers. And she asked, "Where can I find a professional guide in Maine who knows how to prepare a palatable meal, make a bough bed, paddle a canoe, and where to find the white orchid, *Cypripedium acaule albiflorum*?" Before I could attempt to answer the question, the lady added, "He must *know* the wilderness, and above all, he must be a gentleman."

I looked at the lady, who was neat and trim but forty years old plus ten. And it seemed to me that she need not worry about men who were not gentlemen. And then, while I sought for words that would not betray my private amusement, I thought of Dud Dean, who would have replied to a question with such stipulations in a courtly manner.

"Lady," I said, "there are doubtless scores of such men who are registered guides in Maine, but I only know one of them. He is much older than you and I, and his mind and personality are more mature. He knows the birds and flowers by their names, although he often calls them names that are not found in the books. And he is a gentleman with the best of manners."

“And what are the wages one must pay such a paragon?”

“Wait a moment. I only told you that I knew such a guide. I didn’t say that he was available. Dud Dean picks and chooses his clientele. One must persuade Dud that he is worth the while. Your money would be a secondary consideration.”

“You intrigue me,” the lady said. “And how do I approach this Dud? And is he none other than the lauded Dud Dean of your stories? And would he really know where *Cypripedium acaule albiflorum* grows?”

“Dud would call them lady’s-slippers or white moccasins. And I am sure that he would know a score of places where they bloom in June.”

The lady tapped her white teeth with the rubber end of a pencil. “Now that I have gone so far,” she said, “I should tell you the rest. I expect to attach myself to a man in June. The gentleman grew up in Maine. The white moccasin flowers are only an aside. One can buy almost anything in this city, but if it had a glory, that is soiled or dead. We, this man and I, have a hunger in us, not so much to see the rare white orchid as to keep a tryst where such a triumph of the ancient earth survives. It isn’t easily said, and I wonder if you understand.”

I assumed that I did understand. And I said, “If you will come to Bingham, I will take you to Dud Dean’s house, and then you and he can talk about the project to your heart’s content. If you are fortunate enough to enlist Dud Dean, he can make your dream come true.”

When I had told Dud about the lady and her projected vacation and her projected husband, he smiled quizz-

zically. Then he said, "Nope. I'm too old to lead honeymooners eround. Besides, I long ago had to give up guidin' parties with womenfolks. Nancy's jealous."

Nancy Dean had been washing dishes, and of course Dud had made the speech for her to hear. She came from the kitchen to the sitting-room. Nancy is one of those rare persons who grow more and more attractive as they ripen in wisdom, and with charity for all. Now she came to us smiling.

"To the contrary," she said, "I have always wanted Dud to guide ladies. They have a most delightful effect upon him. He calls to mind all his old gallantries. He gets his hair cut and his mustache trimmed. Furthermore, it has been a long time since the opportunity came to guide honeymooners. Why, I would love to go myself, if I were a guide! And I think, Dudley, that it was kind of Mr. Macdougall to think of you, and to recommend you to these people."

"Pshaw, Nancy, how many times have I heard you say that a man sh'ud keep his eyes on Greeks that come bearin' gifts? Mak's like all parsons. Thar's sunthin' up his sleeves. Besides, w'ud yer trust him to size up a strange woman? Like ducks yer w'ud. What erbout her man? Has he got fallen arches? Can he take blackflies an' bog water? Can he sleep with the stub end of a fir bough in the small of his back? Er is he old enough to know better, but don't?"

"They grew up in little Maine towns," I said. "He came from a little village in Washington County. She grew up in Aroostook. And they are dreaming about white moccasins, and all that."

“Crotch. Is that supposed to prove sunthing, Mak?”

“Dudley,” said Nancy.

“Hump. Wel-el, no harm if I talk with them. When they come to Bingham, bring ’em around. My garden is planted. Chores purty well caught up. Bring ’em up here. Nancy will size ’em up, and if she decides that I am good enough fer sech folks I have no doubt that I’m their man.”

Five weeks after that day, the lady, Mrs. Pendmaster Davis, wrote a letter to me, and that is the rest of the story.

Dear Mr. Macdougall,

I am happy! Your friend was the most delightful and entrancing man! To that, we both agree. Pend and I have reviewed our honeymoon and the endless little delights that Dud contrived for us. We have them like a rosary to tell over and over — and I am not irreverent.

First thing. Dud asked us, “Which is most important — the lady’s-slippers er *trout*?”

I said, “Trout,” because I knew how dearly Pend loves to fish for trout. And he has caught them in England, Scotland, and in the Pyrenees, as well as almost everywhere in North America.

But Pend said, “The lady’s-slippers. There is no question about that.”

Honestly, I think that your old friend was pleased. But he almost insisted on giving us physical examinations. How careful and wise he is! When at last we convinced him that we really wanted to go afoot into a remote corner of the wilderness, and that I was prepared

to undergo the torments of the blackfly, and what else, he said:

“C’ud you even stand bein’ lost? Reason I ask is that I’ve got a sartin place in mind which I hain’t seen fer fifty years. Since then, thar’s been a big fire in thar, an’ since the fire it’s been logged over. So I might have to poke eround afore we got thar. But I am mortally sure that we can find your white moccasins, an’ find them no end. And thar’s bound to be some trout to catch. But to git thar, we’d have to go to Big Enchanted Pond, cross it, and then climb up inter Bulldog Mountain.”

“Enchanted!” Did anyone ever have a honeymoon in a more fittingly named place? Of course we were enthusiastic. Pend said, “I have been lost with men in whom I had less confidence. And, by gosh, I managed to enjoy it. As for our lady, she has already risked more than that. Lead on, MacDuff.”

Then the men bought our supplies. And your Mr. Dean loaned Pend one of his huge packbaskets. They carried fifty pounds each. All because Pend was determined that a honeymoon would be spoiled unless there was plenty to eat.

I do not believe that Dud Dean was even puzzled about where he was or where to go ahead. I know that Pend did not worry for a moment. He said to me, “This man is the genuine old guide. We need not fret.” And yet, Dud had not gone that way for fifty years. Think of it, a lifetime!

We walked from the road that goes to Spencer Lake. What a breathless beauty there is in all that country! The Upper Enchanted! Verily. Dud told us about the

terrible forest fire of 1895 — the very year Pend was born. Dud showed us huge pine trunks that still lie where they fell after that fire. Pend cut into one with his axe. It was still sound under the outer grey shell. And Dud called to our attention the marine rock at the height of land — as one goes down to Enchanted Pond. That man is a matchless entertainer, because his own interests are so varied.

Dud told us about the legend that Enchanted Pond is bottomless beneath its deepest water. He pointed out the place at the lower end where some old lumberman had built a dam between those magnificent granite mountains.

And Pend caught three gloriously colored trout in that blue water, while Dud rowed us to the Bulldog Mountain shore. By the way, Pend did not keep those trout. I have had so much to learn about men and fishermen in these few weeks—things I might have learned years ago, if Pend had come into the store for a copy of your book, *Dud Dean and His Country*, years ago instead of a few months ago. Dud Dean! And His Country! We'll never forget that man or his country — not ever.

The mountain was steep. Did you know that once there was a profile of a bulldog on the east end, until it slid off and away during a springtime deluge? What a savage name, Bulldog! Must there be a bulldog in the Enchanted Country? No. The Enchanted is rid of that. I am glad it is gone. But there is a great raw scar where the profile was.

Now we come to our weather. That old joke about

the Maine man who said to the tourist who had complained about the weather, "What kind of weather do yer want? We've got all kinds," is no whimsy. There never was a lovelier day than when we started up the mountain. The sky was as blue as the ribbon that Alice wore into Wonderland. Then, as if by magic, the cumulus clouds grew forebodingly dark. It was as if the demons were angry because we had invaded their mountain. And how it rained!

Dud explained, with that solemn face he puts on, that it does not rain cats and dogs in the Enchanted — not even bulldogs. Instead, according to Dud, it rains rain, although sometimes it rains lady's-slippers — white fer when she gets up in the morning, gold fer when she eats her dinner (at noon, of course) and pink fer when she goes to dance across the sunset. And then he added that he had known it to rain *trout* in the Enchanted, but that kind, he said, hardly ever take a fly, unless a fellow has the Pink Lady.

"I have a Pink Lady," said Pend. And I guess that I was, after such an interpolation!

Dud pretended not to comprehend the implication. He said, "Then I guess, maybe, yer c'ud git some trout if yer sh'ud try real hard. But yer know, thar was once a tribe of Indians that lived up an' down the Kennebec. And among them was a girl so purty that they called her 'Flower-of-the-rising-sun.' Of course, all the young fellers loved her. One of them was a big, tall chap who went by the name of Moxie, an' he courted her morning, noon, an' almost all night. So they were wed. Then the young man made a terrible mistake. Took his young wife

with him when he went into the Enchanted to fish fer trout. Fer a little time they was happy an' contented — until early one morning, when Moxie woke up. He looked fer his wife. She had left his side. He hurried outside the wigwam, and thar he saw her walkin' over the lake, where the risin' sun made a path.

“Moxie called to her, but she did not hear him. He ran to the lake, and went after her in his birch canoe. No use. She jist went away, up the mountain, an' thar she vanished out of mortal sight. Poor Moxie! Not even a yeller leaf was turned upside down. Not even a twig had been rolled on its side. An' he never found her. So after a while he left the Enchanted; wandered off, down country, an' where Moxie Mountain is he died of a broken heart. Yer can see him any clear day, with his great shoulders an' chest heaved up ag'inst the sky.

“But what the Enchanted did with Flower-of-the-rising-sun, no man knows. Yer see, it ain't safe in here, but the trout don't know it. As fer fishermen, what do they know but trout?”

Of course, your old friend was talking to help us forget the drenching rain. Once he turned to look at us, and asked, “W'udn't you rather go back to the camps on the big lake? They're nice an' comfortable. We c'ud sleep dry, and' then come up here tomorrow.”

Pend looked to me. And I said, “No.”

“Ye're sure?”

I was. But I was weary and very, very wet. At noon-time we stopped at a little spring. And there Dud and Pend cooked our dinner. The rain continued. And once

more Dud asked me, "Don't yer want to go back to the camps?"

I am so glad that I refused to turn back. So glad!

When we went on, Dud said, "Mind now, that I'm goin' it purty blind. Maybe I can't find that pond to-night. It's a small mark in this big country. And maybe it ain't thar anymore, like Flower-of-the-rising-sun. Queer things happen up here, an' ordinary things happen queerly. Even the trout, in this pond I'm lookin' fer, is strange. Some folks declare that thar ain't a trout in it to go over half a pound. An' some persons have fished in here to go back home vowin' that thar's no trout at all. And a few folks whisper erbout tremendous trout that haunt the place."

Pend asked, "But what do you say?"

"I say that it strikes me as odd that when I come in here fifty years ago, the weather was jist like it is this very afternoon. We was young fellers, Mat Markham an' me. Thar was mighty heavy timber up here on the mountain. Take that an' the rainstorm, an' the light was dim. Arter a while, we both figgered that we was good an' lost. So we started settin' a line — yer know, pickin' out a tree straight ahead of us, goin' to that, an' then pickin' another. Mat was kinda superstitious. He still is. I 'member that he said, 'If I ever git out of this godforsaken place, I'll never set foot on it ag'in.' And b'crotch, he was as good as his word, becuz he's never been in here since that time. I've always wanted to come in here, but until now this an' that has lured me elsewhere.

"When Mat an' me had gone over the divide, an' started down, the rain kinda pindled — good deal as

it's doin' now. Mat kept on moaning, but I didn't pay much attention of course. All of a sudden, I seen a big round raft of fog, like an old circus tent, but kinda moving, writhing, an' rolling. I scootched down, so's I c'ud see under the fog, an' then I seen the pond, level, an' lookin' like an old kitchen floor that has been scoured with sand an' mopped an' mopped fer a hundred years by generations of peeticular women.

“‘Look,’ I says to Mat, who was still grumblin’ er-bout the rain an’ foolish fools like us. ‘Look,’ I says. An’ then I p’inted like this’ ——”

Mr. Macdougall, your Dud is a magician. When Pend and I looked where Dud had pointed, just as he had pointed for his friend fifty years ago, we saw a pond, or part of a pond. And there was a cloud of fog lying over it, like a circus tent!

“Great guns, man,” exclaimed Pend. “You have an instinct for the abrupt. Is that the pond you were looking to find?”

“Don’t know yit. Maybe. Anyhow, it’s a pond. Or will it fold up in that cloud an’ vanish away?”

Pend said, “We will soon find out!”

So he ran down to the shore of the pond, where he splashed his right hand in the water. “It’s real,” he said, while laughing back at us.

“C’ud be,” said Dud.

But what a ghost of a pond it was, under that weird raft of mountain fog. It was grey and lonely. And for a moment, no more, I wished that I were back on Madison Avenue. And then I remembered how unearthly the skyscrapers look in fog and storm. One

sees a few lower stories, but the rest are swallowed up, as if the building were immaterial or upside down in a vague, formless sea.

“Fust,” said Dud, “good sense makes camp. Let’s see . . . Ayah, over this way thar’s a spring, er thar was fifty years ago.”

We followed Dud.

“Here,” he said. And I saw the sweetest little spring that came as by kindly magic from under a mound of soft moss. “And thar,” said Dud. And I saw a single plant of *Cypripedium acaule* with ten blossoms on the one plant.

Dud smiled at me. “Ye’ll have to excuse us, becuz they’re only pink ones. An’ I don’t mind if yer laugh at me, when I tell yer that they was here fifty years ago.”

Pend had brought that tent with the wonderfully light but water-proof material — floor and all. And he and Dud were only a few moments setting it up.

“There is plenty of room for the three of us,” I said.

Dud Dean laughed at me. “If yer don’t mind,” he said, “I will put up my own shelter-half where Mat an’ me built us a leanto so long ago. Now, when we’re all shipshape, why not cook up sunthin’ until it’s real hot. I’ll go explore to see if them cedars still grow near the south shore, where Mat an’ me made our raft. Say, do yer know this is the most fun I’ve had since the day Mat fell inter a springhole on the shore of Middle Carry Pond. We was hedgehoggin’ erlong the shore, lookin’ fer a boat that had come up missing, as Mont Spinney said when his wife run off with the butter money. The shore, yer see, looked all firm an’ trust-

worthy, but when Mat stepped in that place he jist went out of sight inter a deep springhole. An' the poor feller was so cold when he wallowed out that he kept saying, 'Colder'n hell, colder'n hell,' till Mak give him a lecture fer what he called apostasy.

“ ‘What d 'yer mean by that?’ says Mat.

“ ‘I mean that hell is *not* cold,’ says Mak.”

Pend and I began to unpack. And in a few moments we heard Dud's axe. He had found the cedars. Pend explained to me that cedar was a light wood, and that it made a buoyant raft.

When Dud came back, he was poling a large raft. And he had a bundle of dry kindling wood tied and fastened on his shoulders. The fire was quickly kindled, and I am sure that mortals never ate more delicious food than our hot biscuits and beef stew. And then we went to bed. And then we slept like small children — children in the Enchanted Country!

Dud awakened us. And I smelled bacon and coffee. “I figgered,” he said, “that it w'ud be all right to wake yer up, becuz the weather has improved. Besides, the trout are puddlin' out front.”

Did you ever try to dress in a sleeping-bag? There are difficulties. Dud called again. “I wish that ye'd hurry. Thar's an old she otter and her kits out in the pond. It's int'restin' to watch 'em cut up.”

I jist wrapped a blanket around me and went out. What a handsomely graceful creature an otter is. There were four of them, diving, rising, and chasing each other in the water. How could one ever forget that strong, swift gracefulness!

At the further end of the pond (it was shaped like a football) the trout continued to rise. "Puddling" Dud called it, "becuz they're only takin' nymphs near the surface."

Otters, trout, nymphs, and the earliest daylight in the Enchanted!

Of course, breakfast was delicious. "Coffee," said Dud, "must be part good spring water — none of your chemically diluted, polluted stuff that is as vile as bog-water! But, as Mat says, 'To make good coffee, fust take some coffee, put it in a *coffee-pot* full of b'ilin' water, an' then let it be so long as it takes to whistle, *Comin' Through the Rye.*'"

Pend and I decided to christen the pond "Ghost Lake." And then we embarked on Dud's raft. Of course I should have died if they had made me stay ashore, although I offered to do so, nevertheless. But the men insisted that I should go.

Pend fished with flies. And I was so proud to observe that Dud Dean approved of Pend's skill. It was all so beautifully done. The dry flies appeared to be so small and fragile — number twelves and fourteens, I think. Pend cast into the circles made by the feeding trout. And those vividly colored fish rose with astonishing savageness. And when hooked, they fought with all the grace of the otters.

When one went free, Pend would say, "Bully for you, mister." Then Dud Dean would chuckle. I counted all the fish that Dud actually netted to remove the flies. There were forty of them — "none under half a

pound, an' some of 'em almost big e-nough to scare a hot-house trout to death."

They saved one, an unimaginably beautiful thing. "Plenty fer three of us," said Dud. "An' now, let's go find the lady's-slippers, if yer really meant what yer said."

The sun had risen. The pond was a strange pale green and warm with a golden light when we left the camp. It was amusing to me to witness Dud's apologetic way when the first lady's-slippers that he found were a great bed of *Cypripedium calceolus pubescens*, the big yellow moccasin. "Y'know," he said, "I had fergotten all erbout them yellter slippers. Yer don't see 'em very often."

As a matter of fact, I had never seen them growing in the wild way. The large bed was mixed with ferns. The blossoms were like pure gold in that damp, dark setting of forest shadows. And there were so many of them! So amazingly abundant in that lavish place that I could not believe my eyes.

But all that was only to prepare us for the white slippers around the little lost bog, where like figments of utter beauty the enchanted white moccasins grew. When your raw-boned old friend pushed a screen of ferns aside to show us the first patch, I loved him . . . that greatly simple man.

"Here they are," he said. "And to me, it seems as though I had only left them here a few hours ago. But it was fifty years ago. Ask Mat Markham." Then I detected an anxiety in his voice. "I 'spose that ye'll want to pick some?"

“Just one,” I said.

I thought for a moment that he was going to hug me. “Glory be!” he said. “I reckon that the Indian girl c’ud spare yer more than that.”

Pend and I took color shots, as we had of the yellow moccasins. We have shown the slides to our friends. The question we always expect never fails to be asked: “Where are they?” And I do not need to pretend vagueness to protect the stand, because I only know that they are somewhere on the other side of a mountain — somewhere in the Enchanted.

“B’fore we go back to camp,” said Dud Dean, “I’d be pleased to have the lady try my little flyrod down here off the old beaver dam at the foot of this little bog. The trout in thar are little fellers, but the Lord has dressed ’em up real purty.”

That was my first lesson in fly fishing. And the fly was a Red Ibis. I loved fly fishing in spite of the black-flies that beset us. Dud Dean was patient and cheerful when I tangled the line in cedars that grew too near the water. What fun it was to catch those handsome little trout.

And that was how our week began! We fell in love with your friend. He is a great soul and a charming gentleman. He is a mystic, but his big hands were made to hold an axe. He is a big, rawboned weather-beaten man, but he can remember where he saw white lady’s-slippers growing fifty years ago.

Our days in that Enchanted Country were too swift, as I suppose days are sure to be when one is altogether happy and content. The last night was clear and light-

ed by a full moon. And is there a place on earth where the moonlight falls so magically as near a mountain top! Dud came to us where we sat looking out on the little lake. And he said, "If the idea sh'ud appeal to you folks, I w'ud like to show yer sunthin' strange and beautiful."

A pleasant sense of excitement filled me. Pend whispered to me, "I have an intuition that we shall never forget this, whatever he has in mind."

We followed Dud along the west shore of the pond — no flashlights, because Dud said, "They'd be handy, but I w'udn't dare."

He led us to the strangest thing — an old dead pine (very ancient) that seemed to be fast in the soft soil of the shore, but lying its full length out in the pond.

"It's always been here," he said. "The water is real shallow, an' the bottom is hard shale and sand. So if anyone fell off, 'tw'udn't do 'em any harm. Matter of fact, we c'ud wade to the end of the log, if that was necessary. But the pine is as stidy as a board walk."

And then he walked out. I did not think that I could do it in that half-light, but with Pend's help I did. Dud was waiting for us at the end. And he whispered, "Look at the bottom."

The bottom was silver white.

"Sand," said Dud. "In the daytime yer can see it bubbling. Thar's a tremendous spring here, but it's always gentle — no gushing. Now, jist keep still an' watch."

As I watched, the water seemed to become clearer, or the moonlight brighter.

“Now,” whispered Dud.

A school of little trout swam over the white sand, turned, and came back.

“Not yit,” whispered Dud. “It hain’t here yit.”

Pend whispered in my ear, “I suspect that I know what he wants us to see. Watch.”

Suddenly, as if they had been summoned from far away, the small trout were gone. And, without a visible approach, I saw a huge fish posed motionless over the sand. And I felt that queer excitement that is older than our Race. And I saw the larger stripe of white-white on the creature’s pectoral fins. I saw its eyes!

“Wait,” whispered Dud.

And there, beside the first trout, lay another giant. They lay side by side, and I saw that they were perfectly matched.

“Wait,” whispered Dud.

And there were three more, and then I saw another. There were six immense trout — as if they had materialized from the clean water and the white sand. My eyes began to doubt, or I to doubt my eyes. I moved nearer to Pend, to touch him for assurance. And the trout were gone!

Dud chuckled. “It w’ud always be that way,” he said.

We walked back to the camp without speaking. Dud placed wood on the red coals. It caught fire, and the yellow light was welcome.

“Were they real?” I asked, feeling silly to do so, but unable to keep back the question.

“Of course they were real,” said Pend.

But Dud Dean chuckled. "Speakin' fer myself, I'll have to say that I don't know. All I know is that's what I saw off that log when it was full moonlight fifty years ago. I was there to git a pail of water, but I went back after Mat Markham. And I know what Mat said. He says, "Be you tryin' to fool me? Nobody ever caught a trout that big. Nobody ever heard of a big trout bein' caught in this pond. It's a crotchly lie, that's what it is!" And all the time, Mat stood thar lookin' at them trout jist the same as we did tonight.

"So much as I know, Mat was right when he said that no one ever claimed to git any really big trout in here. We didn't. And nor have we this time. In most waters, trout grow slow. I don't see any reason to think that trout grow fast in this little pond. It appears to be fair-to-middlin' trout water an' that's all.

"But if I was to let myself go, I w'ud take my oath that them *big* trout we saw tonight was the same trout that I saw fifty years ago. Yes sir, by crotch, I'll never forgit them trout. C'udn't. But yer may watch an' wait until kingdom-come an' ye'll never see them trout in the daylight. They don't even seem to be nearabouts in the daytime. So it figgers out this way: only time ye'll ever see 'em is late in a moonlight night. So I don't know. Sometimes I have wondered if it was a trick the moonlight played, but yer saw the smaller trout before the big ones come in tonight. W'ud yer say that it was a trick of the moonlight on the bottom, Pend?"

Pend replied, "No, it wasn't an illusion."

"Wel-el, maybe it's the Enchanted — eh? Maybe it's like pink, and white, and yellow lady's-slippers. All

I know is that I've seen them trout twice. I guess I'm not apt to see them ever ag'in. But maybe you folks will. Yer know, I w'ud have been bad disapp'inted if storm er clouds had hidden the full moon tonight. Wel-el, hope yer sleep sound. So goodnight."

When he had gone to his own camp, Pend and I sat together near the dying fire. And I said, "What do you really think, dear?"

"Think? Why I think that Dud Dean was like an old priest out there tonight. And deep in my heart, I think that the grand old fellow was passing something on to us, something he has loved, and that he wanted to share with us. God bless him."

THE REMARKABLE GENERAL SPOTS

THE neat and reliable steeple clock on the shelf under the looking glass said that the hour was seven o'clock. I had gone up the hill in the sharp fall air to call on Dud Dean. And when I had knocked on the kitchen door, Dud had called, "Walk in yer-self."

That warm and pleasant room was lighted with a small kerosene lamp. Dud explained, "I c'ud have lighted the big lamp, but thar's times when I enjoy it half light and half dark. As yer prob'ly know, Nancy has gone to Boston on the painful errand of visitin' relatives. Nice of you to come up, Mak."

"But you have company," I said, when I saw Mat Markham.

Dud grinned at Mat. "Mat ain't comp'ny. He's a burden. Take just now, afore you walked in. Mat was lettin' off both barrels at what Doc Brownin' use to call the *status quo*."

Mat did not respond.

Dud pointed to a blue-figured plate piled high with doughnuts. "Have one, Mak. They're boughten doughnuts but they ain't so bad as Mat says they be.

I was jist explainin' to Mat that it's an awful mistake to concentrate on the hole in a doughnut."

"Huh," grunted Mat. "That shows how much sense thar is in sech talk. Them holes is as good as any holes, but them doughnuts is terrible, an' more proof of the way things is goin' plump to hell. Them hain't doughnuts. They're de-ceptions."

When I sat down in the rocker that Dud had pushed in my direction, Nancy's cat, whom Dud calls Beelzebub, appeared from under the stove and began to rub against my leg.

Suddenly, that is, suddenly for him — Mat pointed a thick, stubby finger at Beelzebub and said, "Thar's a sample fer yer. I can remember when the prime hide of a black cat was worth thirty, forty cents. What's more important, a man c'ud buy three cuts of B. L. chewin' fer a quarter and still have enough left to buy a good cigar. What's now? B. L. is twenty cents fer a plug, an' five-cent-cigars is ten, but even a ten-cent-cigar hain't fit to fumigate a backhouse. And a black cat ain't worth nothing."

That was the longest speech I ever heard Mat Markham make. Evidently Mat was at his melancholy best. But Dud shook his head with mock solemnity. "That's no way to talk," he said. "If Nancy was here she'd fumigate you, Mat. And say, speaking of cats reminds me of the coonhound Mat bought away back in 1905. Did I ever tell you about General Spots? No! By time, thar's sunthin' we can talk erbout."

Mat cleared his throat — that is, Mat grunted. Then he added, "It w'ud be sunthin' to talk erbout, if you

don't mind hearin' Dud stretch the truth so bad that the Almighty c'udn't ever use it ag'in."

"Now Mat," drawled Dud, "jist answer one question fer us: did yer, er didn't yer, buy a coon hound?"

"If anybody gives a durn, yes I did."

"Wel-el, then why sh'udn't we tell Mak erbout that remarkable dog?"

Mat reached for a doughnut, stuffed most of it into his mouth, and said in a doughnutty tone of voice, "Go right ahead. Tell it. But don't expect me to back yer up."

For some reason, and I haven't the least of a notion why, Mat thought that he had indulged in a humorous ultimatum. That is, he chuckled — cackled would be nearer the fact.

Dud stretched out his long legs, and the black cat jumped to his lap. "Wel-el," began Dud, "I've been rarecoon huntin' two er three times in my lifetime. The queer part is that I enjoyed myself. This is how it started. Mat read an advertisement in one of them sportin' magazines. This is what it said: 'World's best Black and Tans. Fox Hounds, Cat Dogs, and Coon Hounds. Special — for \$50.00 we offer General Spots, the best and truest bred hound in the U. S. Free trial, and your money back if we ain't satisfied.' "

Mat raised a big hand. "Hol'done, it never said, if *we* ain't satisfied. It said, if *you* ain't satisfied."

"Ayah. That's practically what I said it said. Yer see, Mak, our friend Mat had been figgering. Coons was quoted in the fur market reports at four and five dollars apiece. Hardly anybody eround here bothered

to hunt er trap coons, an' they was uncommon plentiful that year. So Mat figgered he c'ud pick up no end of coons with the help of a really smart dog."

That seemed to be Mat's talkative night. He interrupted again. Pointing a finger at me, he said, "And don't fergit, if you print this, the way yer have some of Dud's tomfoolishness, to say it plain that this happened afore they made them danged night-huntin' laws down't Augusti. I don't want them game wardens a-tracking me every time I go to the barn with a lantern."

"Ayah," said Dud. "So Mat bought him a post office money order fer fifty dollars. When he'd mailed it to Kentucky, he sot down to wait fer his hound. Of course he was good an' sick when he thought of his fifty dollars a-goin' away off thar. Us Maine folks figger that it's all right to export anything but real money. But them fellers was as good as their words. In two weeks, General Spots arrived in Bingham. And when Mat had removed two of the top boards on the crate, that dog climbed out. And the fust thing he did was to bite Mat in the slack of his britches. As Mat says, this is a hard world — hard on dogs, but harder on men.

"Somehow, Mat convinced the General that it warn't good policy to bite a Maine guide, not even back-to. Then he led that hound up here. I didn't say a word erbout that dog's looks, but Nancy said that somebody er sunthin' sh'ud be ashamed of itself."

Here Mat interrupted again. "That," he grumbled, "is a corndemned lie. Nancy only remarked that he looked hungry."

Dud grinned at Mat, and continued. "Y'see, them

kennel fellers only allowed a ten days' trial. That made Mat nervous, becuz when the ten days w'ud be up, the dog 'ud be his, and the money w'ud be their'n. That made Mat fidgit. He wanted to go coon huntin' that very night. He also told me that Doc Brownin' wanted to go with us, so I knew thar was bound to be some kind of fun afore morning.

"But it turned out that Doc was consid'able upset. He figgered that Mat had been took fer fifty dollars. Doc was an old man, an' he had less faith in his feller men than some parsons sh'ud have.

"Ain't it a sight! Even as I tell this to you, I begin to feel the way I did when we started out that night — yer know, kinda het up and all pleasantly situated. A young man can really feel that way, and an old man can re-member.

"It was one of them chilly nights, not lit up like a real winter night, but 'bout half as light an' consid'ably darker. We went in Doc's Stanley Steamer, a car that was invented over here in Strong, and the best car I ever saw to go huntin' in. Compared with the Ford that Nancy bought once upon a time, that steamer whispered erlong the road without fuss er bother.

"Wel'el, erlong the river was a likely place, because oaks grow thar like they liked it. So up we goes, erlong the old dugway road, which is at the bottom of Wyman Lake now. We stopped near the foot of Baker Mountain, where Crazy Baker dug fer gold. It was a good place to dig.

"General Spots didn't act the least mite homesick. Prob'ly he didn't know that much. On the way, he had

sot in the back seat with Mat, so he hadn't met Doc Browning. The fust thing he done when he got out of the car was to bite Doc. It warn't a real ambitious bite, but kinda indifferent, an' it only made a couple of purplish marks on Doc's leg. But Doc was hoppin' mad in a min-it.

“‘Dammit,’ says he, ‘I might have expected that, even although he hasn't associated with Mat Markham but half a day. Mat, you've bought a dog with no more brains than you've got yourself.’

“‘Mat tried to explain to Doc that the dog was a perfect stranger to him, but Doc w'udn't listen. He was fer shootin' General Spots then an' thar. While he was sputterin' and poppin' off, the hound wandered away. And, by crotch, before Doc had run out of threats, that hound began to yell. He made so much noise that Doc had to stop cussing, becuz he c'udn't tell where he was at. Or maybe it was becuz one of the scardest red heifers I ever see jumped the fence like she was fitted out with wings. If Doc hadn't been quick, she'd of run him down.

“‘There!’ shouts Doc. ‘There is your coon hound, a-chasing Clarence Andrews' young stock. By gosh, I'm goin' to shoot the head off that hound!’

“‘If yer sh'ud,’ says Mat, ‘it w'ud cost yer fifty dollars, plus six dollars worth of express. An' don't ferget it, Mister.’

“‘Sir’, says Doc, ‘I want you to understand that I would consider it cheap at twice the price.’

“‘Mat was mad. So he took a lantern an' struck off

after his dog. So did I. So did Doc, still a'talkin' a lot too much fer a feller that was travelin' uphill.

"Prob'ly we was twenty min-its goin' up, and by that time the General was barkin' up a moderate-sized beech tree.

" 'By gad,' says Doc. 'At least it ain't a heifer.'

"We didn't have proper lights, an' thar was consid'able leaves on that beech. I climbed the tree. When I got up thar erbout thirty feet, I let down my piece of clothesline. Mat tied on the lantern. An' when I got hold of it, I held it up over my head. By crotch, thar was two medium-sized coons.

"By that time, Doc an' the General was dancin' around the tree like old friends. Doc wanted me to p'int out the coons to him so he c'ud shoot them, but that didn't sound smart to me. So I let down the rope ag'in and Mat hitched on my revolver, which I had left with my coat. When I fired at one of them coons, the other feller decided that he didn't want to be shot at. And he landed on the ground almost as soon as the dead one. The General grabbed hold of the dead coon, an' the live one ran right between Mat's legs.

"Crotch, it made me feel mad all over when them two lunkheads and the General left me in that beech tree. Doc was always like that, head-over-heels, but Mat needn't have picked that moment to git excited fer the fust time in his life.

"Before I c'ud let that lantern down, an' git down myself, I heard a gun go off away up the hill. So I sot down with the dead coon and the lantern. Bine-by, here comes General Spots down the hill. Next comes

Doc. Then comes Mat, a-carryin' a dead coon, a lantern, an' his gun. But they warn't lookin' fer me.

“‘Yer know,’ says Mat to Doc, ‘I feel as if we’d fergotten sunthing.’

“I stood up.

“‘Oh, here you are,’ says Doc. ‘You missed it. Talk erbout fun! Why, that damned dog is a honey.’

“We went back to the car. It was Doc’s idea that we c’ud ride erlong slow, an’ let the hound hunt as we rode. That was a deluxe idea, but we only got as far as the little brook on the Beard Place. That was where the General let loose noise enough to hush a tornado. Doc stopped the car, left it right thar in the road, blockin’ it jist as much as a mountain c’ud. ‘Come on,’ he says to us. ‘He has treed another up in the Will Beard pasture!’

“‘Maybe it’s only a heifer,’ I says. But Doc didn’t pay any attention. Anyway, he was wrong when he thought that coon had treed. It run up that little brook until it petered out at the top of the mountain, an’ then, down he comes the same way. Of course none of us was thar to intercept him, becuz we was tryin’ to follow the Doc. So the coon put it fer the river, but the General was hard on him, an’ he only had time to climb an oak tree at the edge of the Kennebec.

“Somehow, to my shame, I got behind Doc an’ Mat on the way back down the mountain. Doc was part way up that oak when I got thar — and him past seventy. I reckon, beyond doubt, that the sight of Doc comin’ up the tree was too much fer the coon. So he

jumped. Prob'ly he didn't do it on purpose, but he landed in the river, makin' sech a splash that a feller might have thought it was Doc who had fallen in. General Spots knew better. He out thar, an' mucked that coon in two feet of water.

“It sartinly was excitin', an' if yer don't think so, I guess yer never went coon hunting. Doc tried to come down the tree back-arnds. He lost his hold an' fell the last fifteen feet. He made a noise like all the air had gone out of him. I tried to make Mat understand that maybe Doc was hurt, but Mat only looked as wild as a feller from Brighton Commons. Away he goes inter the river to save his hound, shoutin' sunthin' erbout fifty dollars. I knew better, but I followed after him. That's one of the troubles 'ith coon huntin' — somebody's always goin' where he sh'udn't, er the wrong way, an' then everybody follows after.

“Mat, the hound, and the coon was all mixed up in the river water. When I got where I c'ud see which was which, the coon was as dead as a hen under water. Mister, that was a big coon. It weighed twenty-three pounds — half as much as the General hisself.

“Mat got hold of the coon to save its hide, an' we all went back to see what had become of Doc Browning. He was on his feet ag'in — feelin' all over hisself like he had lost his wallet or store-teeth.

“‘What's the matter?’ says Mat.

“‘I am all right,’ says Doc, ‘but that was a damned hard place to fall on.’

“Mat was puzzled, becuz he didn't know what had happened to Doc.

“‘What happened?’ he says. ‘Didger fall out of the tree?’

“‘No,’ says Doc. ‘I jist took a nap while you were in swimming.’

“‘Who’s been swimming?’ says Mat, tryin’ to figger out what Doc was talkin’ erbout.

“‘Oh, shut your face!’ says Doc.

“‘Wel-el, I begun to figger that thar was money in coon hunting — that is, if a man c’ud survive it an’ collect his money. But it was queer the way General Spots acted. He never showed one sign that he was glad to have us erlong, or even realized that we was thar. I am sartin that he was the most efficient blockhead I ever saw.

“‘That critter put up three coons in two different trees on a little hossback between the road and the river. I mean, up jist beyond the Ranse Ham Place. An’ we collected them. Six coons that far, an’ so far as we c’ud see the night was young.

“‘Doc said to Mat, ‘I will give you sixty dollars for that hound — right now, that is, if you’re afraid of your money.’

“‘Mat snickered. ‘I hain’t afraid of my money,’ he says.”

Dud paused to look at Mat. Mat was looking at the ceiling. “‘And now we come to the end of it,” said Dud. “‘Ho, hum, I ’spose it might have happened to better men.”

Mat grunted. “‘Huh!’”

“‘I will say this,” continued Dud. “‘It happened up the road a piece; but whether it was up the road er

down the road from the place where we got the last three coons, I hain't stating. It hain't safe to name names. Is it Mat?"

Mat continued to stare at the ceiling.

"It was a big river intervale. Down at the lower end thar was some oaks, near the river. That was where the General begun to beller like the Bulls of Bashan — all of them!

"I wonder if I've said anything erbout that hound's speed? He was big an' powerful, an' the fastest thing I ever saw on feet. Straight up the intervale he goes, an' with only time to yip once in a while. Crotch, that was a race. It was a wonder the General didn't catch fire from the friction.

"Thar's a p'int to all this. If that hound had been a slower trailer, everythin' might have been different — I mean, the game w'ud have gone further, an' all that. As 'twas, it barely had time to git up a big elum with a top like a pa'tridge's tail. An' the place where that elum grew warn't far e-nough away from a certain house that ain't where it was then, becuz thar's fifty feet of lake water on top.

"That trip, Mat an' the Doc didn't lead me none. No sir, Mister! My soul, I felt like I was keepin' comp'ny with eagles — not meanin' Mat er Doc! I mean that I got thar fust. The General was tearin' eround and eround the big tree, although once in a while he'd cut in an' bark up. All that time, he was yowlin' to high heaven, like he expected his game to jump the tree any min-it.

"We held our lanterns together, lookin' on one side

of that elum an' then the other. At last, we saw them eyes lookin' down on us through a crotch. But that was the very tick when our uninvited comp'ny arrived. To say the least, as Mat w'ud, we was kinda startled. She looked like a ghost. And Mat said that she was a ghost. But it's my guess that ghosts don't talk like she talked at us.

“ ‘Don't shoot him! Don't shoot him! Blast (she had another word) your stupid (she didn't use that word either) souls!’ ”

Dud waited a moment, as if the spell of that long ago scene were on him. At last he said, “Do you remember, Mat?”

Mat reached for a doughnut, started to push it under his mustache, reconsidered, and put it back on the blue plate. “Ayah,” he said.

Dud chuckled, merriment playing over his handsome face, until it hid away in his grey eyes. “At fust,” he said, “it looked like all she had on was a nightdress, but really she had on a light-colored wrapper. She was an awe-inspirin' sight, with her hair flying in all directions. She scared all of us except the General, who went on bellerin’.

“Of course, Doc w'ud try to cope with the situation, it bein' his opinion that thar warn't none he c'udn't cope with, and as usual he was diplomatic in reverse. ‘Maranda,’ he says, ‘what in the old devil ails you?’

“ ‘Ails *me*? Ails me! Nothin' ails me, you old fool. That's my Buster your crazy dog has chased up that tree.’

“ ‘Buster?’ says Doc. ‘And who is Buster?’

“It come to me that she must mean her cat, so I tried to help us. ‘Shucks,’ I says, ‘how c’ud it be your cat?’

“ ‘Besides,’ says Mat, ‘we’re coon hunting.’

“Doc began to laugh, which was the last thing he sh’ud a done. And he kept on laughin’ until Maranda stepped in and fetched him a slap in the face. Honest, it rocked him back’ards. And Doc went white an’ mad all over.

“It scared me. ‘Wait a min-it,’ I says. ‘She’s a woman.’ Crotch, I never fergit the look he turned on me.

“ ‘A woman, is she! Well, by the Pharaohs, when a woman chooses to act like a man, let her take a man’s medicine.’

“Every step Doc made at her, she backed up, but her tongue didn’t. She even called Doc the last word. He roared all over. ‘Hold up those lanterns!’ he shouts at Mat an’ me. It was like runnin’ up behind a feller on a divin’ board, an’ then yellin’ *jump* at him. We held ’em up, of course. Fer a wonder that thing up in the elum hadn’t moved — didn’t dare, I guess.

“ ‘Look!’ he says at Maranda. ‘Is that your blasted, bedeviled tomcat?’

“ ‘Take your dirty hands off me,’ says Maranda. ‘I have already told you that it’s my cat.’

“Doc gave her a push away from him. ‘So it is *your* cat? Well, by gad, you watch me!’

“And with that, he punched the butt of his shotgun inter his shoulder, an’ I guess that he pulled both triggers.

“Then come a thud at the backside of the tree. Maranda ran eround. So did I. So did Mat. Doc jist

stood thar, rubbin' his right shoulder. Maranda lit into General Spots who was standin' over the game, an' she pounded the hound until he backed away, shakin' his head like he c'udn't make out what was happening.

"Crotch! That was a tremendous wildcat. It weighed forty-five pounds, the next day. All we had seen of it up the tree was its eyes lookin' through the crotch of the elum. Wel-el, when Maranda saw that dead wildcat, she screamed sunthin' bloodcurdling, pulled her things erbout her, an' left on the dead run fer the house."

Dud looked at Mat. And Mat began to pull on his boots.

I said to Dud, "So everything ended all right?"

"It was more complicated than yer think. Yer see, when Maranda departed, the General thought it was his chance, so he bit her, bit her hard."

"Then you were in trouble."

"That's what we figgered."

"How did it turn out?"

"Wel-el, yer see, Maranda thought that the bobcat bit her. She told folks that it did. And in time, she come to feel that we had saved her life."

Mat had gotten his boots on and reached for his hat.

"What became of General Spots?" I asked.

To my surprise, Mat answered. "Don't know. Shipped him back to Kentucky next day. G'night."

"Yer see," explained Dud, "Mat figgered that a dog who didn't care who he bit, ner where he bit 'em, might be expensive in the long run. And say, Mak, don't git a wrong idea erbout old Doc Browning. He

drove these roads through blizzards and twenty-below weather. Thar warn't nobody eround here that didn't owe Doc praise and gratitude. He was quick to boil over, but every last soul of us knew that the Lord made him."

SILVER MAYFLIES

MOST MEN that like to fish fer trout kinda wish that they knew where thar was a little corner of Eden and a trout pond where nobody has fished since Adam was a boy. It's a kind of queer desire that ain't so easily explained as common folks, who don't know anythin' erbout fishing fer trout, might imagine. It hain't jist that a feller wants to fill up a packbasket with trout. It's a deep-down Daniel Boone sort of hankerin' to walk eround where it ain't all tramped up and tramped down. And if sech a place hain't too far off, the spell of it seems to be all the sweeter an' stronger.

“Jist a few days ago, a feller showed me some pitchurs of timber land that he'd taken from away up in an airplane. Yer c'ud count the spruce trees, pick out the old punkin pines, follow the course of every stream, and trace out all the old wood roads. But the fust thing I noticed, was a little pond away up in one of the mountains in that section. So of course I asked him if thar was any trout in it. ‘We have never been up thar,’ he says, ‘but thar’s a million of nice spruce in that region.’

“That photygraph reminded me of Charles Spalding an' a little pond up on Three Slide Mountain, Number 5, Range 6. Charlie had been in thar cruisin' timber fer

Forrest Colby. And Charlie told me quite a story erbout a handsome little pond he had discovered.

“Last night, I come across the map Charlie drew on the back of an envelope. Charlie was a map maker, and he drew in the pond and the little brook that run out of it down the north end of Three Slide to Gold Brook, which flows down the deep divide between Three Slide and Tumbledown mountains. Ayah. Thar’s gold in Gold Brook, but what of it? We’re talkin’ erbout *trout*.

“I asked Charlie if he figgered thar was trout in that little pond. He admitted that he hadn’t fished it, but he declared that when he looked down inter it from the top of a ledge he’d seen trout a-jumping. ‘At least,’ says Charlie, ‘if they warn’t trout, what were they? Why, do you know, Dud, sometimes I’ve laid awake at night and felt sorry that I didn’t take time to catch a few of those trout, but there you go, a man hardly ever manages to do what he should do, because he’s so busy doing what he shouldn’t.’

“Somehow, I didn’t fergit erbout Charlie’s little mountain pond. The p’int, mind yer, warn’t that thar was a little pond with trout in it, maybe. We know a lot of back-of-the-back ponds ’ith plenty of trout in ’em. The p’int was that an old cuss like me has a weakness fer the pull of goin’ fishing where maybe no one ever fished since the clocks begun to tick on the mantle shelf in heaven.

“Other folks w’ud smile, and maybe laugh, if they knew that I dreamed erbout that little pond. In the dream I c’ud see it all plain, and it lay like a teacup tilted ag’instant that ledge of granite Charlie had talked

erabout. And in the dream, I saw an almighty big trout rise ag'in and ag'in fer big silver Mayflies. I mean jist that. Them Mayflies twinkled silver like an old spoon in lamplight. So they looked like they was all gilded with gold. But the big trout was purtiest of all. He shone 'ith a burnin' crimson and a melted gold color. By crotch! I c'udn't git shet of that dream of the old cuss and his silver Mayflies! The dream excited me so much that I waked up at the very min-it I was tryin' to tie an imitation of them Mayflies on a leader made of spider web.

“And, b'crotch, I was awful disapp'inted to wake up, and to find I was layin' in bed at home, right smack in the middle of things as they happen in town. So then an' thar, I resolved to find that little pond, so I c'ud add it to my list of little mountain ponds that are like secrets in the hills.

“Yer understand, that warn't no blindfold resolution. I knew that lay of land only too well. I'd have to git me up to Jackman, fifty miles north of home. Then I'd have to board the C.P.R., and git off it at Skinner, which was a lumber-mill place purty near the border. Then I'd have to walk fourteen miles over the shanks of three mountains, before I c'ud start up the valley of Gold Brook in search of the small brook that w'ud lead me, I hoped, to Charlie's little mountain pond. So I packed light; took a blanket fer sleepin' out under the stars, plenty of salt pork and other grub, a three-pound axe, and two pounds of twenty-penny spikes.

“It was three o'clock in the afternoon when I located a small brook on the left hand side of Gold Brook. It

seemed to be the brook that was indicated on Charlie's map. So I was started on the last lap, after walkin' erbout seventeen miles.

"As ye'd expect, the goin' was a mite rough up that mountain. That brook splashed down over ledges of grey-headed rocks, and gurgled through ravines that was erbout filled up with slabs of frost-split granite. Fer the fust two miles, I saw little trout in the pools erlong the course of the brook; but as I climbed higher up the mountain, the brook took to disappearin' in places, where it 'ud run under the rocks, and I begun to wonder if a trout c'ud ever make his way to this little pond I was lookin' to find. In fact, even though I hated to admit it, it was plain that unless some queer-hearted evangelist of trout fishing had lugged some trout to that pond, thar warn't any in it. As fer that, it was hard to imagine anyone doin' sech a thing in that country, where the big ponds down on the level below the mountains was so richly stocked with trout that they was in each other's way.

"Ayah. The sensible thing to be done was to give up that goose chase as a bad job. Thar jist c'udn't be any trout in that pond, if thar was a pond at the end of that uphill brook. If I had sot down to think it over, that w'ud of been the end of it. But I kept climbin' the mountain, like my legs was boss and my common sense was nonsense. Instid of bein' smart, I concentrated on what Charlie had told me and on what I had dreamed. Besides that, thar was a purely irrational urge in me not to turn back.

"After erbout a quarter of a mile, I c'udn't even fol-

low the dry bed of that brook. I had to detour, to hedgehog round a slide of earth an' rocks. That's when I lost all track an' sign of the brook. Crotch, it was a con-fusin' experience. The brook jist warn't to be located anymore. And that uncomfortable min-it, I seen sunthin' that give me a start. It was a critter that I hadn't seen since I was a boy. The martin run across an old down log 'ithin twenty feet of me. Them purty little critters is 'bout all gone nowdays. Prob'ly they warn't ever plentiful, but they're gone now, except a few in off-corners of the big woods.

“When I saw that martin, I knew that I had walked away from the world of now and back to a hundred years ago, before white men trespassed on the Indians' happy huntin' ground, which they knew danged well was right here on this earth and not some place where the white men warn't ever apt to go.

“Finally, when I'd gone around that tremendous slide of rocks and trees, I walked out on top of a ledge. On top, it was like a piazza without any roof over it. Thar, I had a view north and east—miles of blackgrowth and hills no end—sunthin' wild an' grand an' ferever. Jericho, that sight was worth what it cost me in muscle and wind to git up that mountain. After I was as full of it as I c'ud drink in, I looked down below me, at the bottom of the drop-off. Glory, thar was my little pond, and it was as if I was lookin' at it from the very ledge Charlie had described. Later on, when I finish this, ye'll see that was a wonderous queer happenstance.

“The pond was erbout three hundred feet long, and erbout a hundred wide at the widest. Crotch, thar it

was, when I'd given up the idea that I'd ever find it. I thought that if I sh'ud blink my eyes, it w'ud disappear. I mean, that's how I felt.

"I looked at my watch. The time was fifteen min-its past five. I hedgehoged down eround the ledge to the south end of the pond. Thar was no visible inlet, so it was jist one more of them big mountain springs. The surface was as smooth as a lookin' glass. No livin' thing disturbed the place, not even a zephyr, which, as the small boy said, is a tall animal which can reach up higher than it can reach down lower.

"The little pond took my eye. It was purty in the afternoon. It was beautiful but puzzlin' like the ladies in a paper-bound novel. I sat on the east shore fer more than an hour, and all the while I didn't see the least of a dimple by trout er shiner. Not even a lonesome damselfly disrupted the ca'm of the water. So far as the fishin' beckoned me, I didn't feel the least inspired. Of course I still had Charlie's assurance that he'd seen trout a-jumpin' thar, but that was as of five years ago.

"But I set to work to build me a raft. That consumed some time, but I found nine eight-foot lengths of black spruce that had given over the struggle to grow in that thin mountain soil and ag'inst the fierce winter winds in sech a place. I notched two cross poles, and spiked the logs in place. When it was done, the raft w'ud float me, but fifty extra pounds w'ud have wetted a feller's feet. I don't aim to try to tell anybody why it's fun to make a raft, but it is.

"Them was the longest days in the year. The sky was still clear, so I decided not to bother with a lean-to. I

hunted up a little hardwood, and then I split some dry spruce fer kindlin' so I c'ud make a little fire when I was ready to cook sunthin' fer supper—trout, fer instance. Then I cut enough fir boughs an' tips to make a comfortable mattress.

“When the camp was in order, I put together my little three-ounce rod, and I felt all ready fer fish an' adventure—the last if nothin' else. Supper c'ud wait, becuz I was anxious to git at my fishing, to git it over with, as the feller said when he'd made up his mind to propose to a cross-eyed girl.

“I found that the bottom of the pond was hard, and that the water was shallow on the east side, but it deepened rapidly as I poled out, until I c'udn't touch at all with the twelve-foot pole I had. Then I began to put the sum of it to the test. I fished dry flies. I fished an' fished. Tried every pattern that I had with me, everythin' from butter-cup yeller May to a number sixteen Black Gnat. That was a lot of fishin' with no response.

“Of course, I considered sh'ud I use wet flies, but I had a feelin' that if I fished wet it w'udn't be fair—like a young feller kissin' his girl when she was lookin what time was it. Wet flies w'ud splash in that quiet place. So I kept on 'ith dry flies, whittlin' away my fine guess-and-by-gosh leader.

“After a while, I felt extra foolish. What sense was thar in thinkin' that diff'runt patterns mattered in a place like that? Thar I was, fishing where no jackass had ever fished before. If thar was any trout thar, they'd be wild an' all uneddicated to the wiles an' guiles of this world. They'd strike at anythin' they thought

was good enough to eat. Why, at Rock Pond, which was only a couple of miles from thar, as a crow w'ud think of it, I c'ud have filled a bushel basket with trout while I'd been fishin' in that place on the mountain.

“But Charlie had said . . . Thar was three possibilities that come to me concernin' what Charlie had told me. Fust, he might have been mistaken. Maybe he only saw pollywogs blowin' bubbles, when he'd looked down on this pond from up on the ledge. Second, maybe this warn't the pond that Charlie had found. Third——

“Anyhow, it was dusky dark when I give up, sans trout, as that Arab w'ud have put it. I got ready to git me some supper. A red squirrel had eaten a hole right through the length of my loaf of bread. He had also carried off all the ginger snaps that Nancy had tucked in my pack. As Wildy Hooney said, when her Barb got tight and went to bed with his boots on, it warn't a real neat trick. I mean, eatin' a hole through my home-baked loaf of bread. Evidently that squirrel liked bread all right.

“I like to have folks enjoy themselves, but a red squirrel is too much of a bad thing. The leetle cusses w'ud gnaw their way inter eternity's cupboard. Wel-el, thar was plenty of comp'ny. Afore I c'ud spread my blanket on the bough bed, I had to convince a little half-growed porcupine that it warn't his place. The crotchly little idgit had never seen a man. Didn't give a darn if he hadn't.

“When I had et some good browned salt pork, a hunk of what bread the squirrel had left me, and drunk some pond water b'iled with tea, I laid back on my bed, and

the deer mice an' flyin' squirrels took over. I had good fun lyin' thar listenin' to the stir an' rustle. And I went to sleep 'ith a deer mouse that thought I had some food under the blanket.

"Prob'ly I'd slept fer as much as two hours when one of them little soft-winged saw-whets decided to talk er-bout his troubles from a limb no more than eight feet over my bed. Crotch, he turned the moonlight green. I fetched up standin' on my feet. With a flashlight, I c'ud see the little owl a-settin' thar blinkin' in the light. I got a stick an' drove him away.

"After that I went to sleep some more, till the deer mouse run up my face an' back ag'in. I set up and told him what I had in mind. The moon had climbed up level with my campin' place. Down on the forest level, at Rock Pond and Iron Pond, thar w'ud be the sound of peepers eround the shorelines, but up thar the only sound was the moonlight. That is, until the deer mouse got inside my blanket ag'in. I stood up, and shook him out. Durn little scamp was too much of a democrat to suit me. By that time, I felt wide awake, so I walked down't the shore of the little pond. What I had in mind was a good cold drink.

"Thar was little ruffles of fog on the water here an' thar. And the bright moonlight laid on the water like a benediction by a man from Mars. I looked eround careful, but thar warn't any of them silver Mayflies I had seen in my dream. I felt a little mite like a live person all alone in a cemetery. Sunthin' fell off a little black spruce. It went *tunk* on my back, and I felt as though I'd been currycombed up and then down my backbone.

Maybe it was one of them small cones off a black spruce. Maybe it was only a dry twig er a piece of bark.

“A man jist feels different in the moonlight on top a mountain. At sech times, I’ve wondered if I’d feel real happy in heaven. Mark yer, I’d like to go, becuz that’s where Nancy’s going. But if Nancy sh’ud be busy on this an’ that committee, what w’ud a feller like me find to do? I’ve tried, years back, to play an harmonica. C’udn’t. Then what w’ud I do with a harp? And what if heaven looked like the moonlight on a mountain? How’d I git acquainted an’ use to sech a place? Crotch, it worries me. I tried to tell Mat, one time when both of us was campin’ up on Moxie Mountain, erlongside of Mountain Dimmick Pond. Mat looked awful solemn, but he said that he reckoned I didn’t have no cause to worry. Mat has his moments, but most often he don’t know it.

“Anyhow, in heaven sunthin’ might happen like it did up on Three Slide. Thar I stood, sort of shiverin’ in my shirt tail, when sunthin’ made a swosh-swirl an’ turned in the shallow water no more’n ten feet from where I stood. It might have been a mink. It c’ud of been an otter — that’s how big it looked where I stood. And immediately arterwards I seen a school of silver shiners a-glintin’ and flashin’ two er three inches over the water.

“Jericho, I was at my pack in five seconds. When I reached in it fer my fly book and flashlight, a flyin’ squirrel bolted out like he was of a mind to explode inter pieces. I found the flashlight, and set up my rod. And I picked on a white marabou streamer. Then I didn’t

bother with clothes er shoes. I got on the end of the raft, out in the pond, and done some fast roll-casts, until I had that streamer con-sid'able beyond where I seen that swirl and them sc'at minnows.

"I was waked up and real int'rested. No silver May-flies to be sure, and I warn't sartin what had made that commotion after them shiners, but when I begun to strip in that streamer thar was a strike that socked my arm to the elbow. If it was a mink, I had him on. If it was an otter, that was jist the way it felt on the end of my line. I had hooked sunthin' that was plenty big enough to be mad erbout it, and husky enough to ruin my little rod, er bust any leader yer ever saw.

"Crotch, then I knew past any moonshine that I was where I belonged. I felt jist as much at home to any shadder er wash of moonlight as the old mountain herself. And I reckon that I was an awesome sight myself, bein' dressed in a shirt tail an' nothin' else. I 'member that my bare feet looked like a pair of big flounders belly up.

"And I knew it was a trout I'd hooked on that marabou. It plowed up and down the pond, and it took time to meditate in the black shadders under the cliff. I put on all the butt and power a good, honest rod maker had built inter that rod. I reckoned I was sp'iling that three-ounce rod, but I had no regrets erbout it. And I know that I never wanted to land a trout so much as I did that feller. Wel-el, the long straight runs slacked off. He spent more time borin' down and swashin' the bottom. His mad wore off. But my rod had taken a merciless buckin' and beating. After erbout twenty min-its,

come the time fer a landin' net. But my sorrows, as Crosby Spauldin' uster say, my landin' net was hangin' on a stub in the tree where I had also hung my pack. Then I knew how the old preacher felt when he'd summoned his folks to pray fer rain. They come to his church, but when he looked 'em over he was sorely disapp'inted. 'You miser'ble sinners,' he says. 'Your crops is dyin' fer the want of rain. Your wells is goin' dry. But not a one of yer had faith e-nought to bring an umbrela.'

"So I had to work on that trout until my arm ached. When he rolled over on his broad side, I tried to git my trigger finger inter his gills. The light was uncertain. I fumbled. And he uncoiled a last bust of power. In a second, I saw my white fly layin' idle. Then it begun to sink. The big trout went from sight like sunthin' had took him back.

"I run back to my pack, got the flashlight, and run back to the pond. Thar was nothin' in sight on that queer, grey sand bottom. Wel-el, it didn't feel any better to lose a trout like that by moonlight than by sunshine. If yer never lost a trout that w'ud go seven to eight pounds, did yer ever have a tooth pulled without anythin' to numb the pain?

"I went back to git my britches. After all these thousands of years, a man can think better in his britches, and if yer want to, yer can pass that on to some of your psychological friends. I filled up my pipe. The flood of moonlight was higher on the mountain when I picked up my rod an' went to fishin' ag'in. Maybe the truth an' moonlight don't go together, but I'll have to stick with

the truth, even if it ain't always so purty. I did a lot of castin' here an' thar, but that's all that happened. No more trout. To tell the facts, I was sort of weary myself. So I went back to bed. The deer mouse had gone off, and I slept good fer an hour er so.

"Bine-by, I waked up. Sunthin' had made a noise. I looked up in the spruce over my head, and thar was that martin, or his mate, a-chasin' the red squirrel. Once when the martin crossed from limb to limb the new daylight splashed on him and he looked to be deep orange. Far as I c'ud see, he didn't catch that red squirrel, but it was some satisfaction to see one of them imps good an' scared.

"I fried some more salt pork, ate it and what was left of the loaf of bread with the squirrel-hole in it, and drank a pint of hot coffee. Then I tried the fishin' ag'in. That time, I tried bein' what is known as scientific. That is, I cut all the hackle off a number sixteen fly. With that an' a dight of pink meat from my salt pork, I caught two of them shiners. Gorriation, they was handsome little fellows with a row of bright red erlong the lateral line, and a blush of gold on their under sides.

"So I put on a small red an' white bucktail 'ith a yeller body. Pays to take pains sometimes. That bucktail done it! I hooked a trout that felt exactly like the one I had lost by moonlight. We had it out, while the white crowns sang. That time, I had the net handy by. Crotch, what a handsome old rascal — all colored up like a small tike's story book.

"I figgered it was best to take him home. A big trout like that is purty hungry most of the time an' too per-

icious to be good fer little waters. But I guess it's possible that old scamp had the place to hisself. At least I c'udn't find another trout, small er better. The mark of the big marabou hook was in his jaw.

"All thar was to it, I had to go back up thar later in the summer. I took a bucket with a dozen three-inch trout in it. If a game warden had met me, it w'ud have been his duty to arrest me, but it was my own private duty to do what warn't exactly legal.

So I put them little bits of trout in the mountain pond. I tried the fishin' again on that trip, but didn't find another trout. However, I collected a few to take home on my way down Gold Brook. That day, I met a man who was pannin' gold. He showed me a little bottle with erbout half an ounce of dust and one small nugget in it. I went erlong on my way to Skinner, thinkin' how odd and thick headed some folks can be — like a-goin' way in thar jist to pan fer gold.

"In the fall of the year, after I'd made my two trips to Three Slide Mountain, Charlie Spalding got back from cruisin' timber in Nova Scotia. One day, I met him downstreet, and of course I was happy to tell him erbout findin' his little pond and the big trout. Charlie listened to me, but before I was done with the report, he was shakin' his head and lookin' mighty mournful.

"'Dud,' he said, 'I never told you that there was a pond on Three Slide, becuz there ain't any such pond. I ought to know. I've cruised the length of it and down the middle. There are three little ponds on Tumble-down, but none whatsoever on Three Slide.' "

THE SKUNK KING

DUD DEAN said, "In these days, it's Miss Nantucket, Miss Alaska, Miss Mississippi, an' so on. But it uster be "king" of this er that: Lumber King, Potato King, Bean King, Apple King, and Clam King. Anybody that did a big business in this er that was a king, even if he happened to look like a cider barrel on stilts. But the only Skunk King I ever heard erbout was Misty Spinney.

"If it's necessary, yer c'ud explain to folks who has only smelled skunks at a distance, that they come in four patterns an' grades. Number 1 is a black skunk with a patch of white on top his head an' another at the tip of his tail. Number 2 is a skunk with a fork of white on his neck and shoulders, but the same white patch on his front an' rear. Number 3 is a narrow stripe from two-thirds to all the way along either side. But the Number 4 is erbout half white — that is, his stripes of white are from two inches to four inches wide.

"I have heard that they c'udn't dye them white stripes a black to match the natural black, so they had to cut them out of the hide an' use them separate. Hence, as the school teacher said erbout goin' from one place to the next, the Number 1 was the most valuable. An' fer a long time a black skunk was worth from four to six dollars, when a Number 4 warn't worth more

than a dollar. The queer part of it was that all skunks smelled jist the same, and, as the poet said, w'ud of smelled as sweet by any other name. So w'ud have Misty Spinney. But he was the Skunk King.

“Some years he collected as many as a thousand of them melodious critters, as Mat uster call them. Of course, Misty didn't catch that many hisself. Folks brought the skunks to him from far an' near. He bought skunks from half a dozen counties. An' folks who w'ud not dare to skin a skunk themselves w'ud sell 'em to Misty fer half price. In fact, if a skunk smelled real high Misty w'udn't pay more than one-fourth its value, becuz he knew he didn't have to — not that he minded, but that he was always one to take up all the advantages.

“I guess I've already said that he was the only Skunk King I ever heard erbout. One of Misty's neighbors said, 'I don't know how satisfactory a business it is, but it sartinly is olfactory.'

“Don't git the idea that I'm patronizin' Misty, becuz I've known a pile of men who were engaged in dirtier business. On the whole, Misty was a harmless feller, except from a skunk's p'int of view. In the end, Misty had made a lot of money. Yep, Misty was the Skunk King.

“His overhead was low. No woman ever considered movin' inter his old house fer longer than a whiff — that is, the way he smelled to a woman's nose was for worse and not for better. His house set on a hill, an' from August till deep snows yer c'ud smell skunks from

thar to four miles, an' fer the rest of the year, more or less.

“Of course, Misty got so he c'udn't notice the smell hisself, although he always claimed it was almighty good fer asthma, catarrh, sinus, cataracts, and egotism. An' he said that he had considered bottlin' it up, until he found that they w'udn't let him send it through the mails. And he'd add, 'Of course, I c'ud have sold it on the hoof, but that 'ud be too expensive.'

“Sometimes he'd confess that in his younger days he knew moments when he w'ud wonder if he sh'udn't have gone inter some other business, but that after he found out that folks even raised rattlesnakes fer a living he was better content with his own occupation. So the fact that folks w'ud hold their noses when they met him didn't bother Misty, becuz he knew that he c'ud buy them out, an' then pay fer their funerals.

“Yer see, Misty had a racket that was hard to beat. He made a lot of money on the skunk pelts, but that was only a sideline. His principal business was:

JEPHUNNETH SPINNEY'S PURE OIL OF SKUNK

NATURE'S MIRACULOUS HEALER

OF

ALL INFLAMMATIONS

PULMONARY OR OTHERWISE

GOOD FOR SNAKE BITES, HOG BITES,
HOSS BITES, AND BEDBUGS, ET CETRA

ET CETRA.

“I mean, Misty saved every squid of skunk fat. In a good season he tried out a couple hundred quarts — countin' his own an' all that he bought of other folks.

An' by crotch, he sold it all fer two dollars a quart. He had a big local trade, an' he mailed it far an' wide. Folks believed in skunk's oil fer all sorts of chest troubles an' inflammations. Misty had a little booklet printed that told all erbout his boon to ailing mankind. He might have diluted his oil with the lesser fats, coon fat er what not, but he never did, although it was always a regret to him that the Creator didn't see fit to make the skunk a bigger animal. And I presume that Misty was the only man that ever felt that way. In short, Misty was a most unusual feller, and in the end he had laid hold of more money than some of the lumber kings in Bangor.

"The only fly in his ointment was that he hated to kill skunks, becuz he considered them man's best friend. 'They catch more rats an' mice than all the cats from here to Bombay, and they eat more insects than all the birds from Hudson's Bay to the tip end of South America,' he uster say. 'When yer compare a skunk with a politician, yer realize that a skunk only smells up a small place when that becomes necessary in the course of events, but a politician smells to high heaven. And if yer was to try out the oil from the fat on a politician, it w'ud kill a buzzard, whereas skunk oil is good fer all the ills known to mankind.'

"So Misty Spinney was the Skunk King. Sometimes I talked with Misty erbout skunk hunting. It was his habit to begin erbout the fust of September, when skunks was active. He'd hunt them all that month an' the next. Of course, the pelts w'udn't be prime, so Misty brought 'em home alive. Then he'd keep them in

pens, until they was as fat as fat, an' their pelts was full an' prime.

"I developed a hankerin' to go erlong with Misty on one of his expeditions. But why in crotch it occurred to me that it w'ud be fun to bring Mat Markham, I don't know. Sometimes, I've noticed that my imagination gits the upper hand of me. An' of course I thought that it w'ud be a laughable affair to tangle old Mat in sech a business. So I talked it, from another angle, until Mat sort of guessed that he'd go erlong.

"So we went. Lookin' back on it, I know that I never had more fun in all my life, but at the time I warn't so sure. I think that it broadened out my eddication. Of course, before we got started, Mat had his qualms an' reconsiderations.

"'Look,' says Mat. 'Are yer sartin that sech a feller as Misty Spinney is fit comp'ny fer folks that don't ord'narily associate with skunks?'

"I did my best to quiet Mat's alarms, becuz I thought it w'udn't be half the fun if Mat warn't erlong. But above all else, I wanted to go with Misty, becuz I like to git out fer a night-time hunt once in a while. Y'see, at night everythin' yer know in the daytime has been changed. Places are bigger. Trees are taller. Brooks an' bogs are deeper. And it's billions of miles to the nearest star! Herbs an' flowers smell better. Growin' things reach out an' touch a feller. And as fer the common earth, it feels good, smells good, and is good. I like it outdoors, day er night, but at night I feel like I'm playin' hooky ag'in.

"Wel-el, Mat an' me drove over to Misty's one night,

when a full moon was due at erbout eight o'clock. Mat had a nice little roader in them days. We hitched her to a staple in the barn door, an' Misty met us halfway to the kitchen door. He had three of them old-time railroad lanterns that burned a special oil — more refined than ord'nary, er sunthin' else than kerosene — I fergit which. Anyhow, they was lit an' settin' in a row on the back stoop.

"Misty was fidgity. 'Why in mystery,' he says, 'didn't yer wait until tomorrow morning? Don't it ever come inter your heads that time is a-going? This ain't no play fer me. I earn a livin' hunting skunks. An' the best time is from twilight till midnight.'

"While we was talking, Misty picked up half a dozen grain sacks.

"'What's them fer?'" says Mat.

"'To carry skunks in, of course.'

"'Yer mean dead ones?'"

"'No! Do yer think that I'm killin' skunks in October, when every pelt w'ud be as blue as a whetstone?'"

"'Do yer mean that ye're goin' to put *live* skunks in them bags!'" says Mat.

"Misty didn't bother to comment. Instid, he called his dog. That dog smelt desolated. As fer breed, it was part houn' and part fox terrier. Leastways, so Misty said. But yer w'ud have taken an oath that one er both of his parents was skunks. I mean, of course, he smelt that way.

"'Come on,' says Misty, 'the moon's been up thirty minutes a-ready. Here. You fellers pick up them bags.'

"'What fer?'" says Mat.

“Misty halted, like an army in its tracks. ‘Did I understand right? Are yer goin’ skunk huntin’ with me, er be yer goin’ off pickin’ stinkin’ Benjamins by yourself?’

“I gave Mat a poke in the ribs. So he closed his mouth. And while Misty was backin’ out his own hoss an’ wagon, I whispered to Mat, ‘Yer don’t need to worry. We ain’t apt to git all those bags full of skunks.’

“‘Don’t be too sure of that,’ grumbles Mat. ‘They may be more plentiful than yer think.’

“Then the three of us got on the seat in the express wagon, an’ Misty slapped his hoss with the end of the reins. Crotch, that hoss jumped an’ we nearly went over back’ards. Also that pacer had speed. Off we goes.

“Misty didn’t say much. Mat didn’t say a word. I said, ‘Did yer ever hear of the skunk that showed up at a town meeting?’

“Misty hit his hoss another clip, an’ once more the seat let go to almost tip us in back.

“‘They w’udn’t let him vote, becuz he hadn’t registered,’ I says, when we got righted eround ag’in.

“‘Hump,’ says Misty. ‘The way I heard it, the skunk refused to vote with sech a bunch of polecats.’”

“Mat pricked up with one of his once-in-a-lifetime cracks, ‘The way I hear’d it, they w’udn’t let him vote becuz he was a repeater.’

“Misty jist sniffed. ‘You fellers has got a thing er two to learn erbout skunks,’ he says.

“Of course that sobered Mat in a hurry. ‘Is thar any way,’ he says, ‘to git the smell out of your clothes,

short of buryin' them?'

"'Yes,' says Misty. 'Jist take a bath once in a while.'

"'Prob'ly we hadn't gone a half mile, when we heard a yowlin' and a yappin' from that dog of Misty's. 'Whoa!' says Misty, tryin' to pull his hoss to a standstill, when it was roadin' ten miles an hour. 'Whoa! Danged hoss won't ever make a skunk hunter in a thousand years.'

"'How do yer know it's a skunk?' asks Mat, hopin' thar was a mistake somewhere.

"'That's easy,' says Misty. 'When he yips, it's a skunk. When he howls, it's a skunk. But when he yowls, like his father, it's a skunk.'

"'What if he jist barks, like a regular dog?' says Mat.

"'Then it's two skunks,' says Misty.

"'Wel-el, we all piled out of the wagon. Mat an' me laid hold of a lantern per man, but Misty jist scattered over the stun wall without a lantern.

"'Mat stopped on the road side of the wall and looked over the top of it, like one of them embattled Concord farmers that fired the shot that was heard eround the world. I got over slow an' careful. And then I see that skunk. It was in the middle of a circle that dog was barkin' eround. Round an' round goes the dog, barkin' by turns, yippin' a turn, an' then yowlin' a turn. But he never stopped. Round an' eround he goes, until Misty walked inside the circle. As fer the skunk, he acted to me as if he thought that nothin' was happenin' that he c'udn't manage.

"'Misty yelled, 'Hold up your lanterns so I can see.'

Mat held up his lantern, but since he was erbout ten rods away it didn't do much good, I reckon.

"I advanced, but not becuz I enjoyed the idea. Yer see, I was once present at one of them tail-liftin' performances, and on that occasion I learned that a skunk can do what some folks claim a skunk can't do, namely, to aim an' fire while suspended off the ground an' only clutchin' thin air. But I held up the lantern, while Misty walked in on the skunk. Then that dog stopped circling an' stood in front of the skunk. That dog an' Misty was an efficient pair, I'm tellin' yer.

"In one deft motion, Misty removed the skunk from the ground. Mat an' his lantern disappeared behind the wall. And I had to laugh, although thar was a good chance it w'ud turn out no laughin' matter.

"'Hold the bag open,' says Misty to me.

"So I sot the lantern down an' held the gunnysack same as a man w'ud fer someone to pour in a bushel of apples — only off the ground.

"Misty poised that skunk over the bag, an' let her go. If he had missed the bag, it w'ud have been thick eround thar. I handed it to Misty an' picked up my lantern. Mat peeked over the wall.

"Misty snickered. Mat waited while we approached. Misty stepped up on the wall. All of a sudden, he thrust the bag at Mat. 'Take it!' he says. Mat took it. An' if ever I see a man who felt foolish when he realized what had happened to him, Mat was the man.

"'You take it,' says Mat, tryin' hard to make a smile come where thar warn't any.

"'No sir,' says Misty. 'But you watch what yer do-

ing. Keep that bag at arm's length an' don't let it touch anything.'

" 'Then what?' says Mat, awful tense an' earnest.

" 'Why jist hold on to it. Thar's another skunk up the pasture a piece. Dud an' me will go git that one, too.

" 'Mat was good an' mad of course. 'Yer mean that I'm to stand here while you fellers are off lookin' fer more trouble? I'll see yer in double hell fust.'

" 'All right,' says Misty. 'Jist try lettin' go.'

" 'I must say that I felt sorry fer Mat, but what c'ud I do erbout it? The last thing Misty said to Mat was, 'Don't lose that skunk becuz he's an extra good one.'

" 'Mat sartinly looked turrible mournful.

" 'Come on,' says Misty to me.

" 'Then I realized that my old grandmother had been right, when she told me how she was brought up to always go out eround when she met a skunk in the road. That is the only way in life to avoid the complications. That is to say, once yer associate yourself with folks like Misty yer have to accept what they take to be the natural course of events.

" 'So off we goes with that benighted dog. The last look I had at Mat, he stood thar in the midst of indecision with that squirmin' skunk in the bag. Why in time nothin' happened was more'n I c'ud tell. I says, 'Won't that skunk complicate Mat?'

" 'Naw,' says Misty. 'Put a skunk in a bag, an' he can't figger out where in tarnel he's at. And a skunk likes to *know* what's what, afore he acts accordin' to his own best lights.'

“We went up on a pasture hillside. Up thar, it really was light as day. The moon was big an’ powerful. Off a mile er so I c’ud see the silver light layin’ on Iron-bound Pond. Gosh, I was pleased. So I sort of fergot er-bout Mat, which shows jist how much good a friend is to yer on a skunk hunt.

“All of a sudden, the blessed quietness was sp’iled by that dog. But Misty was real pleased. He beamed in the moonlight. ‘This,’ he says, ‘is a danged fine night. He’s found another one.’

“Maybe the skunk had thought it was a nice night. Thar he was, standin’ his ground, unperturbable, as the poet says. I didn’t need to hold the lantern fer Misty. He strode in calm as a clam. In a twinkle, he had that skunk by the tail. It kinda pawed with its front feet, but Misty dropped him in the sack, careless as all-git-in-trouble. The procedure was always the same. The dog stopped his circlin’ when Misty stepped in fer the skunk, but he barked louder than ever. While the skunk watched the dog, Misty did the rest. That c’ud git tire-some, but not unless yer fergot how fraught with danger it was. One miss . . .

“Fust thing I knew, I was in Mat’s position, but I had learned the lesson an’ I thrust the bag at Mister Spinney. ‘Take it!’ I says. An’ by crotch, he did.

“‘Some folks don’t have guts e-nough to make skunk hunters,’ he says, lookin’ hard at me.

“But it was a load off my mind to be rid of that skunk. Then we went back to the hoss an’ wagon. Misty transferred his skunk to a department in the big box on the

back of the wagon. Then we begun to wonder what had become of Mat. So we shouted. No answer.

“‘Now what in thunder has become of them fellers?’ says Misty, real puzzled. Or course he meant the skunk and Mat.

“I thought that I c’ud make a guess. I figgered that Mat was pervoked. He’d gone back to Misty’s house. It made me wonder if Mat had taken his hoss an’ buggy and gone off home. It was within the realm of possibility.

“While we waited a few min-its, Misty’s dog found another skunk. But Misty said that he warn’t goin’ to take it, becuz he always left some skunks fer seed. So he called the dog in. To my astonishment, the mutt came.

“So did Mat. That is, he appeared from up the road.

“‘Where’s my skunk?’ says Misty.

“‘In a way,’ Mat says, ‘I don’t know.’

“‘Do yer mean that ye’ve lost that skunk!’

“‘Sort of,’ says Mat.

“‘Did he let yer have it?’

“Mat smelled of his hands. ‘None to speak of,’ he says.

“Misty turned to me, ‘Dud, that skunk I jist passed up was prob’ly the same feller. I thought the dog had found him quick an’ easy, considerin’ we’d already been over the ground. You fellers is a nuisance. All I’ve actually got is a measly broadstripe. Now we’ve got to find the one Mat has gone and lost ag’in.’

“‘Waste of time,’ says Mat.

“‘It w’ud be you to think so,’ says Misty. ‘A danged efficient skunk hunter, you are!’

“‘The dog warn’t re-luctant to go back. An’ within

twenty min-its, he was barkin' eround an' eround ag'in. Mat hadn't gone in with us, so he missed the performance.

“‘By George,’ says Misty, ‘that skunk is another broad-stripe. It ain't the one Mat lost. Well, no matter. He's jist as fat, maybe.’

“After that, the dog hunted some more but didn't find anything. So we went back, after a while. Misty said to me, ‘Always hunt fer skunks near where folks live. They don't hanker fer them run-out back places. They like good, farmed land.’

“I was sorry to hear that, becuz I always enjoy roamin' eround those old back farms, where folks have lived but don't no more. While I was re-grettin' that skunks didn't agree with me, sunthin' came to me. ‘Back in July,’ I says, ‘we saw a big star skunk an' five young ones up on the Old Lake Road a piece.’

“‘How'd the young 'uns run?’ says Misty. And I sensed that he was tryin' to catch me. He thought I'd say that they was all of 'em like their marm.

“So I says, ‘The way I remember, thar was no two of 'em jist alike, but thar was one that was black like his ma.’

“Misty was impressed. ‘Want to know! Wa-al, I ain't been over that way fer years. It w'ud be some fun to revisit my old diggings. After folks moved away, up in that section, so did the skunks, but of course thar's once in a while an independent specimen, becuz skunks is jist like folks.’ When he'd said that, he saw Mat a-settin' on the buggy seat. ‘Well, Mathew,’ he says, ‘how yer enjoyin' yerself?’

“‘As well as usual,’ says Mat. ‘But I won’t hold no more skunks, if that’s what’s on your mind.’

“‘Ho, ho! I can handle my own skunks. I was jist havin’ a little fun with yer.’

“‘It’s a stinkin’ way to have fun,’ says Mat.

“Misty laid the reins on his pacer, an’ thereafter we was bounced an’ banged over the road. ‘Can’t waste no time, if we’re goin’ up the Old Lake Road,’ explains Misty. At fust, I thought that we’d left the dog behind, but then I made out that he was runnin’ under the rear axle. Once only I saw his hind end an’ tail. Guess he was only runnin’ on three legs an’ scratchin’ hissself with the other.

“‘Yer know,’ said Misty to Mat, ‘I guess yer think I’m rough on a beginner, but dispatch is the thing. I uster sort of linger an’ loiter, but I found out that yer can’t do business that way. Take tonight. I hain’t made e-nough to feed my skunks fer half a day. A man can’t git ahead goin’ back’ards. Know how many orders I’ve got fer oil? More ’n a hundred quarts. Realize how many skunks that means? Yer see, I’ve no time to do-daddle. Have to keep moving. An’ I hope Dud’s right erbout them black skunks an’ all the rest of ’em.’

“‘Hold still,’ says Mat, ‘I jist seen a skunk go ’cross the road ahead of us.’

“Misty reined in the pacer. ‘You, Slop!’ he yelled at the dog under the wagon. The dog appeared from the rear. ‘Have a look on the left,’ says Misty. Slop went off to the left. ‘We’ll sit a minute,’ he says. I mean, Misty said.

“I looked eround. ‘Mighty pleasant night,’ I says.

“‘Huh? Oh, maybe. But dark, dampish nights, jist afore a rain, are better. Skunks are always out on sech nights. Animals with good eyes fer night huntin’ don’t like moonlight.’

“Slop — it was good to find out the dog’s name — set up another of his one ring circuses. ‘Now I’ll show yer how it’s done with dispatch,’ says Misty.

“Mat an’ me laid hold of our lanterns, but by that time we c’ud see plain as day, almost. However, a lantern was comp’ny. Mat says to me, ‘I w’ud give fifty cents to see him make a slip. He’s so dashed blamed sure of hisself. I’d even like the way he’d smell.’

“‘How do yer ’spose he does it?’ says I.

“‘It’s nothing,’ says Mat. ‘That de-mented dog of his does it all. The dog hypnotizes the skunk. Gits it so dizzy it can’t operate. When a skunk can’t figger where he’s at, then he’s so puzzled he can’t pucker. But don’t bet too much on that.’

“I didn’t. I happen to know that thar is exceptions, and that the exception to a rule proves that it ain’t a rule. But jist the same, Misty met us before we got where he’d been. ‘Big cuss,’ he says. ‘Narrow stripe. Fat.’

“Misty transferred his catch to the box. ‘Jist three,’ he said, most wistfully.

“Yer might think that I was workin’ this up to an announcement. I did have sech a feelin’ that night. I mean that sunthin’ thick was bound to happen. But it didn’t. Misty was a smooth operator.

“I knew well enough where I had seen that black skunk durin’ the summer. It was consid’ably this side of the old Withee Place. But I had fergot erbout the

cattle. When we got over the bobwire fence to explore that pasture, the herd was feedin' on the dead, frosty grass. Of course, we didn't think much erbout that. Why sh'ud we? Almost inside of five min-its Slop was skunkin' it. Believe it er don't, thar was that old black skunk. And Misty picked her up as easy as a daisy.

"That was the very moment when Mat let out a blood curdlin' yell. 'Look out! Look out!'

"At fust, I thought that Mat was indulgin' in bad taste — tryin' to rattle Misty at the ticklish instant—but when I looked up I see Mat leavin' us like a black hornet had lit on him 'ith its landin' gear up and all guns firing. Crotch! I was confused! But Misty bagged his skunk, calm as a baby in a cradle. Then it was my turn to yell, 'Look out!'

"Misty looked at me. He looked at Mat who was fleeing like a vain shadder, but no more than a safe distance ahead of the maddest white-faced critter I ever see. Misty was disgusted. 'Holy smoke,' he says, 'that's nothin' but one of Gilbert Miller's white-faced steers. What's got inter Mat?'

"I don't know how much yer can remember erbout that pasture, but from where Mat had started it was a long way to the fence. Mat jist had time to dive through the bobwire, but he hung up on it. An' that white-faced critter hit Mat a jolt in the seat-of-the-pants that unloosed him. Poor Mat disappeared in the bushes on the other side like he had been shot out of a gun. The fence made a sound of staples rippin' out, but the blasted critter didn't follow up the advantage. Instid, he wheeled erbout, facin' us. It come to me that I had

heard some bulls was worse cross at the full of the moon. An' that one looked like Pharaoh an' all his chariots to me. He snorted like an old-fashioned fire engine, lowered his head, an' tore down on us. From over in the bushes I heard an agonized yell, 'Look out!' So Mat warn't dead.

"I looked at Misty, an' he was jist standin' thar with the most bewildered look on his face I had ever seen on anybody's map. I looked fer Slop — thinkin' that maybe Misty c'ud send the dog out to meet the charge. Slop warn't thar. He had departed. I looked at the white-face, an' he only had a hundred yards to go, if *we* was his destination, an' if *we* warn't, it was sunthin' right in line!

"Then I see a tree. It was too crotchly far off, but none was nearer. Guess I'd gone halfway from thar to the tree, before I noticed that I was luggin' my lantern. I left it. An' I made the tree. It had a branch I c'ud jist reach an' I went up feet first. Once I was sartin where I was, I looked fer Misty. He was on his way, but the critter had gained sunthin' horrifying. I got set to give him a hand, but it was sartin he'd have to slow down, and to do that was goin' to be a problem with the bull hard on him.

"But he did — jist long e-nough to hand me the bag with the skunk in it. That's all! Then thar warn't time to climb, so on he goes. An' that bull — it was a bull! — thundered under my tree like a troop of the Black Watch. I c'udn't figger it any way but that Misty was done fer, so I got down ag'in. What I thought I was

goin' to do, I don't know. But anyhow, I got down with the bag of skunk in my left hand.

"I have told yer several times that was a full-moon night, an' how plain we c'ud see. While I stood under the tree, Misty dodged close to the fence, which was a woven wire fence five feet high on the north end of the field. The critter crashed inter it head on. That's how close he was. The wire squeaked an' squawked, an' the posts cracked, but still it held. The bull was all tangled. Finally he managed to back out, but in the meantime Misty had found a hollow where he c'ud squeeze under.

Wel-el, I guess I was what the poet called, enthralled. That danged critter saw me and he didn't have to decide what he w'ud do next. He jist did it, head down, tail in the air like an antenna. He got thar long before I c'ud have climbed that tree ag'in. Of course, I'm tellin' this, so yer know it warn't the end of Dud Dean, but that ain't the way it looked to me.

"It is funny how good a man can git erlong without thinkin' at sech times! I still had the bag an' that skunk. So I reached in the bag, felt eround, and got hold of a leg. By that time the bull was on me, so I jist tossed the skunk in front of him. Crotch, yer w'ud have thought that a ton of chemicals had exploded. I tried to get behind the tree, but it was only 'bout ten inches wide. Of course, the bull c'udn't stop. He went right by me, like an engine so hot the water was b'iling out the radiator. But the best part of it was that he kept going, until he went out of sight in some alders.

"Wel-el, it was all over. Mat charged in with a fence-post. When Misty got thar, he was jist as tore up and

scratched down as Mat was.

“When I explained what I had done with the skunk, Mat almost laughed out loud.

“‘Where is the skunk?’ says Misty. Then he found her. The bull had tramped her. She was mangled all out of shape, but she was still mighty in death.

“‘Too bad,’ says Misty. ‘Too bad!’ Then he stood there thinking. Finally he says, ‘Wa-al, where’ll we go now?’

“‘I am goin’ home,’ says Mat.

“‘Home?’ says Misty.

“‘Home,’ says Mat. And he turned on his heel an’ marched off toward where we’d left the pacer. Misty says, ‘Come on. We might’s well go home with that big sissy.’

“‘But we c’udn’t find Slop. An’ we didn’t find Slop until we drove inter Misty’s dooryard with three skunks, minus two skunks.

“‘Come in,’ says Misty. ‘I’ll make yer some coffee.’

“That sounded mighty good to me, but Mat refused. ‘No sir!’ he says. ‘I am so full of skunk that I c’udn’t taste coffee if I was pickled in it. An’ if Dud plans to ride home with me, he’s startin’ as of *now*.’

“While Mat was talking, he was unhitchin’ his little mare, who was rollin’ the whites of her eyes, an’ her ears were flat on her neck. I hardly had time to thank Misty fer a wonderful time. Out of the yard we goes on two wheels. Mat never even tried to pull that danged mare down to a reasonable gait, an’ she never slowed down till we hit Mahoney Hill, which is so steep that a bird c’udn’t fly over it in high gear.

“ ‘Say,’ I says, ‘what was your hurry?’

“ ‘Mat seemed to be considerin’ that a long time. At last he says, ‘Tell yer Dud, when Misty goes inside that house he’s goin’ to find sunthin’ that’ll please him no end.’

“ ‘What do yer mean?’

“ ‘I mean that when him, an’ *you* too, went off, leavin’ me to hold that bag of skunk, I took that danged skunk back to the house an’ left it in the kitchen sink. Thar warn’t no string on the bag, so he didn’t have to stay thar if he didn’t like it.’

“ ‘That was a dirty trick,’ I told Mat.

“ ‘Maybe so, but after what’s gone on tonight, I can’t tell one dirty trick from another. Besides, what did yer expect me to do? Stand thar holdin’ a skunk fer a half hour like a simple-minded idgit? Er did yer think that I w’ud try to put it in that box? Er w’udn’t I have looked cute jist trustin’ that skunk to be good while I dumped him out on the ground. I didn’t even have a string to tie the bag. If I had, I’d have left it in the wagon er anywhere. But every time I tried to git a shoestring loose, that skunk w’ud start squarin’ off — I c’ud tell it, feel it in my bones. I’m tellin’ yer, Mister, that I w’udn’t trust a skunk any further than I c’ud throw a bull by the tail.’ ”

MAT SAW A GHOST

ALL MY LIFE," said Dud Dean, "I have heard folks refer to this er that sudden an' upsettin' event as a bolt out of the blue, but I was growed up before I realized how crotchly literal the expression can be. In fact, thar was a time when I imagined that a bolt out of the blue was an impossibility. Of course it ain't. I have known it to happen two er three times. Everythin' was serene and summerish, sky clear an' blue, rumbles away off in the distance maybe, but no forewarnin' near at hand. Then crash, and the lightnin' hit. Nothin' cu'd be more unforeseeable.

"So it is with those strange events that strike at folks like a bolt out of the blue. So it was the night Mat and me went down to the Andrews ledges to fish fer trout. I remember that it was an extra purty evening. The river was low, and that big hummock of river rocks an' gravel that lies between the west channel and the east was high an' dry with jist a trickle of water flowin' through the middle of it and tumblin' in the east channel in front of the ledges.

"We waded across from up above the ledges, and walked down the dry bar. Thar we c'ud fish in either channel, and off the lower end where thar's a lot of deep water. By that time, the sun had gone off the job, and it had left banks of color in the sky all up and down

the west shore of the river. That warn't jist an average sunset. It was a deluge of color that lasted fer an hour.

“I amused myself lookin’ at old Mat, while he was castin’ out where the water was powerful. Mat sartinly w’udn’t intend to be mistook fer a fairy prince er an angel visitant. But thar he stood, lackin’ two inches of bein’ six feet tall, but built thick like an angus, and all around him was a gold an’ crimson river. And thar was old Mat with the colors of the sunset on him, shining on his old felt hat, glintin’ off the tufts of hair around his ears, and as fer his mustache, it was sunthin’ that w’ud have made them wicked women that tried to bewitch Ulysses’ men come a’running. Crotch, it was oddly amusin’ to see old Mat so glamorously tricked out, and he so unaware of it.

“And to cap it all, danged if Mat didn’t hook a nice salmon. Jericho, hole in the ground! That salmon struck in the fast water that guts down between the ledges and the island of rocks where we was fishing. Right off the bat that six-pound fish made a run straight down the east channel. She ripped out all Mat’s line and so he had to travel with it, but he done his level best not to hurry and he hung back on his rod every step of the way.

“That salmon jumped, off the p’int of gravels. It cleared the water like an arm punched straight at your jaw. The full light of the afterglow struck it fer the instant, and fer maybe half a second it was a big silver fish turned inter gold—sunthin’ all alive and covered with glory! It was so danged handsome that I sung out, ‘Careful, don’t lose her, Mat!’

“Mat jist emptied his big lungs. The air blew up through his mustache, and it danced and sparked. The sight of it all made me feel queer, like me and Mat was fishin’ on the no-trespassing side of the Jordan River, instead of in our own Kennebec.

“The fish turned when Mat set all the pliant power of his rod ag’inst it, and it plowed the pitch and the whirl of the west channel. And over thar she jumped two er three times. And in the shadders from the wooded bank the salmon looked all silver-purple. But she didn’t stop. Ran straight through to the head of the channel and over near the mouth of the long cove that makes up inter the Chester Cool farm. And then when the fish broke up and over the water, it was as pink as one of them imported rainbows. Of course, Mat was out in the river up to his hips, and yer might think that he w’ud look all pink in that light, but he didn’t. He looked like one of them old Red Paint Indians. Crotch, I was pleased.

“But it was up thar, at the head of the west channel, that Mat got that salmon plum beat out, tuckered to the end. I netted it fer Mat. It was a fat female erbout six years old. We didn’t need her, so Mat let her go. A fish like that is worth several hundred dollars on the spawning bed—if yer figger on what it costs to raise an’ put out a thousand yearlin’ salmon, and how few of them tame little fish survive.

“Anyhow, Mat and me is specially fond of catchin’ trout. And that was a *trout* evening, becuz erbout seven o’clock here comes a swarm of them leetle mites of Mayflies. Drakes They’re no more than half an inch long,

not countin' their tails, but they're perfect samples of the big fellers—what they lack in size, they make it up in numbers. The air was full of them from the level of the river to as far as yer c'ud see 'em. At sech a time on the river ye'll not believe your eyes, becuz thar's so many trout an' salmon in plain sight. It is at sech times that the Kennebec raises a crop of raw meat to feed back to its trout.

“We hooked an' netted a dozen trout off the west side. If a feller stops to pocket his small trout at sech a time, he loses half his time fer fishing. Besides, they warn't big trout, jist quarter to half-pounders. Mat kept a couple of them to go with his bacon in the mornin', but I kinda had in mind layin' hold of a bigger trout. But crotch, it was fun castin' at them rises, fun an' plenty of action.

“After a while, the swarm pindled off and the black shadders moved out and out from the west shore, like sunthin' alive and creepin' at us out of the woods. So we went down to the p'int ag'in. Mat hooked a trout that was good fer a four-pound bet, but after five min-its his leader parted. Prob'ly thar was a knot in it, er maybe a bruise off the rocks, when that salmon was cuttin' up didos.

“Twilight lasts a long time them long June nights. I take a comfortable delight in it. And thar's a hour between eight an' nine when I'd rather be fishin' on the river than learnin' to play a harp. Nancy says that sech talk is wicked, but I tell her: ‘How long since the honest-to-goodness truth was wicked?’ Anyhow, we hooked some better trout. I don't mean a lot of them, but five

er six. Then I noticed that our left-over sunlight was erbout all gone, as if it had flowed off with the water.

“We sot down on a handy stick of spruce pulpwood. I make it a practice, when the weather is nice, to never go home until I’ve sot a while to think it over. As usual, Mat had nothin’ to say, which is pleasant at sech a time. So thar we sot, shoulder to shoulder, and it come to me how many days, addin’ up to years, old Mat and me had fished together. And in a sense, we’ve been God’s pampered. We earned our livin’ guiding men who wanted mighty earnest to fish fer trout, and so it happened that we got to fish ourselves more ’n most men can. I reckon that Mat and me, and all sech, hain’t much use to God ner men, but we’ve managed to escape everythin’ but the wrath to come, and as to that, it ain’t happened yit.

“Gorry, we was comfortable settin’ thar. The black-flies had retired an’ called it a day. Over on the west shore, the skeeters w’ud be unnecessarily plentiful, but out thar they didn’t bother. And up on Chet Cool’s intervale, the whippoorwills begun to sing.

“Mat said, ‘Time to cross the river afore it’s dark.’

“I kinda half twisted erbout so I c’ud look up the river. It looked a little like a silver road up toward the islands—a silver and faded-out blue. Wel-el, it was time to wade the east channel, as Mat had said. But when I was on the p’int of gittin’ on my feet, Mat give me sech a powerfully gentle nudge in the ribs that it almost nudged me off the end of the log.

“I looked at Mat, and he was lookin’ hard across to the ledges. If ever a man was up ag’inst not believin’

what his eyes seen, Mat was in the same situation. His chin hung down four inches under his mustache, and if yer don't per-ceive that left his mouth wide open, try to imagine a woodchuck hole. Crotch, it looked like the rest of his face might fall in.

“Yer might say that it made me curious. What was Mat lookin’ at? When I saw what Mat had seen, I knew that we sh’ud have left that place at least two hours earlier. Yer see, by that time what light thar was came from at our backs and shone over our heads. Prob’ly from the east side we looked like shadders, er like bumps on a log.

“Anyhow, a person who looked like nothin’ else but a woman stood on the ledges with the last grey light of twilight fallin’ on her. Now Mak, try to understand! When I fust told Nancy erbout this, she didn’t even try, er so it seemed to me. I told her . . . I told her that I thought it was jist someone goin’ swimming, although thar ain’t a rougher place the whole length of the river. What else, in the name of Beelzebub, w’ud a man think? Of course, I don’t pretend that I was *thinking*, mind yer. I was drained empty of all thought. If Belteshazza had walked out on that ledge a-lookin’ fer the fiery furnace, I c’udn’t of been so flabbergasted. But when I told Nancy, she said, ‘All you needed to do was to shout out a warning, or just say something loud to Mat. That would have been enough to forestall all that happened after she appeared.’

“All right! But I didn’t. I did manage to whisper at Mat, ‘Who in crotch d’yer ’spose that is?’ Mat was all

choked up when he tried to answer me. 'It's a ghost,' he wheezes.

"Condemned if that didn't sound sensible to me. Fer thar she stood at the edge of the river, and in that dim afterglow she seemed to shine with a pale light, like a body lit up with some fox fire—as unreal, but as real, as a May-fly.

"What she had on, I don't know, but it warn't much. This is the place in the report where Nancy said, 'That will do, Dudley. That is more than enough.'

"The woman's head was turned away from us, as if she was listenin' behind her. The next second, she tried to wade out inter the water, and either she slipped on the rock, er she plunged off. Re-member now, that the river was real low, and that the east channel ain't more 'n fifty feet wide from the ledge to the island, or bar of rocks, where Mat and me sot all dumbfounded. So the water goes through thar like a million wild horses.

"Of course Mat and me jumped to our feet. I saw a gleam of white as the current took hold of her and swept her downward. If she c'ud swim, she warn't tryin' to git out of it. In a flash, she was down below us and off the p'int, and I saw the white flash of her arms as she sank out of sight.

"Wel-el, crotch, I felt numb all over. What a crotchly sudden episode to spill all over old trouters like Mat and me! And talk erbout a bolt out of the blue! I looked at Mat, and his face was as white and empty as a map of the Arctic Circle. In fact, now that I think on it, Mat looked like a stuffed Eskimo.

"I looked at the river ag'in, and the eddy that swings

off the p'int and in a half-circle back up to the ledge had caught that person and pulled her inter the shallow water near the shore. All she needed to do, if she had sense enough, was to let down her landin' gear, but she actually drifted up near the ledge. Thar she lay, tossin' and swayin' in the eddy, until the reach of the current, hard ag'inst the island, got her and she sank out of sight.

“If ye'll jist remember what the current is like down thar, yer won't fergit that all this didn't take hardly any time at all, although to hear me tell it ye'd think it was a long time. Anyhow, erbout ten per cent of my brains come to life. I run down to the p'int, pulled off my boots, and waded out inter that upside down V of quieter water between the meetin' of the west and east channels. Thar I stood. What next? Crotch, what a confusion and panic! No natural person is put together so that he can stand by and let someone drown to death without even tryin' to do something to prevent it—even if the fool wants to drown!

“While I stood thar in the water up to my arms, and tried to see, and saw nothing, the river turned her up ag'in. When I dived, it was like leavin' the world and headin' inter a black cave. But I felt what I c'udn't see, and I grabbed hold of an arm. Crotch, it liked to have pulled my arm out of the socket. If I c'ud have got back to the p'int, it w'ud have been easy, but it felt like I was holdin' on to something alive and fightin' to git away. Off we goes inter the drag of the main currents.

“That was bad. But if I c'ud git a better grip on her, we c'ud avoid bein' rolled down the river—that is, I

c'ud make it to the east shore above the big boulders. Ayah. Now I've come to the climax that capped. In other words, what happened next was the limit.

"Ye've read in books on how to save a body from drowning that if the scared witless person gits a strangle hold on yer, to give 'em the heel of your hand to break their grip. Wel-el, of course I thought I had hold of someone so full of river water that thar was no danger of that. But when I bumped my knee on the bottom so hard that it fetched a blat out of me, that person I had hold on give *me* the heel of her hand like a professional. The punch snapped my head back and I lost my hold.

"But that stiff-heel under the chin did wonders fer me. It made me so mad that I warn't even satisfied to let her drown herself. Crotch, she c'ud swim like an otter, but she was reckonin' with a feller who had drove the river springs on end. Besides, she kept tryin' to drown. When I got hold of her the next time she must have figgered that I intended to choke her to death, but I had her round the neck from the rear.

"We had gone down the river a hundred yards by that time. I lugged her ashore and dumped her on a flat of soft mud. She spat water, and then laid still. I c'ud hear Mat comin' down the east shore, so I knew he had crossed the river. It was dark enough to stub and stumble on them rocks. Jerusalem the golden! What a fix! If that person had on . . . wel-el, as Nancy said, 'That's e-nough of that.'

"She gagged and choked, but finally she set up and said, 'I'll hate you forever, you miserable old fool.'

"Of course that gentled the way I felt, and I was

only erbout ninety-nine per cent inclined to roll her over and to give her the dangest paddlin' a mortal ever got where it wu'dn't break any bones. But I tried to hold up my risin' temper—especially when I made out that she was nobody I had ever seen in my life. Wet hair looks dark, especially at that hour of night, but her hair was as black as sin. And it was cut short, and sozzled. But in spite of that, she was a handsome person.

“Mat arrived. ‘Here’s your boots,’ he says, throwin’ them at my feet. Fer some reason, he didn’t see the girl. ‘Where’d it go?’ he says.

“I don’t know why, but that made her madder than ever. ‘*It is right here,*’ she says.

“That come as near jumpin’ Mat as anythin’ c’ud. He took one look at her, and walked off.

“‘At least, there is one gentleman out of two chances,’ she says to me.

“‘Yes,’ I says.

“‘But you,’ says she, ‘are a ridiculous old fool, a meddlesome *old* idiot.’

“I guessed that she was right, but dang it, I was also good and mad. The way I took hold of her and pulled her on her feet, warn’t subject to no misunderstanding. And I says to her, talkin’ right square at her, ‘I never laid my hands on a womankind to hurt her in my whole life, but ye’ve managed to make me madder than I ever was in all my lifetime. And if yer open that mean mouth of yours once more, except to tell me what I want to know, I’ll spank the mean daylights out of yer. And mark that it hain’t safe to discount that one dot. Dang your ungrateful, egotisted little soul.’

“Mat was standin’ off in the dark erbout thirty feet. He said, ‘I reckon she’s right, jist the same—erbout you bein’ an old fool. If she wants to drown herself, let her, and small loss to anybody.’

“Crotch, I sensed that fer the fust time she was sca’t. Who w’udn’t be from her p’int of view? Thar she was in the hands of two murderous old cusses. But I thought that I’d have to follow up on the advantage.

“‘All right, young lady, where did yer come from?’

Somehow, that was the wrong question to start with. Her chin went up as high as her nose and she snapped back at me, ‘None of your meddlesome business!’

“Then she begun to bawl sunthin’ horrible. And danged if Mat didn’t walk off, leavin’ me all alone with a *situation*. I tried another question — which I reckon was some smarter than the fust one. ‘Where are your clothes?’

“She answered that one. ‘On the big ledge, where I . . . where I fell in.’

“‘All right,’ says I. ‘We’ll git them. Come on.’

“She came becuz I laid hold of her hand, and she had to come. It was good and dark by then. I rec’lected how much p’ison ivy thar was erlong the bank of the river in that place, but it was possible that a good case of it w’ud be good fer her disposition.

“Mat had waited at the ledge. I suppose that it went ag’inst his conscience to leave me entirely with that young banshee. He had the rods and our creels. That’s Mat fer yer. If Gabriel blew his horn, Mat w’ud stop long enough to find sunthin’ he could wear that was made of asbestos. I mean, Mat’s methodical an’ careful.

“Wel-el, thar were her clothes all laid out in neat order. She got them on afore I got my boots on and laced up. I reckon that puttin’ them on was reassurin’—like a return to life. She was runnin’ a comb through her hair when I finished with my boots.

“‘Now,’ I says to her, ‘let me introduce Mathew Markham. And I am Dud Dean. Both of us live in Bingham which is up the road a few miles. What can we do fer you?’

“‘Danged if she didn’t slump down and begin to cry all over herself ag’in. And of course, Mat started to walk away ag’in. ‘Hol-done,’ I says to him, ‘you can’t walk out on me now.’ He turned, hesitated, and said, ‘I’ll wait fer yer at the railroad track.’

“‘Look,’ says I to the girl, who warn’t so young as I had presumed, ‘ye’ve got to talk. Even if it’s the fust time in your life, try to imagine how the other feller feels. And if yer don’t help us to help you, I’ll have to turn yer over to the sheriff. Maybe ye’d like that better.’

“‘It sobered her up a lot . . . some, anyhow.

“‘Where did yer come from to here?’ I asked her.

“‘Straight across a big field from the main road, down over a high bank, and across a railroad track. I smelled the river.’

“‘Why?’

“‘Because I am married . . . married to a man!’

“‘That was Eve’s trouble,’ I told her.

“‘This is a stubborn, mean man; an impossible, insufferable man. We fought about where to stay tonight. I wanted to stop at the next town. He insisted that we

drive to a place called Jackman, fifty miles farther. I couldn't endure him. I told him to stop his miserable car, and to let me out. *He did!*"

"That's where he made a mistake,' I said. 'Where is he now?'

"How could I know that? In Jackman perhaps, or over the border in Canada . . . for all I care where he is!"

"How long you folks been married?' I says, tryin' not to laugh out loud.

"None of *your* business!"

"No,' I says, 'guess it hain't. All right, my young lady, the way yer came down here is the way Mat and me come. We left our car in the gravel pit beside the road. So you lead the way. Let's git started, becuz I told Nancy I'd be home by ten o'clock.'

"She started. Part of the way, she bawled some more. Mat kept clearin' his throat like he'd caught a cold. Before we reached the road, I seen a big automobile parked erlongside.

"That your car?"

"It is *his* car,' she says.

"Let's talk a min-it,' I says. 'What yer goin' to tell that man of yours? Ye've kept him waitin' a couple of hours. After all, yer sh'ud make up your mind how to explain it. Now as fer me and Mat—Mat will git all that's happened figgered out in the next hundred years. He'll guess that you was mad as a stingin' hornet, so yer ran off in a blind temper. When yer found the Kennebec River, yer thought it w'ud serve him right if yer sh'ud drown yourself, that is, make him *think* that yer

had. So yer undressed, laid out your things so he c'udn't miss them, and then yer went off inter the river—only it was a little mite more of a river than ye'd figgered. Yer even waited a while to see if your man w'udn't git thar in time to see yer helpless an' forlorn. Mat will figger it out some day. But right now, he's tryin' to guess why anyone as young an' healthy and purty as yer be, and all comfortably fixed, sh'ud ever think of drownin' herself. So Mat won't have a word to say. He don't enjoy talkin' anyway.

“As fer me, I'm an old fool—the kind that thinks slow—the kind yer have to punch with the heel of your hand before he knows what's what. We'll let it go at that. And we'll not mention that ye've been so near to gittin' your rear end blistered as red as a taillight, although if ye've got any imagination at all, it will sting and smart fer the rest of your life—I mean, whenever yer git anywhere near the frame of mind you was in to-night. Now interduce me to *your* man.”

nan.'

“When he saw us coming, he climbed out in a hurry. ‘Where in the name of God have you been?’ he says. ‘Can't you imagine *how* I've felt, sitting here in the dark, waiting for you to come back?’

“‘This is Dud Dean,’ she says.

“He wheeled eround. ‘Who in the devil is Dud Dean? And what do I care if he is?’

“‘Someone who is big enough to take you apart,’ she says—still purty lippy, as I reckon she always w'ud be. But she was also smart enough to march to the car and turn on the headlights.

“‘Thar we stood, him and me. He was a chunky feller.

And it struck me dang appropriate that his bushy head of hair sh'ud be red as his temper. So he run his fingers through it, bein' mad and scared.

“ ‘Damn it,’ he said, ‘I kept thinking that she’d get over her peeve and come back to the car like a grown-up person, instead of acting like a sulky kid.’

“That didn’t require any comment on my part. I kept quiet. He mussed his hair some more. Finally he asked me, ‘What did she say your name was?’

“ ‘Dud Dean.’

“ ‘All right, Dud Dean, did you ever try to reason with a woman?’

“ ‘One er twice, years ago.’

“ ‘Are you a married man?’

“ ‘Somebody giggled. Of course it was Mat. That w’ud be his idea of sunthin’ funny.

“ ‘Young feller,’ I says, ‘I’ve been married almost fifty years.’

“ ‘You have! How?’

“ ‘Wel-el, Nancy and me kinda growed up together. We sort of got used to it. But let me tell yer something: if Nancy had ever tried to leave me, the way your woman did tonight, she w’ud of had a job on her hands.’

“ ‘What do you mean?’ he says.

“ ‘I mean that I w’ud have gone with her part way.’

“ ‘Part way?’

“ ‘Ayah. That w’ud be as far as she’d planned to go anyway.’

“He didn’t seem to git my p’int. But he ran his fingers through his red hair some more.

“ ‘Anyhow,’ he says, ‘I’m grateful to you. She might

have got lost. Where did you find her anyway?’

“I saw her face. She dreaded the answer. ‘Mister,’ says I, ‘we found her down’t the river. It’s a great place to learn lessons. It can soak out your extra starch; set yer straight. I’ve known folks who learned a lot down’t the river.’

“I guess that he hadn’t noticed my rod and creel until then. ‘I’ve got it!’ he says. ‘You’re a fisherman—a fly fisherman, too. Did you have luck?’

“I walked up to the headlights, and I opened the lid. And was I glad that I had saved two nice trout.

“‘Great guns!’ he says. ‘And I was in a sweat to get to Canada. Rachel, you were right all the time. This is the place to stop. I’m going to — we’re going to — stay over a day or more.’

“‘Good night,’ I says, and started away to the car, where Mat was waitin’ fer me.

“She run after me and grabbed hold of my arm. ‘Oh, thank you so much! Thank you for not telling him all of it. I am so ashamed.’

“‘I will bargain ’ith yer,’ I says.

“‘Bargain?’

“‘Ayah. I promise not to tell him a word, if ye’ll promise never to tell anybody how yer caught me under the chin.’

“‘I promise,’ she said.”

JIPPYPOP

IN the old story, "Deadwater Doings," I said that Deadwater has its ups and downs. It is down now, and one would guess that it is down for keeps. The railroad station is gone. The old Somerset Line to Kinco is gone. The store and cottages are gone. Only the Austin murmurs and mutters as it flows over the old timbers that were the foundation of the dam.

Dud Dean and I went back to Deadwater the last year Bert McMaster held his post as fire warden and watchman for the Coburn Heirs. The half-dozen cottages stood at the top of the bank above the store, but they were deserted and ragged.. That store, with its front plate glass windows, was always an anachronism set down in a million acres of forest wilderness. The large downstairs room had been devoted to counters, shelves, and the postoffice. When Dud and I walked in for that last visit, the postoffice had been discontinued, since Bert was the only resident, and the shelves were empty, since Bert was the only possible customer, except for a dozen bottles of syrup of figs in yellow, dusty cartons.

"I'm jist hangin' on here as long as they'll keep me," Bert told us.

"Must be kinda lonesome," said Dud.

"Lonesome! Gorry di'monds, no! Thar's more peo-

ple come up here now than thar was in the best days Deadwater ever knew. Since them cusses abandoned the railroad, and somebody else fixed the road-bed so folks c'ud drive over it with a car, thar's folks here, er goin' by here, almost every min-it all day long. And, as the father of fourteen said, the more they come, the worse they look. Jippypop, Dud, ye've no idea what a sorry lot of folks them tourists be. Steal? Some of 'em w'ud steal a skunk's last scent. Why, last week, when I was gone fer two days, they stold my backhouse — took it bodily, holes an' all. Jackers? They come in gangs. They shot a big doe a hundred yards up the road two er three nights ago. Left her layin' thar, after they'd cut off the hindquarters fer steak. And when I found her, thar was a pair of half-starved fawns a-nuzzlin' at her. Hellation! Do I dee-spise them summer jackers. Corn-denned night-huntin' rascals!

“Neckers? They w'ud make a blind ox sick to his stomach. Women? They come up here and peek in my windows. Hellation, I don't know what Deadwater's comin' to!”

“Want to know!” drawled Dud. “Do yer ever see anybody like that long drink of water, Bart what-was-his-name?”

“His name was Bart M. Latcher. Bart, short fer Bartholomew. That cuss? So yer haven't fergot him? Say, do yer know I guess that he run inter Bill X that day he went up the Austin. And I'm purty sure that Bill X picked a fight. What's more, I think Bart gave that Bill X a sweet licking.”

“What makes yer think that?” asked Dud.

“Wa-al, Bill stopped here at the store on his way out. He sartinly *looked* like he’d been handled rough. But I’d never of dreamed that he had tangled with Bart, if he hadn’t said so hisself. He bragged that he had knocked a feller who was seven foot tall all over the landscape. Gorry, I was dis-custed. Says I to Bill, ‘It is plain all over yer jist how much of a whippin’ yer give the other feller, but jist in case yer still don’t know when ye’ve had e-nough, I’m goin’ to take hold of yer myself.’ Of course, I had to git over the counter afore I c’ud git at the big sneak. Wish yer c’ud of seen how green he turned, and how he warn’t in no hurry to wait fer me to git at him. I betcha that Bart knocked seven kinds of predestination out of that Bill X. But when Bart come back, all he wanted to talk erbout was that nice trout he’d caught and how he’d met you fellers. That Bartholomew was a queer cuss.”

“Liked him myself,” Dud said. “Liked him fust rate. Do yer ever hear from him?”

“Nope. Not really. But he always sends me a birthday card.”

“He does? How did he happen to know when your birthday comes?”

“Say, the way yer said that, anyone w’ud think I didn’t have a birthday like the other tax payers. How did he know? He asked me. I told him.”

“He does well to remember it after all the years.”

“Tain’t so hard. I was born on the Fourth of July. My old man wanted to name me Independence McMaster, and I’ve always felt sorry that the rel’tives interrupted. I’d have liked that name.”

“So yer really don’t know much erbout what’s hap-
pened to Bart, eh?”

“Wa-al, no. But he’s comin’ up here in the deer
huntin’ season. That is, if it snows early so as I can git
away from this con-finement.”

“Crotch,” exclaimed Dud. “I w’ud kinda like to
meet him ag’in.”

“Jippypop, that’ll be easy. Come up and go huntin’
with us. We’ll be here to eat an’ sleep.”

“Sartinly will, if I can git away,” Dud said.

November the 22nd Bert McMaster did send a mes-
sage to Dud. But Dud and I could not get away until
the following Monday, and then only for an evening
call at the old store.

There was a lighted lamp in the back part of the
building. Dud pounded on the door. Out of the smoky
dimness, Bert McMaster emerged. His right hand was
swathed and his arm in a sling. At the door, he said,
“Come on in. It ain’t locked.”

Dud lifted the latch and pushed. “What in crotch
has happened to yer?” he asked Bert.

“Oh, so it’s you, Dud. Gorry di’monds, I’m glad to
see yer. But if ye’d been with us today, maybe I w’udn’t
be in such deeplorable condition—me, ner Bart.”

“What happened? Been fighting?”

“Naw. And all that ails Bart is that a danged wildcat
run up one side of him an’ down the other, that’s all. I
figger that the cat thought he was climbin’ a tree.”

“Ye’ve been drinking,” said Dud.

“No I ain’t. I never was soberer, and I never will be
till the day I die. But come on in. Bart’s here.”

A tall, a very tall, man stood by the big grey pot-bellied stove. Bert McMaster's description of the man came back to me: "He's six foot four, er maybe five inches tall, I bet. But he ain't much wider than a sheet-polk." In memory, I saw the man as he had looked that day on the Austin, when Bill X had gone headfirst into the pool at Edgely Dam.

Bart M. Latcher. He was smiling at Dud, but he did not offer to shake hands.

"Boy," said Dud, "ye're easy to remember."

"And I have remembered you. Thank you, sir."

We sat down in a half-circle around the stove, for the night was cold—only a degree or so above zero.

Bert McMaster said, "I was jist warmin' up some coffee. Hellation, what a day we've had. We jist got back here half an hour er so ago. Bart wound this bandage round my hand. He tore up my best sheet, the only sheet I owned. But then, I never used it."

"What happened?" asked Dud.

"Jippypop, ye're hard of attention. I told yer what happened. Say, Dud, what do yer know erbout mountain lions, catamounts, an' sech? Did yer ever hear of a bobtailed mountain lion?"

"Can't say that I ever did," drawled Dud.

"Wait a min-it," said Bert, "while I go git the critter." And he went limping off to the back room.

Dud turned to Bart. "Wel-el, Bart, jist what did happen to you fellers?"

"We went wildcat hunting with some . . . some characters, and a most astonishing dog."

Bert McMaster returned. He hobbled, and he was

dragging an immense Bay Lynx. The creature was stiff, and its paws bumped and rattled on the floor.

“Thar!” said Bert. “Look at him. Fifty pounds an’ lean as an old maid on a milk diet. Jumpin’ jacks, what a miserable disposition that cat had!”

“I have read,” said Bart, “that the lynx is a timid, cautious creature, and that he never attacks a human being.”

After saying that, he held out his immense hands, which were deeply scratched and lacerated. Then he plunged them into a pan of warm water and disinfectant, where, apparently, he had been soaking them when we arrived.

“Crotch, both of yer look as if a train had run over yer. You sh’ud take them wounds to a doctor. Do yer mean to tell me that bobcat attacked you fellers?”

“Not exactly that,” Bert admitted, kicking the big creature to one side and sitting down. “Not exactly.”

“How did it happen? Was it accidental?”

“Accidental? If ye’d been thar, ye’d know better than to ask sech a question. Is a buzz saw accidental? But it all happened after I tried to choke the cuss to death.”

“Then you were drunk!”

“I warn’t drunk.”

Dud relaxed, slumped back in his chair, and said, “Begin at the beginnin’ like honest folks.”

“All right. Yer asked fer it. And if yer say, when I’m done, that yer don’t believe me, I’ll give yer that cat, tail an’ all! This mornin’ ’bout daylight, three hunters and a houn’ dog came a-bustin’ in here. They was from

Hellhuddle, Massachusetts. That's jist what they said. Warn't it, Bart?"

Bart nodded solmenly. "It is near Westfield," he said.

Dud asked, "What were they doin' away up here?"

"That's what I asked them, naturally. They talked. They said that houn' was the best houn' in the world. They said that he'd hunt rabbits—who in hellation w'ud want to hunt them things?—when they wanted him to hunt rabbits. Er he'd hunt foxes. Er he'd hunt bobcats. One of them, a big cuss with a black mustache and white hair—Say! why didn't I notice *that!* His mustache was dyed, of course. If I'd noticed, I w'ud never have gone an inch with sech a dee-ceptive outfit. But I was only goin' to say that the feller with the mustache said, 'I can put him on any track I want, and he'll never leave it till I tell him.'

"Wa-al, they got Bart and me all he't up. And we went. The agreement was that they would give us five dollars apiece if we'd show 'em a fresh cat track. But, heck! them fellers warn't genuwine cat hunters. They let that out of the bag before we had gone past Pearl Woodard's camp. They was talkin' what big cats they'd bagged. I asked them, 'Jist what do yer call a *big* cat?' And they says, 'Oh, twenty-five pounds, maybe thirty.'

"'Hellation,' I says, 'that's only a baby bobcat. Up here, a cat weighs forty pounds afore we talk *big.*' *Now* I know that even old black mustache w'ud have turned pale, if they had believed me. But oh no! They jist winked at each other like a con-vention of sheetpolks. Smart fellers, yer see."

Bart looked up. "I thought you were joking, Bert."

“Joking! Who in jippypop w’ud joke erbout anythin’ as dee-praved as a botcat! No sir! Wa-al, thar was only one feller in that pack I hadn’t made up my mind erbout. I mean the houn’ dog. He was kinda smart, but wait till I tell yer erbout him. The durn coward!

“Of course I had no more idea where to find a cat track than I had of where to look fer a pink rat. All I knew was that thar’s always bobcats where the rabbits is thick, so up here one place was as good as another. But I’ll be preserved if I didn’t find a track of a cat up on Wild Brook. It was spankin’ fresh. That houn’ stuck his nose in it, and gorry how he howled. Stuck his nozzle heavenward an’ let her roll. But do yer think he wanted to chase that cat? No sir. They had to gather round an’ urge him on.

“I give him credit for bein’ a durn fast dog. But he went faster the wrong way. That is, he went ahead until we c’ud jist hear him. Then back he come right over his own tracks. All them fellers allowed that he’d never done that before. But no one in the crowd, not even me, was smart e-nough to figger out *why* he acted that way. Hellation, he was jist scared.

“Wa-al, that’s the way it went. Warn’t it, Bart? That’s how we progressed all the morning and inter the afternoon. How can yer gain on a cat that way?

“I don’t see how Bart stood it. The snowshoein’ was turrible. Gorry, we walked all over Bald Mountain township. And I think that it was us men who pooched that cat in the end. Anyhow, he treed erbout three o’clock in the afternoon. An’ the daylight was none too good.

“I had always heard that yer sh’ud go up easy to where a cat is treed, becuz if yer don’t they’ll jump an’ make a run fer it ag’in. But that cat didn’t act nervous. He jist squat down in the crotch of a big yellor birch. By that time, the houn’ had took courage. And the old fool was standin’ on his hind legs, and pawin’ at the bark as far up as he c’ud reach.

“By gorry di’monds, I did notice that was a peetick’ly mean lookin’ bobcat, but a man ain’t cool an’ sensible when he’s in sech tomfool comp’ny. Them fellers was ex-cited. ‘Look at him! Look at the size of him!’ they kept yellin’ at one another. And they tramped round and round the tree like mad. Jippypop!

“Then they argued erbout who was to do the shoot-ing. They c’udn’t agree which one of them was the best shot. They c’udn’t agree on nothing. I suggested that we all draw lots to see who’d do the honors. So Bart held up a fist full of twigs, all differunt lengths, and the feller who drew the shortest one was to do the shoot-ing. Was I some relieved when it turned out that I had the shortest twig! Then one of them damp fools accused Bart and me of fixin’ it up! Then they said that I sh’ud let an experienced cat hunter do the honors. Hellation, I was mad.

“I aimed at that critter’s head, but he moved it at the wrong second. Instid of hittin’ him fair in the head, the ball only tore his ear off, but we didn’t know that till later. He fell out the tree headfust. He was a dead lookin’ cat, bloody an’ bleeding. We all thought he was dead. He lay thar like he was dead.

“Them fellers all howled. The houn’ howled. They

kept poundin' each other on the back, and making war-hoops. I fergot to jack another shell inter my rifle. No, that's wrong. I leaned the rifle ag'inst a tree, and somehow it slid off and fell inter the snow. That's the way it was.

"They all yelled, 'Let old Major at him. Let old Major at him.' Of course, nobody was hinderin' old Major. Instid, it took consid'able encouragin' before old Major w'ud go near that cat. After a lot of it, that houn' sniffed an' snuffed at the bobcat. Finally, he decided that it was safe dead, and he sailed into the critter like he had intended to do it all the time.

"How they yelled and slapped each other on the back. They even shook hands all the way eround. All the while thar was the cat, a-bleedin' in the snow. And I really w'ud like to know what it was that houn' bit at. It was like punchin' the wrong button, becauz all of a sudden the cat warn't dead. Old Major looked like a pinwheel, until he shot off head over heels inter the snow. And when he picked himself up, he never even looked back. He jist evaporated.

"What next? Dud, ye've got to believe me from now on. Every one of them fellers scattered. I mean two of 'em run away from thar. Of course, some of them didn't have guns. When they started out, they had explained that to Bart and me. Pro-fessional cat hunters only need one gun. Why lug others? So only old mustache had a rifle. He backed up a little, but he really held his ground. Meantime, I was tryin' to find my gun, and I didn't. That mustache feller warn't ca'm. Anybody that fires at a cat no more than thirty feet away, but don't

hit it, can't be real ca'm and collected. The cat rolled and rolled and spat an' spat. And then, durned if mustache didn't jam his gun. The cat made a blind lunge in his direction, and he threw his gun at it. Jippypop, what a foolish mix-up.

"But I didn't suppose that old black mustache had missed the cat. I thought he had hit it hard, becuz in a min-it er so it straightened out like it was dead ag'in. I walked up to it and kicked it hard in the head. It acted dead. So I grabbed at its front foot, intendin' to hold it up so them Indians c'ud see how dead it was.

"I'll be eternally damned if that critter didn't come alive ag'in. Hellation, it was con-fusing. And was I busy! And was I crazy. I got both hands on that cat's throat. And I shut off his wind. What good did that do? Them legs! The fust hi'st, he slit the sleeves of my jumper inter ribbons. I tried to git my foot on his heart, and he ripped my stockings, pants, underdrawers, and the hide. How c'ud I let go? Can a man let go of sunthin' that's as fast as the cam shaft of a flyin' machine? But that's what old mustache kept shoutin' at me. *'Let go. Let go him! !'*

"Thar ain't no doubt that Bart saved my life. Otherwise, I'd have hung on until I fell apart. Bart got hold of them hind legs. He liked to of got sliced to pieces doin' it, but he did. So we jist hung on till that cat was dead, and then we hung on some more.

"And yer know what? Them fellers was real upset becuz I w'udn't give that big cat to them. They said it was their cat. Their dog had treed it. By independence, was I hot under the collar! I told them, 'Anytime I

have to choke a damned wildcat to death, I'll collect the bounty er I'll know the reason why I don't.'

"They argued, but that's all. I guess me and Bart was a tough lookin' pair of tomcats, becuz we was drippin' our own blood, and our clothes was all ventilated. Anyhow, them fellers went off lookin' fer their dog. It turned out that he was under Pearl Woodard's shed. They had to coax him out with a pound of frankfurts tied on a long pole. I was dis-custed. If I had a dog like that one, I w'ud tie a bundle of dinnamite on his tail. So . . . Bart and me jist got home a little while afore you fellers got here, an' we've had a tough day of it."

Dud chuckled. "I've heard of folks who hunt rattlesnakes an' catch them alive. I've heard of folks that go after lions an' take 'em alive. But I'll be danged if I ever heard of anybody tryin' to choke a bobcat to death. Wel-el, Mak and me better start out fer home. You fellers need some sleep. And Bart, now yer know that Bill X is a gentle little cuss compared to a bobcat, be yer goin' to try it ag'in?"

Bart appeared to be embarrassed. Bert McMaster answered the question for him. "We hain't. Once is e-nough, by jippypop. Tomorrow we're goin' deer hunting. It's a nice gentle sport, even if some crazy fool shoots yer fer a deer. Why don't yer come up and go with us?"

"I reckon that I better. Somebody sh'ud keep an eye on you fellers. Say, what became of your friends and their hound?"

"Gorry, I don't know. I fergot to ask 'em *in* when we got back here."

ZOROMASTER SAYETH

DUD DEAN and I were talking—or perhaps I had been expounding my conviction that there is prospective and therefore healing in the wilderness. “Wel-el, I think that ye’re right in the main,” said Dud, “but jist the same, I’ve known of folks to die of consumption who never worked anywhere than in the woods. What’s more, I’ve known of folks to come down ’ith ulcers of the stomach from camp cooking. Howsoever, I’ve taken notice that a man can straighten out what’s gone crooked, if he’s willin’ to git down to brass tacks.

“It all makes me think of my old friend, Ruel Cates. When Ruel was a little mite of a feller, the Cateses had a family reunion. The house was full of grown-up talkin’ folks. Ruel was thar, but no one paid attention to him. He kept tryin’ to tell erbout sunthin’ wonderful, but each time he begun, some older person w’ud ignore him an’ start talking. So he waited an’ waited for a chance. Binc-by, thar was a lull, an’ Ruel piped up in his high, shrill, boyish voice: ‘Pa planted some cu-cumber pickles. An’ he took a bottle, an’ he put a little cu-cumber pickle inside. An’ it grew, and grew, till it busted the damned thing.’

“I mean, thar’s one of our troubles. We git our mind

sot on one thing, fixed on it, an' it grows an' grows till it busts us.

"I've heard that we only use a small part of our brains, an' that seems probable. Mind and health is related. Good sense and brass tacks can do a lot for a man, when his mind threatens to git in a rut. I 'spose that ye've heard of Lyman Ford. Mat Markham guided him some. An' so did I at odd times. He was born in high gear. He was always jumpin' inter the collar. He made a lot of money by spreadin' hisself like a green bay tree. So he warn't uncommon smart, as I sized him up, but he was bound to work twice as hard and twice as long every day and inter the night. Sech folks hain't as common as lazy folks, but they're by no means uncommon.

"When Lyman took to trout fishing, he done it becuz it was done among his associates in business. An' Lyman went at his fishin' hell-bent-fer-election, same's he went at everythin' else. He acted like he had to do it er it w'udn't git done.

"I met him the fust time at Moxie Lake. The next time, he was at Pierce Pond. That time, he was in better comp'ny—like Doctor Wade, fer one. I often saw him in the years that interveened, as the old maid said, but the last time he come up to Bingham in a limousine full of blankets, hot-water-bottles, an' smellin' salts. It made my heart give a hitch an' a skip to see that one-time up-and-git-at-it feller all huddled up an' caved in.

"But in a way, Doc Wade had warned me, although his letter was what Nancy called cryptic, which I reckon means short fer short. As I read it, the letter only

said that Lyman warn't up to his old self. The fires was banked, steam low, er sunthin' like that. The plain part of it was that Doc Wade wanted me to help Lyman git a grip on hisself—however that was to be done. 'What he needs most,' the letter said, 'is to catch up with his fishing.'

"I was to meet Lyman at the post office at two forty-five p. m., the next Thursday. I smiled when I read that. Lyman had always lived that way. If he said quarter to three, he'd bust to make it at two forty-five. An' sure e-nough thar he was—only they had parked in front of Ervin Moore's drugstore. An' as I've indicated, Lyman was a sick man. The poor cuss looked like sunthin' moth an' rust had corrupted.

"'Well,' he says, 'don't stand there and gape forever. You see what's left of me. And if you're wondering why I am here, it's because of that ass of a Dr. Wade. He thinks that it should do me good to go trout fishing. It never did. Why should it now?'

"Crotch, to make it worse, Lyman had developed one of them slow, sad smiles. Havin' proved it, he went on erbout Doc Wade. 'I have pointed out to Dr. Wade that the heart specialist, whom we have consulted, said that any exposure would kill me. And what did Dr. Wade say? He said, "Maine is a better place to die in than Chicago."'

"I was a mite nettled erbout the way he referred to Dr. Wade. An' I told him straight that I'd as soon listen to Doc Wade as any specialist that ever lived."

"'Huh! Huh!'" says Lyman. An' then he sank back in his pillows an' blankets. Then in a woeful tone, he says,

‘We shall wait for Mrs. Ford. She is in that drugstore.’

“I thought maybe I sh’ud go inside to meet the lady, since I had never laid eyes on her. Wel-el, yer know how it is. Yer guess what a person looks like, but most generally they don’t. That time, I was right. She did. I mean that she had a sad, sweet face, like an old-fashioned pansy pressed in a copy of *The Best Loved Poems*.

“I told her who I was.

“‘How do you do?’ she says. But she didn’t wait to find out. Jist blew off into a zephyr of words, words.

“‘First,’ she says to me, ‘I want you to read Dr. Alexander Infinitude’s letter of instructions, which he so kindly prepared, when I failed to persuade Lyman to remain in Chicago. I presume that you have noticed the grave condition of Lyman’s health?’

“To save time, I did not answer. The specialist’s ‘instructions’ were marked 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on to 49. It was full of words like *caution, precautions, care, careful, exposure*, an’ so on. A good many paragraphs begun with ‘By no means.’ Fer example, ‘By no means permit the patient to cast a fly in the usual manner.’ And, ‘By no means submit the patient to any intense emotional stimuli whatsoever.’

“‘Madam,’ says I, ‘Lyman always was erbout as excitable as a cucumber in an icebox, but jist suppose he sh’ud hook on a really big trout that was bound to go all the ways to Sunday. W’ud a heart like his stand sech a strain?’

“The lady’s smile was sad to behold when she replied, ‘I don’t perceive why anyone should become excited about a trout, big or otherwise, but we must avoid

all risks. And for that reason, we must employ a guide who can be relied upon.'

"'How d'yer mean?' I says. 'Fer instance *what* do yer mean?'

"'Why, if catching fish is violent exertion, then it is your duty to avoid fish. If you know where there are fish, you should also know where there are no fish.'

"'Yer mean that we're to play tiddlywinks er sun-thing?'

"'No. Lyman would not play tiddlywinks. On the other hand, he may insist upon fishing, because Dr. Wade has suggested fishing—most unwisely, we think. But we must avoid excitement or undue exertion. *You* must see to it that Lyman does not catch fish.'

"'The way she kept saying *fish* bothered me. 'Mad-am,' I says, 'up here they ain't fish, becuz they're *trout*. An' I am sorry to tell yer that I am the last guide in all creation that yer w'ud want to hire. All my life, I've been takin' folks where they c'ud catch trout, an' skip-pin' places where they warn't apt to catch trout. Besides, I'm excitable myself. I enjoy gittin' excited more than anythin' else in the world. Yer c'udn't trust me fer one min-it. Besides, I am not, never was, an' don't want to be a wet nurse.'

"'Danged if she didn't shake her head an' smile at me slow an' sad. Says she, 'You are not that sort of a man at all. Even Dr. Wade described you as calm, controlled, and moderate in all things. Furthermore, that is the way you vibrate. I am particularly sensitive to vibrations. And, furthermore, Lyman is depending on you.'

He is not the demonstrative kind, but Lyman has his own appreciations of men and friendship.'

"Wel-el, dang her little hide. She warn't so dull. Jist when I had cleared myself, she worked in that touch. An' I knew it. But danged if I warn't softened jist the same. I did feel bad erbout Lyman.

"She was still buyin' things when I went out. Lyman opened up his eyes. 'Well,' he said, 'are you going with us?' Blamed if I didn't say I was. So Lyman reached out a hand that was blue veined an' too weak to shake anythin' but an angel's wing.

"Of course the water we was goin' to fish had to jibe with Mrs. Ford's stipulations. Also, she wanted hot an' cold water. Water is a real simple element. An' I know where thar's plenty of cold water. Hot water is sunthin' else—I mean, where the fishin' is good. After figgering, I decided Attean Pond w'ud be the place. We c'ud drive to the shore of it, step inter a boat, an' git out of the boat inter a bedroom. Once we got thar, we c'ud boat eround from Moose River to Big Wood Pond.

"So off we goes with Nancy's blessing. 'Remember, Dudley,' she says, 'that you are to be a missionary, sort of.' Then she talked more'n that. Between Mrs. Ford's vibrations and Nancy's prohibitions I was in a purty pickle. Off we goes, headed fer Jackman an' Attean Pond. All the way, up hill an' down, Mrs. Ford talked. I got the complete hist'ry of Lyman's case from murmurin' spark plugs to angina pee-tick-lus. She said that it had all come erbout becuz Lyman was too ambitious for gain and power.

"Lyman did rouse up long enough to protest. He

said that hard work never killed a man, but thar warn't no punch in his speech—no more than thar is in a quotation. An' speakin' of quotation, that was Mrs. Ford's worst habit. She turned loose sunthin' from a feller she called Zoromaster at every turn in the conversation. Zoromaster saith, 'Human ambitions are lamentable follies, and man is his own taskmaster.'

"She asked me if I was familiar with the wisdom of Zoromaster, but after that fer a sample, I didn't mind admittin' that I warn't.

"Zoromaster saith, "The ambitions of men are nonsense to the stars, and the body hath no more need of vestment than vestment hath need of the body." "

"It occurred to me that if this Zoromaster had waded eround in a January snowdrift, he might have changed his idea on vestment. Crotch, in real good winter weather even the vestment needs a body to keep it warm. I've seen long-legged underwear hung out in February that was frozen so stiff yer c'udn't help pityin' it.

"Wel-el, I hired that boat of the Holdens which is almost as big as a steamboat. I took my own canoe aboard, with the idea Lyman an' me might want to go fishing, but I hadn't taken inter account how far gone he was. Best he c'ud do was to troll off the end of the big boat, which he must have known was foolish-hopeless.

"Even in the old days, Lyman never impressed me as bein' much of a fly fisherman. It was only a routine 'ith him. Anyhow, we trolled with the assistance of Zoromaster. That was jist as much fun as playin' ring-around-the-rosey. Crotch, the prospect stretched ahead

until life disappeared into nothingness, as Zoromaster w'ud have said, an' prob'ly did.

“One thing that irritated me, as much as anything, was that condemned chauffeur, whose name was Tony sunthin' er other. I never met a mortal who c'ud give up carin' a dang erbout anythin' so easy as he did. The young saphead had been completely lost since the day they left Chicago, an' he had no more idea where he was at Attean than a south sea island cannibal w'ud have had. If I c'ud have talked with him it w'udn't have been so danged melancholy.

“When I'd watched Lyman a while, I seen that it was a fact the life had gone out of him. The way I studied it out, it never had occurred to him that Lyman Ford w'ud ever be sick. Not him! Now that he was, more er less, he was ready to lay down like a goat and die. No fight. Jist uncomprehending dismay. The only real positive move I saw him make durin' the fust day was to duck a little when a gull flew over the boat. Incidentally, that gull was the only livin' thing that Tony the chauffeur recognized all the time we was at Attean. ‘A gull!’ he says. ‘Well what d'yer know! A gull!’

“Fer the rest of it, Mrs. Ford talked. After a while, I got to feelin' awful strange. I c'udn't tell to save me whether we was fishin' er jist floatin' eround in a suspended state of Zoromasterianism. Talk erbout gittin' excited! How I wished that I c'ud. Mrs. Ford was the life of the party, accordin' to her lights, an' I seen that she was gently de-termined to be.

“That Zoromaster had said sunthin' unpleasant fer every occasion. ‘Zoromaster saith, “No man can ever

possess so little as an atom of this world. We but journey from daylight to dark, and in the end we pitch our tents beyond the edge of our knowledge.”’

“Lyman did wake up a little when she quoted that. ‘That reminds me,’ he said. ‘Does anyone know what’s happened to the stock market?’ But his wife came back with, ‘Better to be anxious about the morrow than to fret thyself about to-day, for do not all our days add up to the morrow?’

“It was no wonder to me, after that, when Lyman began to discuss cremation versus lettin’ nature take its course. It was so durn cheerful all day long that I mentioned the fact to Tony when we went back to camp.

“‘I sh’ud worry,’ he says, ‘so long as they pay me good, and I eat good, even if this place is so back in the sticks that it stinks like it was brand new. Say, do you believe that dars bears up in dees mountains?’

“‘Thar’s b’ars in any mountain,’ I says. ‘How much does Lyman pay yer?’

“‘That’s my business,’ he says. ‘But them bears ain’t dangerous—would youse say?’

“‘That’s the b’ar’s business,’ I says. And I left him lookin’ off across the lake to the mountains. I was lonely fer some human comp’ny. The way I felt an’ the way everythin’ looked didn’t jibe. The July sun was setting, an’ it looked like an army of gypsies on the march—yeller wagons an’ red hosses all across the sky!

“Then who sh’ud I come across but Mrs. Ford on her way to supper. ‘It’s mighty purty in the west,’ I says to her.

“She spread on one of them sweet, sad smiles. ‘Zoro-

master saith, "In nature man has no abode. While nature is in travail to produce a greener grasshopper, man must pray his way to a higher destiny."

"Then she sighed. An' I sighed. Gol darn it all to hellhuddle, that Zoromaster made me sad. I don't know how I c'ud be so de-pressed, but I was. Afore I went to bed that night, I sot down an' wrote Nancy a letter—tellin' her how it had always seemed to me a good old-fashioned custom to bury a man facin' the east, even if *he* didn't know it.

"So when I got up, afore daylight the next morning, I felt jist the same way—like a porcupine at the tip-top of a hackmatak at the end of a day in January, forty below, an' the wind blowin' like the devil was in it. Of course, Lyman didn't git up until dinner time, so I had that time on my hands. After I et, I borrowed an out-board motor an' a boat to go with it, an' I headed straight for the mouth of Moose River and Attean Rips. I got thar before real sunup.

"That's the time your streamer come in handy, Mak—the one made of white bucktail and lime-green, silver body, red throat, an' red tail. In ten min-its, I had turned loose three pound-trout. What fun! I got rid of Zoromaster, condemn him. In another ten min-its I had a fat four-pounder. Crotch, I felt real good!

"When I got back to camp, several normal-minded fellers came out to admire my trout. Then I met Tony. He asked me what kind of a fish that was. So I told him that it was a *Salvelinus fontinalis*. An' he said, 'Who do youse think yer kiddin'?"

"Then I got dinner packed an' ready, so we c'ud eat

out if Lyman felt like it. I took special pains to pick out some prime steaks an' all that. When Lyman appeared, he was all wrapped up but shiverin' chilly. We boarded the big boat. When we had gone erbout half a mile, he broke the silence. 'I remember,' he says, an' stopped. Jist like that. He c'udn't remember what he had remembered. I knew well enough that he had been goin' to say he remembered a mornin' like that at Moosehead, er Spencer, er Pierce Pond. Judus Priest, it was a sorry thing to watch him.

"Then we trolled. What a way to spend a day. The Lord fergive us! At noon, we put ashore on one of them purty little islands in Attean, an' ate our dinner. Then we got back in the boat to cruise all the afternoon. Nothin' happened except two er three little half-pound trout, an' what Zoromaster saith. Except, of course, Lyman had to drink some hot milk now an' then.

"Bout five o'clock Mrs. Ford smiled an' said, 'Slowly the plowman ploddeth down the lea, and leaves the world to darkness and to me.' That was some better than Zoromaster, an' I begun to wonder if things was goin' to improve.

"That reminds me,' said Lyman, 'that I heard someone in the dining-room say that you caught a nice trout this morning.'

"That is right,' says I. 'A real purty feller, too.'

"Lyman nodded. Then he said, 'We are not going to camp for supper tonight. You and Tony can get a lunch later. I want to be out here when the night comes on.'

"Mrs. Ford looked troubled, but if her Zoromaster ever said anythin' that fitted sech a turn of events she

kept it to herself. Anyhow, of course that's how we happened to be out until the Mayflies begun to hatch. Crotch, it was nice to watch them grey an' yeller flies fumble up from the mud, lay still a moment, an' then flutter off—only some of them didn't becuz the trout begun to smash at them.

“Who has got the words to describe a hatch of Mayflies in a trout pond! It's a queer experience. All at once the nature of things takes wings. It's mystery. It's all of life manifest in the hatch.

“The little thrushes was singing, and away up Moose River, jist this side of out-a-hearing, an owl called, ‘*T'whoo, t'whoo.*’ Tony shivered. The poor cuss didn't know what it was.

“And while we watched, a bigger trout began to feed among the hungry little fellers. ‘That trout,’ says Lyman, ‘reminds me of one I caught at Pierce Pond years ago.’ Crotch, it done me good to hear him say it!

“Mrs. Ford ventured, ‘Zoromaster saith, “Though man must make his bed in the house of uncertainty, let him say to his soul, I have another destiny.’ ”

“Crotch! What did that have to do with a hatch of Mayflies!

“‘In the old days,’ says Lyman, ‘I would try a dry fly—something big and yellow, or greyish. We caught nice trout, and salmon too, in Lindsley Cove and down around Gull Rock . . . in the old days.’

“Zoromaster was stumped.

“All the time, Lyman had fergotten the Warden's Worry on the end of his line. Of course it had sunk to the bottom while we idled, a-watchin' the Mayflies

hatch. Bine-by, I 'spose, he must have given it a hitch. Anyhow, thar was a mighty thrashin' at it. Lyman made a grab at his rod butt, an' thar was a queer look on his face, but he didn't say anything. Prob'ly Mrs. Ford an' Tony never noticed.

"It was gittin' later. The water over under the mountain was black. The thrushes sounded sleepy. The owl got an answer, away off. Then a Sphinx moth came blunderin' over the boat. It flew so close to Tony that it scared him, so he swung at it. Off it goes, staggerin' and losing altitude until it was real low over the water. *Wosh!* goes a big trout.

"Do yer remember how yer felt at school, when all of a sudden the ball game swung your way, an' it was your turn at the bat? Gosh almighty, I was excited. And the fust fly I laid hold of was no fly at all, but one of them bass bugs with buck hair fer wings that was two inches an' a half long. The head was red, the body black, but the wings an' tail was yeller all over. Sunthin' said to me, put it on! An' I did.

"'Don't git excited,' I says to Lyman. 'Jist drop it overboard, an' let it drift.'

"Mrs. Ford stood up, full of alarm. 'You mustn't use your arm, Lyman dear. Dr. Alexan—'

"'Twarn't much of a cast. But up comes that trout. Beautiful! All alive, savage, an' hungry as Nebuchadrezzar. That trout an' that bass bug landed a yard away from the rise.

"Mrs. Ford grabbed my arm, 'Take the pole! Take it away from him. This will be his death.'

"I looked at Lyman, an' his face looked blue, but I

knew that it sartinly w'ud be the death of him if I took that rod away from him. And so far as I'm concerned, I'd rather die playin' a big trout than huggin' a hot water bottle. So I didn't admit that I was worried.

"That trout ripped off eighty yards of line. Lyman was sweatin'. It dripped off his nose an' chin. 'Take it easy,' I says.

"'Shut up!' he says.

"Mrs. Ford was weeping. Tony jist smoked cigarettes.

"Lyman reeled in a lot of line, and then he lost it all to the trout. The dang thing went down the contours. It had weight. And it used it. It tried to rush under the boat. That's when I noticed that we had drifted ag'inst one of them little islands. The bushes was within easy reach. Sunthin' went *woosh!* Tony jumped up, wild as a lily of the field, an' he fell overboard, or he jumped. I didn't have time to tell which. Instead, I grabbed a pickpole and shoved us off the shore.

"And jist then Lyman says in a weak voice, 'The net.' I laid hold of the long-handled net an' reached fer Lyman's trout, but c'udn't. W'udn't have done any good, becuz that trout went off like a muzzle-loadin' gun.

"Now it was dark, only yer c'ud see a little near the water. And it begun to rain . . . plunkin' on the dead calm of the water. I found a flashlight in my packbasket. Lyman worked that trout in ag'in. That time, I netted him. Dang it all, that was a handsome trout! Lyman an' me looked at it—glistenin' wet an' as purty as a flower garden—dang it, purtier!

"Lyman said, 'That trout is a dead ringer for one

Dr. Wade caught in Grass Pond, ten years ago. Who suggested trolling? Dud, you must have known better.'

"Where in crotch was Zoromaster! I looked eround. An' thar she was, right where she crumbled down in a dead faint. Blazes, it took a turn out of me. An' I ran to the thermos jug fer some cold water. When I got back, Lyman had pushed her head down lower, an' she was comin' eround. In a min-it more, thar was that sweet, sad smile ag'in.

"Lyman says to her, 'Where's that blockhead of a chauffeur?'

"That was right e-nough. Where was the cuss? I shouted. An' back comes his voice from the other side of the island. An' do yer think we c'ud git him back? No. When that little deer blew at us, just as the boat went ashore, he'd jumped out running—an' he hadn't stopped until he come to the water on the other side. So the durned idgit c'udn't find his way back ag'in. All the answer I c'ud git out of him was, 'Bears!'

"I told him to stay right where he was, if he valued his life, and I got the motor going an' we run eround the island, an' I pushed her in so he c'ud git aboard. Crotch, he'd aged.

"'Now I know what's ailed me,' says Lyman. 'Now I know. I've been afraid.' "

Dud filled his pipe.

I said, "Dr. Wade must have been pleased."

"Do you know," said Dud, "I intended to ask Doc how in creation Lyman ever got inter sech condition, but that next winter Doc died. Dropped dead in his own office."

THE PATCHED BUCK

DUD DEAN and I had been grouse hunting in the late October weather. We were cold. When we entered the dark, weather-abused house, the light on a kitchen table was not enough to reveal much about the place. But the host was heartily pleased to see Dud.

“Well, well, two holes in the ground, how be yer Dud?” said the little man.

“I’m all right,” said Dud. “And I’m mighty glad to see yer, Nunny. Yer don’t git to town too often these days.”

“Nope, I’ve been tarnation busy. Besides, most of the year, this road is sunthin’ worse than a continuation of mudholes all the way to the main road. While ago I lost my old mare, and the hoss I’ve got now gits awful discouraged. Last time I went out to Bingham, the dim-witted critter laid down in the worst mudhole an’ I c’udn’t git him up on his feet without a fight, so I left him.”

“Fer how long?” asked Dud.

“Oh, he come a-pokin’ in here the next afternoon. Got hungry, I reckon.”

“Why don’t yer buy yourself one of them jeeps?”

“I did.”

“Yer did?”

“Yep, I did. But them is a vain thing fer safety. Plum’ dangerous. I got through most of the mudholes on my way in here, but at one of the last it took off. Left the road. Went right over a big stunwall and down inter a pasture a piece before I got the gasoline shut off. That’s where it is now — been thar fer two er three weeks. Dummied if I can figger how to git back on the road without crossin’ that wall ag’in. Of course I c’ud move e-nough of them field rocks to make a way through, but I hain’t felt up to that. In fact, I hain’t had time, betwixt cuttin’ wood for winter and doin’ a moderate amount of trout fishing, coon hunting, and jist a little fox houn’ing. Beats the devil, but I’m always behind—always sunthin’ to do, and always sunthin’ else to do so that a feller can’t do either one.”

My eyes had become accustomed to the dim light. The room was “low-posted.” And the overall revealed that no woman had presided in that house. The ceiling plaster shone like ebony, and the walls were covered with an array of tools, guns, traps, clothing, traces of popcorn, bags, boots, snowshoes, packs, and several fly-rods. And near the huge fireplace a tiger cat sat looking at an ancient dog that lay on a thick pallet of blankets in the fireplace. Our host chuckled.

“Makes a handy place for old ’Bij. I only use it fer a little while in the month of November. Then I set up a stove. That fireplace con-sumes more wood than a pulp mill. Even the little while I use it, takes two, three cords of wood, dependin’ on what the weather’s like.”

Dud stood up. “Mind if I git a drink of water, Nunny?”

“Hol’on!” exclaimed Nunny, as Dud started toward a doorway. “Don’t try to go out thar! The floor fell inter the cellar last springtime. I’ll git yer some nice spring water. Don’t matter if the floor did go down, becuz I hain’t used that well water since poor old Tobias fell in it. Durn old fool. Can’t imagine what a cat w’ud be doin’ hangin’ eround a well. Looked to me like suicide. Anyhow, sp’iled the water.”

When our host went out with a lantern and pail, Dud said, “Nunny ain’t exactly shiftless er lazy. He jist don’t figger things the way some folks does. Prob’ly he didn’t need that back room. He w’ud figger it was easier to go out eround to the woodshed than to fix that floor. As fer the pump an’ the well, he’d like spring water better.

“Nunny has lived here all his life, except fer two years he spent out in Michigan. Sort of had to come back here to look after his mother, when the old man died too soon. The old lady lived on fer twenty years. Meantime, she refused to leave. She’d say, ‘You go, Nun, but I’m wedded here fer life. I can get along nice.’ Of course, that was nonsense, becuz even in them days the nearest neighbor was three miles off.

“So Nunny stayed. In a way, he was a pioneer, becuz he was the fust person in this country that raised pine and spruce trees in garden beds. Sometimes, he’d have a quarter of an acre thick with little seedlings. When they was two years old, he’d reset them. Then they’d grow thar until they was five er six years old. After that, he w’ud set ’em out at erbout eight er ten feet apart. It kept him out of mischief, becuz he started a new batch of seedlings every year. Folks said that he’d gone crazy.

Yer see, when most good farmers was fightin' pine and spruce as tight as they c'ud swing a bush scythe, Nunny was bendin' his back to set them out—fust in the big pasture, then all over the mowin' fields. After that, he bought more an' more old fields that folks was glad to be rid of fer a dollar an acre. Yep, folks laughed their heads dizzy erbout Nunny Twimby's folly. Wel-el, it's a queer world. Nowdays, Nunny c'ud cash in fer forty, fifty thousand dollars, easy. Poor old cuss!"

When Dud paused, I asked, "By the way, where is that spring?"

"Jist over the fence . . . Say, you're right! What's took him so long?"

We waited ten minutes. Nunny had not come back. So with Dud's flashlight, we crossed the yard, which was more or less barricaded with piles of sleds and equipment for winter work in the woods. Dud chuckled. "Nunny don't use this stuff. Hires some other feller."

When we reached the fence, Dud said, "The spring's right over thar." And he turned the flashlight in that direction. There was Nunny's lantern, and there was Nunny, down on his hands and knees.

"What in thunderation be yer doing?" asked Dud.

"Dud, I've lost my store teeth in the spring, and by crotch, I can't seem to locate 'em."

And that was my first introduction to Nunny Twimby. He is a fabulous sort of person without a haircut. I would not know how to catalogue such a person, but Dud Dean does. "Nunny is his own kind of man—smart except where an' when he don't bother to be." Then Dud told me a story about a patched buck, Nunny

Twimbly, and a non-resident hunter. So the rest of this introduction to Nunny is Dud's story, all of it.

Once, a long time ago, Nunny an' me put in one crotchly disturbin' night. We warn't meat hunting, and this was before the law ag'inst night hunting. So it was respectable enough, except that Nunny was huntin' fer two tens and a five dollar bill. Jist re-member that we was young fellers, who was doin' the best we c'ud, considerin' the shape of our heads.

Nunny got hold of a feller who lived down in Boston, which, as Mat Markham says, is jist a little east of Massachusetts. That feller had money to spend, and he wanted to git a patched buck for his collection.

It so happened that Nunny knew the whereabouts of jist sech a deer, but the critter was uncommon sly an' careful. Of course, yer understand that all-white deer er spotted deer are only rare variations, er freaks, dropped by normally colored white-tailed deer. It's plain that thar's a white strain of deer mixed away back. It's once in a thousand, prob'ly, that one of them white variations is fawned. I've asked a good many hunters and woodsmen if they had ever seen a white fawn, and I've yit to find a man who has. I know that I never did. And I guess the reason is becuz a doe takes extra care to hide away one of them white freaks. If she didn't, of course they'd show up purty plain. If that happens to be a fact, the white deer, er the patched deer, gits extra trainin' to be timid and careful. Anyhow, most of 'em are.

All of us older fellers growed up with the superstition that it's the devil's own luck to shoot a white deer,

and purty gen'rally that superstition amounts to a fear. But a good many folks allow that the bad luck don't go with shootin' a patched deer, becuz it really ain't all white, although of course it ain't all brown either. That's queer, becuz a spotted deer is erbout as rare as a clear white critter, which ain't an albino, yer understand.

Wel-el, Nunny had studied out the habits of this partic'lar buck, and he had found out that the critter was comin' to some apple trees near an old house, the name of which I don't aim to mention fer reasons that I'm not concealing.

Why Nunny was so anxious to have me go with him, I can only guess. And why in seven kind of idgits I went I cannot guess. But I met Nunny and his sporter, and the three of us went out to the old house. We got thar erbout three o'clock in the afternoon. Even then, it was almighty chilly an' kinda unpleasant. An old, old house smells like anythin' else that hasn't had a bath fer years an' years. No, that's wrong, becuz an old house smells worse. Its own smells git mixed with molds, rots, decays, mice, rats, skunks, and porcupines. All the wild critters like to move inter a house that men have left behind—I mean, sech as I've named, and squirrels, weasels, and snakes.

And in addition to sech late augments, thar is the old kitchen smells that leak inter every inch of plaster, room by room. And the sum total of them smells is a penetratin' compound! Thar's cabbage, an' all the veg'tables. Then thar's baked beans, soups, stews, nut-ton, beef, pork, deermeat, moosemeat, an' caribou—

plus the Monday washings fer a hundred years. Also, thar's the smell of coats, frocks, and men's socks. Them things come in from the barn, er wet from the storms outdoors. An' what erbout the smells of homemade soaps, spices, seasoning, an' all sech?

Take away the housewives with their b'ilin' hot water and soap; mix it up with the doings of a hundred years to date; and what yer have is a *Smell*. It lasts as long as the house does.

Wel-el, the sporter's name was Lowell Cromstock. Nunny didn't like him much. His business was wholesale an' retail groceries. I know becuz he mentioned it every so often. He said that he wanted Nunny an' me to call him Low, fer short. But Nunny called him Crum fer short. I didn't venture to call him anythin' but Mister.

When we reached the place, Lowell wanted to look at the evidence that the buck had been under them apple trees, but Nunny said, "Not by a damsite. We're not goin' to advertise ourselves. We're goin' up in the east chamber, and thar we stay till ye've shot the buck yer want. Then yer can tramp eround all over God's creation fer all of me." Lowell used the word "arbitrary," but Nunny didn't soften up.

That house was one of them common enough buildings. Thar was the main house, with a big front door. From that front hall, yer went right inter the livin'-room, er left inter the parlor. Then thar was an ell off the living-room, which was the kitchen and a woodshed. Upstairs, thar was two big roof-ceilin' rooms with winders on the east an' west ends. The chimney went

up in the middle, at the head of the steep stairs, so thar was a low closet in the back.

The front stairs was the uncomfortable feature, becuz they was usually as steep as goin' up ter heaven. Maybe folks remembered to say their prayers after climbing sech stairways. Anyhow, except fer that trouble, them was the most practical houses I've ever seen.

Ayah. We went up the stairs. It was an' hour and a half to dark, an' I hadn't sot thar fifteen min-its until I begun to feel sorry for myself. I marveled that I had been roped inter sech a situation an' propersition! Somehow I hadn't considered how cold-damp and odoriferous an old house can be in the late falltime. Wel-el, I sort of settled down inside my shirt, an' prepared my mind fer a crotchly dull time of it.

Lowell tried to talk, but Nunny shushed him. So we sot. That is, me and Lowell sot on the floor. Nunny sot on a box, with his eyes fixed to a crack outdoors. Blast sech an idea of deer hunting! That was *my* last house party.

Since thar was nothin' to do, I tried to guess all the smells that had been mixed up inter the *Smell*. Nunny turned away from his crack outdoors. "This is foolish," he says. "Them deer won't be coming in until dark. So we better eat."

"Cabbage," I says, since that was what I c'ud smell most.

Nunny thought I was referin' to him, so he says, "Cabbage yourself."

"Maybe you mean cribbage," says Lowell, hopefully. Crotch. We drank some cold coffee. It was mourn-

fully cold an' bitter. And we ate sandriches, which was even more desolate. Crotch, I felt lower than the cellar.

Cellar! It come to me like sunthin' chilly! And I told Lowell, thinkin' that he'd be amused, maybe. Folks had always said that a poor cuss was buried in that cellar. He had come erlong the road from Canada. How anybody knew that he had money on him is more than I can tell, but they did say that he had a roll of it. He asked fer a night's lodging. He got it—in the cellar. Did anybody ever dig an' make a search? Don't sp'il a good story!

Of course yer can't swallow a yarn like that. I never did. Travelers don't come out of Canada with money. They come out with a shirt on their backs, if they're lucky. They go *back* with money. But, crotch, come to think erbout it, maybe that poor feller was goin' *back* to Canada. Crotch, I smelled death in that old house.

That place, that hill, had its share of odd and musty associations. Old Henry was the last man to move off the hill. Before that, it had been a neighborhood of farmers, but when Henry and his de-mented old woman sold their farm to a lumber concern, the neighbors had all gone, some of them years ago. Fer a few years, after he moved to Bingham, Henry kept young-stock up on the hill. I mean, pastured them out summers. But in the end, he had to give up. His wife grew more and more lunny, until she thought she was back on the farm. So she'd git up early Tuesday mornings to churn butter. Then she'd weep becuz someone had stold the cream. After a while, Henry thought so, too. Then he'd walk up an' down the main street with a rope an' halt-

er, lookin' fer his cattle—when he hadn't owned any fer years. All that come to my mind, becuz old Henry had lived on the place where we was waitin' fer a patched buck to come to his end.

Wel-el, it got plenty dark in the house. And it got cold, bone-cold. The soggy old timbers begin to freeze and then to crack and groan. A place like that is never really still at night, except for jist long e-nough to contrive another puzzlin' noise. I tell yer, it's bewildering. Before yer can figger out what made the last noise, thar's another. Then ye've got two to figger out. So afore yer know it, thar's too many creaks, cracks, snaps, slips, an' muffled thumps—all unaccounted.

Nunny was back at his crack outdoors. It was dark in that room. All of a sudden, thar was a pool of light spilled on the floor below the sashless window. Lowell moved his feet back. So I guessed that his thoughts had been uncomfortable. Anyhow, the moon was up.

It was right then that sunthin' pushed and fumbled and mumbled at the front door at the foot of them stairs. The door had been open when we arrived, but I had closed it with the hopes it might be a little mite warmer inside if I did.

Nunny heard the noise, er some part of it. And he said to us in a hoss whisper, "Be quiet. Can't yer?"

I guess Lowell was fed up by that time, becuz he said sunthin' erbout bein' a damp fool—meaning Nunny of course.

Then the front door gave in, and swung back on hinges that yelled like a hurt rabbit. I c'ud make out the look on Lowell's face. He was thinkin' that them

stairs was the only way down, except the one winder in the room where we sot.

Nunny was pervoked. "Go tell whoever that is we're here fust, an' don't need their help."

I thought that was a good idea, being as I was good an' sick of settin' thar. Lowell went with me. When we looked down the stairs thar stood old Henry in a long, tattered overcoat.

"Who's up here?" he says with his old crackin' voice. And he held up a lantern.

"It's us," says Lowell, in a voice that cracked as bad as Henry's.

"Who's us?" says Henry, holdin' up the lantern in his two hands.

I had a hunch that Lowell sh'udn't have said anything, and I spoke right up. "It is jist Dud Dean an' Nunny Twimby," I says. "Yer know us, Henry."

Henry's voice quivered up and up. "I know Dud Dean an' Nunny Twimby. I knew them afore they was born. But I don't know you fellers."

Then 'ith a great show of pains, he sot the lantern on the floor in front of him and reached around in back. Fust thing I c'ud see after that, I was lookin' in the nervous end of an old musket. And the trigger was full cock.

"Don't shoot!" yells Lowell, backin' away until he was out of sight.

"What in the devil is all the matter?" says Nunny. "What's all the noise. Tell 'em to git out of here."

"You tell them," says Lowell. "And where's my rifle?"

Nunny was mad. Out he came. "Who is it?" he asks me. I told him it was old Henry.

"Him! Well tell him—"

Nunny started down the stairs. When he got near e-nough, Henry prodded him in the belly with his old musket. "Hands up!" he croaks. Crotch, a man c'ud feel that he warn't joking any. Nunny held up his arms, but he warn't pacified. "Hell's bells," he says. "Yer old lunitick, don't yer know me?"

"Git back up them stairs," says Henry.

"Do yer mean it?"

"Sartin, I mean it!"

Henry backed up the steps. Lowell appeared with his rifle. I laid hold of it. "Put that back," I says. "The old cuss is harmless."

"Harmless!" says Lowell. "You call *that* harmless?"

Nunny was stubborn. He sot down on the fourth step up, but he was careful not to lower his arms. "Henry," he says, "this is re-dic'lous. Can't yer see who I am? I'm Nunny Twimby. Good Lord, ye've et at my house more times than ye've fingers an' thumbs."

"Ye're a cattle thief. That's who yer are. Ye've stold my red an' white heifer, cuss your hide. Where's that heifer? I've put up with these thievin' ways too long."

"Look at me, Henry," says Nunny. "Yer know me. And yer know Dud Dean."

"Names, names," says Henry.

"Henry," says Nunny, "I bet yer a dollar that old gun hain't loaded."

When old Henry laughed, we knew he was crazy as a full moon.

"She's loaded," he cackles. "Four fingers of powder and ten double O buckshot. And I asked yer, where is my red an' white heifer?"

Nunny looked at the old cuss fer as much as three min-its. Then he says to Henry, "Oh, that red and white heifer? Well, yer know that big white birch beside the cellar hole, down the road erbout two miles? She's thar."

"It hain't more 'n a mile," says Henry. "Besides, I come past that birch less than an hour ago, and I didn't see my heifer. How do yer explain that, smart feller?"

"Becuz your eyes was holden, same as the Bible says."

Old Henry rubbed his eyes.

"Your eyes are still holden," says Nunny. "If they warn't, ye'd know Nunny Twimby."

The old feller rubbed his eyes and forehead. "All I want," he says, "is my red and white heifer. Maybe she was at the big white birch. If she hain't thar, I'll know that ye're a liar and a cattle thief to boot. And then I'll come back to settle with yer."

Crotch, the old feller turned his back on us, pulled the door open, an' went out—lantern in one old hand and the musket in the other.

"God bless us!" says Lowell. "Have you any more of that kind?"

"Durn old nuisance," says Nunny. "Now let's git back to our business."

"You mean, let's get out of here, before that old fool comes back with blood in his eyes!" Lowell says.

"Shucks," says I, "yer might's well try fer a shot at that buck. Henry's harmless, like I told yer."

“There you go! And that’s the trouble with you fellers. You don’t realize how utterly dangerous such insanity is. It’s paranoia!”

“Of course, if ye’re scared,” says Nunny.

That went under Lowell’s hide, becuz he *was* sca’t. “Very well,” he says. “Get back to your crack, Mister.”

“The only thing that worries me,” says Nunny, “is that the old fool might break a leg er freeze to death. Don’t anybody look after him?”

I didn’t know. Prob’ly not, becuz he lived all alone in his last years.

We went back. Nunny took up his watch—this time standin’ back from the winder, but so he c’ud see out of it. In fact we all watched. It was broad moonlight by that time. Maybe an hour passed. It was still an’ lonesome outdoors. Frost sparkled on the ridgepole of the ell. A big old porcupine climbed slowly up a hackmatack that grew near the old half-dead lilac bush.

Then I heard a deer coming—two deer—three deer! It was two does and a buck. The buck was behind. One doe was big. The other was only a yearling. The buck w’ud weigh erbout a hundred an’ fifty, fer my guess.

Nunny motioned fer Lowell to step up front. “Rest your rifle ag’inst the winder case. Take your time. Make it good.”

I looked ag’in. The buck had a brown head, brown legs, an’ patches of brown on his rumps. He was no more than twenty yards away. I whispers to Lowell, “Remember that yer’re shooting *down* on him.”

Lowell was nervous, but he got his rifle at rest, an’ aimed.

Instid of the sound of the shot, Lowell jumped back, walkin' all over Nunny's feet. "My God!" he says.

The buck blew, and off he goes, tail in the air, swingin' right an' left. And we heard the does go out the other side.

Yer c'ud see Nunny tryin' to hold back. "What ailed yer?" he says.

Lowell grabbed hold of Nunny by the shoulders. He was a big man. "Listen," he said, "I almost shot the old man's red and white heifer."

Nunny's eyes bunged out. "Are you crazy? That was the patched buck. The one I promised ye'd git a shot at. Heifer!"

Lowell turned to me, as if he'd given Nunny up as beyond all sense and reason. "Dud," he says, "look down there, near where the heifer is. Tell me, tell Nunny, is that the old man standin' there or not."

Nunny looked when I did. And by crotch, thar stood Henry. He had lost his lantern an' his gun, er he had laid them aside. All he had in his hands was a dangling rope and a leather halter.

"Wa-al, I'll be stumped," says Nunny, "if that hain't Henry, the old fool."

"I told yer so," says Lowell.

"Yer didn't. Yer said that it was the red an' white heifer, and Henry hain't owned any de-scription of heifer, nor any other cattle, fer years an' years!"

"You mean?"

"I mean that he got back here at the worst possible time—and thar goes your buck!"

Ayah. That was that. I felt kinda sorry fer both men.

Lowell had come a long way to git his buck. And Nunny had lost twenty-five dollars. But old Henry bothered me most. I went down thar, and laid hold of him. He was pooched, but not so crazy-headed. "At fust," he said, "I thought it was my red and white heifer, but it was only one of them spotted deer."

We took him home. But fust, when he and I came from eround back to the front of the house, thar was his lantern on the stun doorstep. When I went after it, I found his old muzzle-loader. It was still cocked, jist as it had been fer years. The lock was so rusty, yer c'udn't let the hammer down.

THE JORDAN IS A DIRTY BROOK

WE were using a hackle dry, black as the night that was near at hand. The Kennebec, below the huge dam, was at its own pitch, while the “load” fell off, and the giant turbines slowed down. Dud Dean stood in the summer water up to his thighs, and we were fishing the main channel west of the influx of the Austin.

A rainbow trout sliced up and struck my floating fly. The strike was vicious and savage, and the hooked fish went off like a stone from an ancient catapult. At the end of its own pleasure, the rainbow slid up to a flashing jump above the water. And it looked almost incredibly handsome over the flowing river.

“Glory be!” shouted Dud. “Guess that’s why we’re fishing.”

Thereafter I was in a state of experience mixed with anxiety and perplexity. The rainbow was only a four-pounder, where fish double that weight were taken, but it turned loose a bewildering circus of runs, circles, plunges, and jumps. And near the end of the show, my forearm ached with fatigue.

Dud netted the broad, streamlined creature. And he said, “We’ve had our share of the fun. Let’s go ashore, set down, and think it over. I’ve got to reconsider some of my old conclusions. This imported fish is a challenge.

He's a buster, a ripper, an' a cracking good gamester. I must admit that he lays it over our trout, when it comes to fight and action. And I guess that he's a smarter fish. Not that I love our trout the less, but that the truth has to be told. The big question in my mind is: does he even top our non-migratory salmon? I have grave doubts. We've got to contrive some real tests like timing both fish, considering all the tactics they employ when hooked — all that sort of thing. With some luck it c'ud be done. These rainbows are so powerful and fast that it won't do to say our native salmon are a better fish on the basis of mere opinion. Consarn it all, I feel as if maybe the old idols are goin' down. That fish fairly tied yer up at times. It w'ud be purty difficult to lick sech a fish in real rough water. But then, in real water it's hard to land a salmon. In fact, it's nine to one that yer don't on light rigging."

So Dud and I went ashore to a log that had lodged on the rocks over a gravel bar above the mouth of the Austin Stream.

"Let's see," said Dud Dean, "one, two, three . . . wel-el, I can see ten fishermen from where we set. Twenty years ago, we came down here night after night when thar were no other fishermen. Times have changed. Now thar's ten fishermen where thar was one, an' now thar's one fish where thar uster be ten.

"Over thar stands Fletcher Mountain. Less than one man out of ten, now-a-days, knows why it's called Fletcher Mountain. William Fletcher built a log cabin right handy to where we set — in sight of the Kennebec, and almost on the bank of the Austin. He died in 1806

— the fust white man to use an axe and hoe in this place. That mountain preserves his name more surely than that slab of thin slate down here on the river bank where the old settlers were buried.

“Fletcher came here a few years before the end of the eighteenth century. In a hist’ry book sense, that warn’t long ago, but it is long enough to include many pleasant, and some unpleasant, changes. Fer one thing, those years witnessed the end of the sea salmon and the shad on the Kennebec — yes, and the mighty sturgeon, too. When William Fletcher lived here, tons of ocean salmon pushed by his door. Tons! Too many of them fer their own good, maybe, becuz they crowded each other to the banks of the Austin when they turned away from the Kennebec an’ started up the smaller stream. Fletcher’s boys speared them salmon until they was wearied out. They salted down barrels of those big silver fish that were fat with the goodness and the richness of the sea! So it was that the best of food came to them, like the quail came to the ancient Jews in the desert-wilderness.

“And the years since 1806, was time e-nough to build dams. Fust, one at Augusta, on the falls above the tide-water. Then another at Waterville. And so they built them on up the river. The fust dam turned the trick as disasterously as a hundred. It was a wall across one of the finest salmon rivers in the world. The dams were for progress, but they were built at the expense of thousands of tons of food.

“So, it seems to me, that in the long run of the years men have to strike a balance. And maybe it’s only

after the long run of years that the books reveal how we must carry our assets and our losses. Thar's sunthin' turribly wrong with our bookkeepin' now, becuz we don't know how to estimate the real values of the good things for living. Sech are not jist so many carloads of hogs, potatoes, lumber, pulp, pig iron, er whatever — not that sort of asset alone — but re-creation, things to love like great books, hills, ponds, rivers, and beauty! If we destroy sech good things to make a better mousetrap, er the like, our ledgers don't balance in the long run.

“When I git to thinkin' and cogitatin' erlong them lines, it seems to me that when precious things are at stake, a man only fights fer that he's learned to love. An' maybe the most sorrowful fact erbout us men is that too often we don't realize how much we love a thing until it's too late.

“Of course, I'm a small-minded feller. However, I don't feel like apologizin' to anybody becuz I think that fishin' fer trout is important recreation. If it was left with me, I'd drop out of the pitchur all them who only fish fer fish in the way a feller digs potatoes fer potatoes. I'd take no account of him who can't have a good time unless he's acquirin' a mess of anythin' so danged perishable as fish are — sunthin' a few hours of hot sun can change inter a stench. And so I'd figger on men who had learned to think beyond the length of twenty-five yards of good line er the range of a 30-30, becuz its plain that thar are times when a half-thought is not better than no thought at all, since it's pos'tively worse.

“I know full well that if I tried to say what I'm sayin' to you to some folks, that they'd say, 'Hear the old fool

preach.' An' it does beat the devil how quick a poor cuss can wade out over his head! But let me put it best I can. I knew a feller — you know him too — who belonged eround here. He warn't smart, but he warn't foolish. Thar was a few simple things he c'ud do cleverly. Like huntin' wildcats er cuttin' pulpwood. An' he'd learned to fish fer trout.

“Then, here comes the news that set great armies rollin' across the world. In this country thar was one million, two million, up to seven er eight million young fellers in uniform. They was jist American boys who had to leave their schools and all the normal ways of living to take part in a desperate struggle. Fust they knew, the usual ways of livin' was set aside an' the whole world was geared up to the machinery of war.

“The young feller I have in mind was called erlong with others, some of them was better able to see it through than he was. In his case, he was only bewildered an' all at sea. Re-member him? Sensible folks that knew him c'ud have told how it w'ud turn out, but he was big an' strong, an' he c'ud write his name an' read a little, so the hard-pressed officials passed him erlong. Then he was lost among the millions.

“His uniform fitted. He c'ud shoot straight. But he didn't comprehend where he was at. Sech a slow mind needs too much time to git squared away, an' time was the very thing that the army was short on. So no one really noticed him, unless it was the men in his own squad. Yer see, he was scared — not scared of war, but sca't of the strange. An' he was sick at heart fer the little piece of earth he knew.

“But it all turned out better than ye’d expect. After a while, his name come up fer a leave, before his comp’ny embarked fer service more than half the world away. I talked with him the day he got back home fer ten free days. I guessed what was happenin’ to him. The bewilderment in him was like a b’ar. He had kept tacklin’ it the best he c’ud, but it had throwed him every time. After all, he’d never really growed up.

“I remember how his long, homely face lit up like a quarter moon, when I asked him what he planned to do with his time off. ‘Sir,’ he says, ‘I am goin’ to Berry Pond. An’ thar I’m stayin’ till it’s time to go back.’

“‘Why to Berry Pond?’ I asked him.

“‘Becuz I know it in thar. Becuz thar’s room in thar, plenty of room for everybody that comes erlong . . . Big Berry, Little Berry, Durgin, an’ Lone Jack. Say, do yer know that thar’s trout in Lone Jack that are bigger than five pounds!’

“I knew. And I wished him luck — all kinds of good luck.

“After, I got part of the story from him, an’ the rest from other folks. He took a pack-basket that w’ud hold half a barrel, an’ he packed it to the rim with good stuff to eat, blankets, an’ all else he might need to be comfortable. And before he left town, he spent thirty-two dollars fer a flyrod.

“Then he set up housekeepin’ in an old camp at Big Berry. Fust, he had comp’ny, but I’ve fergot who ’twas. The two of them fished an’ fished. He tried to make up fer all he’d missed, an’ fer all he’d yet to lose. They caught trout in Big Berry, those cardinal-flower-red

trout that run up to a pound, with once in a while one that's twice as heavy. They fished in Durgin Pond, where they caught more of the same kind — only in Durgin Pond, the soldier hooked one of them legends. It got away, as legends always do, but he swore to me: 'Honest to God, that trout weighed eight pounds, if he weighed an ounce.' They went up to Cold Stream Pond, an' up thar, they landed a sunset an' a twilight when the Mayflies hatched. And, 'Honest to God, everythin' went plum crazy! Thar was trout everywhere, *everywhere*. An' how they boiled, busted, an' jumped all over the place! We c'ud have filled a boat with them, but we let them all go free, becuz I was fed up on trout. In the army, I uster think that I c'ud eat trout three times a day fer the rest of my life. But after ye've et trout fer breakfast, dinner, an' supper, day after day, yer don't want trout to eat more'n once in a while. I told our sergeant, when he wanted to know what I was goin' to do up here in the sticks — I says, "By gosh, I'm goin' to git my fill of trout!" Know what he said? He said, "Trout? What trout? Just fish, ain't they?"'

"Ayah, an' between times, they fished in Lone Jack, becuz thar are a few *big* trout in that little pond. And the lure of *big* trout is an everlastin' pull at men. Fellers that have fished had ruther catch a *big* wild trout than to be a king!

"The soldier an' his friend was out on a raft that they had patched up. The time was early in the mornin' when the red gods haunt the wilderness, when countless little flowers of the day begin to open up, an' when the sun mixes night an' day together an' pours soft colors eround

old conkey pines that stand high above the newer stuff. It was early mornin' and the ferever was all eround Lone Jack. I mean, it's good fer the saint er the sinner to go fishin' in the early light; good fer the genius er the dullard to be fishin' afore the sun comes up over the beloved near-at-hand. The soldier told me that, the best he c'ud. He *felt* it in his bones.

"He jist happened to begin his fishin' with a Black Ghost streamer. And he said that prob'ly he'd made fifty casts without a swirl er rise. Then, sunthin' like a beaver made a rush at the streamer. 'Honest to God,' he says to me, 'my heart stopped beating, but I didn't say anything to my buddy, who was still-fishin' with worms. Instid, I cast back an' pulled that Black Ghost like it was a sca't minnow tryin' to git under sunthing. Then that trout hit. Honest to God, it almost broke my arm, an' my heart started beatin' like a jeep goin' over plowed ground. Yer know, it w'ud beat all right fer a while, then it w'ud jump an' buck.

"I says to my buddy, "Git your line in here an' out of the way, becuz I've hooked a whale of a trout." He hated to do it, but I made him. I told him that if he didn't I w'ud throw him off the raft. He c'udn't swim, an' he thought I meant what I'd said. Honest to God, tryin' to fight that trout was jist like tryin' to lead a bull by the tail! I knew my leader w'ud bust if I tried harder, so I let him run. Sometimes he went slow, round an' round the raft, like a jeep in low-low. Stop him! I c'udn't. Then he'd spurt — down the pond, up the pond. Once he went eround a stake that some fool had left stickin' in the mud. Imagine how I felt erbout that!

But it broke off like a piece of punk. Once he went under the raft, pullin' the leader inch by inch ag'inst the outside of the fust log. I told my buddy to push the raft away. When he tried, the pole scared that trout like hell. Honest to God, I thought I'd lost that trout! I almost lost him so many times that my stomach knotted up, an' my legs had cramps.

“ ‘Honest to God, it was eight o'clock until that trout slowed down. And when I saw how wide it was, my eyes went blind fer half a min-it. Then my buddy asked me, did I want him to net it. All we had was one those little short-handled nets. When he leaned out to reach the trout, the raft sunk down on our side — so thar was a foot of water over that side of it. And that trout swam right over it. We both jumped back'ards, an' thar he was high an' dry, an' a-flopping an' a-thumpin' all over it. We both tried to git hold of him, but then he disappeared between the logs. I dropped my rod, reached hold of the line, an' pulled up. Up he comes through the logs, an' I grappled him. My thumb went inter his mouth an' got scratched on his teeth so bad it bled. But I didn't let go. I held on. Five pounds!

“ ‘Honest to God, my head didn't stop aching for three days. But I got that trout jist the same!

“That's the fust part of the story. A week later, the army authorities got in touch with our soldier's brother. They had lost their soldier. He was a week overdue at camp. He was A.W.O.L. Where was he? The brother didn't know. He had presumed that the feller had returned to camp, an' was now safe with Uncle Sam.

“Wel-el, where was he? They went in to Big Berry

Pond. An' thar he was. Thar he sot in a big rowboat out in the middle of the pond, where he was castin' and castin' in the sweet, good air. Crotch! He had lost track of his time, fergotten completely.

"It seems that the authorities made out that it was a serious case. They had a trial. A pyschiatrist helped some. But all the chap had to say fer himself was that he fergot what day it was, what time it was. He didn't mean to stay over. But finally the lieutenant that was app'inted to defend our soldier, got on his feet. An' it was lucky fer the feller that this lieutenant had been a trout fisherman.

" 'Sirs,' he says, 'Up where this soldier was born and brought up, there are millions and millions of acres of wilderness under skies that are seldom disturbed by the noise of planes. And there are thousands of little lakes where men seldom go, where the wild black ducks nest, and the white-tailed deer go to drink after the heat of the day. Up there is a timeless, warless world of earth, and sun, and rain, and the seasons. You may not be able to visualize this other world of spruce trees and quiet, but peace is there.

" 'Sirs, there is a spell, an ancient power, in such a place. It lays hold of some men, and they forget. They lose the sense of exigencies, of urgencies, and the world of men and war dims out. That is not an unimaginable experience. It is not something that happens without cause or reason. There are two men in us all: the man who is more or less constrained and possessed by the world of affairs, of trade and profession, of peace and of war, and then there is that man who is heir to a long,

long past — the hunter, the dweller in tents, in caves, the first man who slept in trees, or on a hilltop like the hunted buck deer — the man who was of the earth. That man in us all does not appear when we meet here in this court, or in the streets where men go about their new business of living by their wits and wisdoms, but that man is still real. Scratch the modern man, and beneath the skin that older elemental man bleeds red.

“Try to imagine this country lad, this simple fellow, going home; going fishing where he had angled for trout through all his growing years; finding again the urgentless earth, the forest, the streams and lakes — all that which knows nothing about the world men make, all that makes no record and keeps no calendar. He went fishing. The stars stood over the land at night. The sun possessed it all the day. Is it any wonder that he forgot the ticking clocks and the passing days?”

“They say that was as far as the young lieutenant got. The Judge Advocate stopped him. ‘You fool,’ he said. ‘I am a fisherman. Several of the men in this special court are anglers. What are you trying to do, disrupt the whole army?’

“So they called it off. Gave our soldier some KP duty. An’ they let it go at that. But as long as I live, I’ll not ferget what he said erbout it to me. ‘Honest to God, I clean fergot. I even thought I had another day. Honest to God, I love even the mud at the bottom of Durgin Pond.’

“And I knew. I knew. And so did the Judge Advocate an’ the young lieutenant, and how many others of us

who are tangled up in the ways of the world, an' the business of earnin' a living!

“Wel-el, I've talked too much. No man has the right to talk his thoughts inter another man's ear; but ye're a preacher, Mak, so yer must know the story of Naaman, the Captain of the King's Hosts. Naaman contracted leprosy, that ancient terror of the flesh. He lived in Damascus, an' he liked it. Someone told him erbout a fabulous prophet of the Lord who lived away off in Samaria. That man had healed folks. So Naaman went the long journey to the prophet's house. When he got thar, Elisha didn't even bother to go out to him. Jist sent word: 'Go wash yer seven times in the Jordan River.'

“The Captain was hurt an' he was red-hot mad. Says he, 'Surely Amana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, are better than this dirty Jordan, this little river!'

“Maybe he was wrong erbout the Jordan. I once talked with a man who had fly fished in the Jordan. He told me that he caught four different fishes on flies, and that one of them was trout-like, sunthin' like a trout. But the p'int was that Naaman loved his *own* rivers.

“Upon my word, I think that's what we need. Even on the common level, we need to know our river. I see men come here from hundreds of miles. This is a big river. Sometimes they pass up the very runs where you an' me have learned to expect trout. Sometimes, I see them fishin' the right places in the wrong way — all becuz they don't know the river. No doubt it's good fun to fish here and fish thar. I'd love to fly fish the Jordan. I'd

be pleased to try the Amana and the Pharpar, if they hain't dried up by this time. But it's more fun to fish your own river.

"It's important to love the water where yer fish; to know it like a book how it acts in high water, and where the trout are when it's low. Unless a man really comes to love his river, er his lake — the flow of it, the lay of it, the look of it under the rain, under the sun — I'm 'fraid that he's apt to miss the best of it. When he does know his river an' love it, then if yer c'ud git him to talk erbout it the way he feels deep down inside, he'd say, as our soldier did to me, 'Honest to God, I've found out that ye've got to love the place where yer fish. It needs to be your own country.'

"Now, I imagine that many a feller w'ud come back at me that thar's no fishin' left in his river, becuz it's so full of the stench an' pollution that nice people git rid of by dumpin' it inter our rivers. And I wu'd have to admit that lovin' a sp'iled river is a good deal like tryin' to love a harlot, maybe. But all that is jist what I have in mind these days. If thar's any manhood left in a feller, he ought to git up an' fight erbout the ruination of sech great goodness under the sun.

"Mak, the Jordan is a dirty river, but my Kennebec flows out of Eden through the hills and valleys of Havilah, where thar is gold.

"A long time ago, so Nancy reads me out of a book, thar was a poor sort of a cuss, who warn't half a man, as near's I can make out, and he said, 'All men kill the thing they love.' God save the mark!"

is rather subtly drawn, as sort of a background for a way of life. That Dud Dean can talk shop no one doubts, for the fine art of casting a line is second nature to him, but talking shop for Dud is a roundabout procedure, to be amply embellished with his rich imagination and colorfully bedecked in his Yankee idiom.

This new collection contains nine of the latest Dud Dean stories, none of which have ever appeared in print before. They have such alluring titles as *Dud Dean and the Enchanted*, *The Remarkable General Spots*, *Silver Mayflies*, *The Skunk King*, *Mat Saw a Ghost*, *Jippypop*, *Zoromaster Sayeth*, *The Patched Buck*, *The Jordan is a Dirty Brook*. And for those who are not familiar with Dud Dean, or those to whom he better needs to be defined, there is an introductory chapter — a sort of get-acquainted-with-Dud Dean section.

Fourth in a series of Dud Dean books *Dud Dean and the Enchanted* deserves attention as perhaps the best of all of Macdougall's writings. In this book he has brought to full maturity the unforgettable character of Dud Dean.

The Author

Arthur R. Macdougall, Jr. is well known to thousands of readers of outdoors and nature stories. His articles and yarns have appeared in several outstanding magazines. His name is tops in his field.

Called by his friends "Mak," he is the beloved pastor of a small country church in the picturesque village of Bingham on the upper Kennebec River in Maine, where for thirty years he has lived and worked — as pastor and writer. His Anglers' Sunday, an annual service at his church, has become almost an institution, known far beyond the reaches of Bingham.

Many years ago Mak wrote his first Dud Dean yarns. He has been writing them ever since. Dud Dean is a character of fiction, but so real has he become that people have thought him a living guide, and letters from fans have come to Mak, asking for him. Dud Dean is much the sort of man one might expect to find on the upper Kennebec — a true son of the streams and the forests, a man steeped in wisdom and wit, a reflection, if there can be called such a thing, of the Maine character.



ARTHUR R. MACDOUGALL, JR.

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