



“He showed his white teeth in an angry snarl.”

WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

BY A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 303.)

ROGER came back to his sister, after a short exploring expedition, with a very anxious face; but the little girl only laughed at his fears.

'Lost, are we? Oh, dear, how frightfully exciting! But it's much better to be lost in a nice clean wood than in that awful dusty crowd that we've had all day. Come on, Roger, I can walk ever so much further, and it won't be dark for ages yet. If we keep to this path we're certain to come out somewhere before long. Very likely it's only a short cut, and we shall get to a village and find the Bernards waiting for us. Poor things, how worried they will be. Old George will be grumpier than ever.'

Certainly Val was a cheerful travelling companion, and her high spirits were infectious. Roger laughed too, and then they plodded on again, and before very long the path led them to the outskirts of the wood, and into open country. There was no sign of a high road, however, and no village; but the narrow track gradually widened into a lane, and just as dusk was falling they came to a lonely cottage standing in a little garden that was planted with vegetables and fruit-trees.

'Hullo, this is a bit of luck!' Roger cried. 'The people are sure to give us something to eat, and they can tell us the way to go. Come on, Val, you will have to do the talking,' and then he pushed open the little wooden gate and, going up to the door, knocked again and again.

There was no answer. The whole place seemed strangely silent, and the windows were darkened. The boy tried the door, expecting to find it fastened, but instead it opened easily, and, followed by Val, he stepped across the threshold of the empty house.

It was quite clear then what had happened, for all around were the signs of a sudden alarm and a hasty flight. The table was laid for a meal: there was unfinished food on the plates, and coffee in the thick china cups. The chairs had been pushed back—one lay overturned on the floor—and there was a bundle of clothes tied together in a red and blue checked shawl. Near the hearth was a baby's cradle, and in it a cheap, broken toy.

'They must have gone away at dinner-time,' Val spoke in a low, awestruck whisper. 'Something must have frightened them; and there were children—do you see the little plates, Roger, with "Annette" on one, and "Pierre" on the other? I wonder whether they were with those people we passed on the road?'

Roger shivered. There was something uncanny about this silent, empty house, and the danger which had driven its inhabitants away seemed very near at hand. But it would not do to be nervous, so he took the electric torch from his pocket and turned it this way and that, making the dim interior of the room flash into sudden brightness.

'See if you can find any matches, Val,' he said, 'and then we'll light a fire and get some supper. It will be pitch dark directly, and we certainly can't go any further to-night.'

Val eyed the bread and butter and cheese on the

table hungrily. 'Will it be stealing if we eat these things? I'm simply starving,' she said. 'And they won't keep, at least the milk won't, and the bread will be pretty stale by the time the poor people come home.'

'Of course we can take whatever we want,' Roger answered, 'and we'll leave money to pay. Here's a box of matches, so that's all right, and a candle. I wonder where they kept the firewood?'

The cottage was a tiny place, just two rooms, a bedroom and the kitchen, and a dark garret overhead; but everything seemed to be scrupulously clean, and there was more bread, eggs, and a piece of cold bacon in a cupboard. Roger and Val had a splendid supper, and then they heated a great pan of water over the fire, so as to be able to wash away the dust and grime of their long day's journey. Finally, Roger made Val lie down on the bed in the inner room, and he settled himself by the fire, determined that he would keep watch in case any danger should threaten during the night.

'I'm not in the least sleepy,' he said to himself, when he had piled fresh logs on the hearth and arranged a pillow behind his head, and then he closed his eyes and knew nothing more until he felt Val's hand on his arm, and heard her voice calling him again and again. 'Roger! Roger! Wake up! There's something outside the door, and it's trying to get in!'

The boy started to his feet. It was nearly dark in the room, for the fire had died down to a few dim embers. He could just see Val's white face looking up at him from between the thick folds of a blanket which she had wrapped round her shoulders.

'Listen!' she said, and then he held his breath, and in the silence the sound of paws scratching at the door and a low whine could be heard distinctly.

'I believe it's wolves.' Val's voice quivered, and in spite of his fifteen years, Roger felt a shudder run through him from head to foot. 'There are wolves here, in the forest: Suzanne often told us about them. Oh, Roger, what shall we do?'

'It can't get in, the door's fastened.' Roger tried to speak bravely, although a long-drawn howl and renewed scratching seemed to belie his words; and then the sounds ceased suddenly, and they heard the pattering of some animal's feet going round the house.

The next moment a door at the back of the kitchen, which they had hardly noticed, was pushed open, and a great beast, grey and shadowy in the dim light, sprang forward into the room.

A scream of terror broke from Val's lips, and she clung to Roger's arm with both hands. They could hear the panting breath of the animal, and see the gleam of its teeth and eyes. And then, suddenly, the half-burnt log on the fire fell to pieces and a bright tongue of flame leaped up. Everything could be seen clearly for a moment, and there in front of them was, not a wolf, but a large shaggy dog, with a short tail and a round, hairy head. He stared at the boy and girl as if bewildered, and showed his white teeth in an angry snarl.

A dog, only a dog, after all! Roger laughed as he fumbled on the table for matches and candle, and Val snatched up a piece of bread and held it out invitingly. She loved dogs, and was not in the least afraid of this one, although he looked a formidable animal enough, as he stood there in his old home, bristling and glaring at the intruders.

'Poor fellow; dear old boy,' the little girl went on, stretching out her hand and gently stroking the matted forehead. 'Roger, he must have belonged to the people who lived here, and now he's found his way home. Yes, look, now he's found his own dinner under the table.'

Roger had lit the candle by this time, and together he and Val watched the new-comer as he first sniffed suspiciously round the room, and then, as if reassured, wagged his stumpy tail and began to eat some scraps and bones which were set ready on a tin plate. When his meal was finished and Val went back to bed, he followed her and stretched himself out on a ragged mat in a corner, where, evidently, he was accustomed to sleep.

Roger, for his part, was quite wide awake now, and having piled some more wood on the fire, he sat for a long time staring into the dancing flames, for, somehow, although the wolf adventure had come to nothing, he felt restless and troubled, as if some unknown danger were very near at hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

'I WONDER which is the north.'

It was the middle of the next day, and Roger and Val had come to a place where four paths met. They had been walking since early morning, slowly, and with many rests, for Val's foot was swollen, and more painful than ever.

Roger had made up his mind before they set out, that when they met more refugees with carts or waggons, he would do his best to get some one to give the little girl a lift, but so far no refugees had been encountered. All the roads seemed to be strangely empty and deserted.

There were, however, three travellers now in their own little party instead of two, for the big rough-haired dog was following closely at their heels.

At first, when they left the cottage, he had resolutely refused to accompany them, and had stretched himself on the worn flag-stone outside the closed door as if determined to stay there and starve, if need be, until his rightful owners returned.

Val had done her best to entice him away with blandishments and offers of food; but nothing had been of any avail, and finally she had given up her efforts in despair, and had left him looking very sulky and forlorn, with a plate of bread at his side, and his bright fierce eyes peering through the mat of shaggy hair that fell over his forehead.

'You'd better leave him alone. He won't come, it's not a bit of good,' Roger had said at last, shouldering his knapsack, and Val, after a last pat and whispered good-bye, had followed her brother regretfully out of the little garden and down the lane. The surprise of the boy and girl may be imagined therefore when, about ten minutes later, they heard pattering steps, and looking back caught sight of a shambling figure lumbering along in their rear. Since then the dog had never left them for a moment, and Val had christened him Bob, because, as she said, he didn't look as if he could have any other name.

Bob had proved very useful during the day, for he was big and strong, and made no objection when Roger fastened the knapsack, which contained a good supply of food brought from the cottage, round his neck.

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WHAT HE COULDN'T LEARN.

HAVE you heard how Teddy Wing,
Whilst perch'd upon his garden swing,
Spent all the summer studying?

Even astride his rocking-horse,
Young Teddy rocked through a whole course
Of 'Lessons on Electric Force.'

Astronomy was Ted's delight,
And anchored to his home-made kite
He'd photograph the planets bright.

Besides all this, the little fellow
Would black his face, and stamp and bellow
Quite through the long part of 'Othello.'

Yet one thing grieved his parents sore,
That, though so full of bookish lore,
Ted could *not* learn to shut a door.

G. BAIRD.

MEHDUM-KULY.

(Concluded from page 302.)

SLOWLY and sadly Mehdum-Kuly returned on foot to the Tuka camp. He had vowed either to prove his valour or to surrender himself to the stroke of the sharp sword. He had no proof of his bravery, nothing whatever to show, and he felt sure that his people would not believe his story.

He reached the camp at sunset. All fell out as he had anticipated. His friends, the minstrels, the tender-hearted maidens of his tribe, and even some of the rude warriors, wept much. They could not help admiring one who so nobly kept his word at the cost of his life. But a vow was a vow, and they dared not plead for him. He must die on the morrow.

* * * * *

The sharp sword gleamed in the sunshine. The Tuka Chief lay bound in the midst of his people. The man who was to deal the stroke came forward.

'Stay!' cried a voice in the distance. All eyes, hitherto fixed on the victim, turned now in the direction of the sound. A horseman was galloping towards the camp.

This was Adyn, who, as in honour bound, had brought the ransom which his captor had not demanded.

Arrived at the Tuka camp, Adyn leapt from the horse he was riding (no other than Argamack), and ran quickly to Mehdum-Kuly, cut his bonds, and wept over him.

Then Adyn explained matters. He told how the young Chief had vanquished him in fair fight; how he, Adyn, the bound captive, had rescued the other from the flood, and how thus the former foes became friends.

'And did I,' continued Adyn, 'snatch Mehdum-Kuly from one death only that he might suffer a more shameful one? I am his brother and his slave. And see! I bring him a large ransom.'

The sight of the gold convinced those rough warriors of the truth of Adyn's story as perhaps nothing else could have convinced them, and they gave vent to their feelings in a great shout of joy. They knew now that



"He ran quickly to Mehdum-Kuly, and cut his bonds."

they had a truly brave man for their leader. They realised, too, if somewhat dimly, that in keeping his word and returning to be slain, he had shown a courage superior to their own.

From that day forward the young Chief had no further trouble with his wild warriors.

Mehdum-Kuly and Adyn remained brothers and fast friends until the end of their lives.

E. D.



“Dobbin looked down into the pit.

OLD DOBBIN.

A True Story.

‘YOU know, Dobbin,’ said the young horse, ‘you aren’t a bit ambitious.’

‘No; why should I be?’ asked Dobbin, contentedly munching his breakfast.

‘Well,’ the young horse tossed his head and beat a tattoo against the stable-door with his heels, ‘any horse with any spirit would be. Look at me!’

Dobbin obediently turned his head and looked at him. And he was well worth looking at—a sleek-coated, long-maned horse, with enough spirit, as his

master said, to jump over the moon. As Dobbin watched him mild-eyed, the young horse fairly pranced.

'Can't I even rouse you to imitate me?' cried the young horse.

'Now what would be the use,' argued Dobbin, his mouth full of hay, 'of my prancing about like a lunatic when I'm in a plough or a horse-hoe? Don't be foolish.'

'Well, I think you ought to be superannuated,' snorted the young horse, and Dobbin rocked with the shock of the long word.

'Whatever —' he began, when the stable door opened and in came the master.

'That young horse had better go out to-day,' he said.

'Better harness him up with old Dobbin to steady him a bit. Think you can manage the two, Ben?' he added to the boy. 'I can't spare a man to-day.'

'Oh! I'll manage if I have old Dobbin, sir,' answered Ben. 'He and I gets on all right. Come up, then! Who-a-a!'

So the two were harnessed up together, and off they went to the field by the chalk-pit, where they went up and down the long furrows; the young horse restive and fretful, Dobbin plodding on placidly.

'What is the good of worrying?' urged Dobbin. 'You've got to do it, you know.'

'I don't want to! I don't want to!' snorted the young horse; but, as Dobbin said, it didn't make any difference—he had to.

Presently up came the master. 'Have you seen my little girl, Ben?' he called. 'She's been missing since the morning.'

'No, sir, I ain't seen her.' Ben paused to scratch his head thoughtfully, and the master went away again with a worried face. 'Get up, Dobbin—get up, young 'un!' cried Ben, and up and down they went again nearer and nearer to the great chalk-pit, in the middle of the field. When they got near, Dobbin looked down into the pit; he knew there were big blackberries on the bushes there. What he saw made him stop suddenly, with ears pricked forward.

'What's the matter?' said the young horse, crossly. 'Why don't you come on and get done with this silly job?'

'Be quiet,' said Dobbin. 'What's that in the pit?'

'Oh! I'm frightened!' cried the young horse, and began to prance about, till Ben came round with a 'Shet up, ye foolish thing! What yer looking at, Dobbin?' Then he, too, looked and went scrambling down, for the master's little girl lay on the grass below, her basket beside her and the blackberries scattered about.

'I've falled and hurted myself, boy,' she called. 'I want Mummie.'

'All right, little 'un, I'll fetch her,' said Ben; but when he turned to go, she cried out, 'Don't go away,' so that Ben didn't know what to do. He looked at her, then up to the pit-edge, where Dobbin looked down at him.

'I'll fetch help,' he said; and Ben, who knew him well, understood.

'Get on with it then, old chap,' he said, and unfastened the harness.

Away went Dobbin down the field, trotting quite fast for him, down the long road and into the farm-yard. There was no one about. What should he do? He went to his stable door, that was shut; he looked

in the sheds—no one there. 'Well,' thought Dobbin, 'I must find some one.' So he went up to the back door and whinnied as loud as he could.

Out came the cook in a fluster. 'Why, whatever are you here for?' she cried.

For answer, Dobbin poked his nose in at the door and whinnied again. That brought out the master, and he at once saw that something was wrong. It did not take him long to mount his own horse, and, with Dobbin's halter in his hand, off he went to the field.

Wasn't he pleased to find his little daughter, and to discover too that she was hardly hurt at all. 'How did you find her?' he asked Ben.

'Dobbin saw her,' answered Ben, 'an' wouldn't budge till I had a look.'

'Dobbin!' cried his master. 'Good old fellow! Quiet he may be, but he's worth a dozen of those prancing, snorting youngsters!' MAY HEWARD.

THE SCRAP OF PAPER.

GEORGE HERBERT says that 'All worldly joys go less to the one joy of doing kindnesses.'

It is the *doing* that is the joy. True kindness looks for no other reward. And often, when we would like to show our gratitude to one who has done us a kindness, it is not in our power to do so. But occasionally we hear or read of a tiny seed of kindness yielding a rich harvest to the sower.

One day, in the now distant times when people travelled by coach, a soldier called at the shop of a hairdresser who was busy with his customers and asked for help. The man said that he had not the money with which to pay his coach-fare, and that unless he could get it immediately, he should overstay his leave of absence, and in consequence be severely punished.

The hairdresser believed his story, was very sympathetic, and gave him a guinea.

'How can I ever repay you, sir?' exclaimed the grateful soldier. He took from his pocket a scrap of dirty paper, on which was some writing. 'I have nothing in the world but this,' he said. 'It is a recipe for making blacking—the best blacking that ever was seen. I have sold many bottles of it to the officers, and in return for your great kindness I earnestly hope that it may prove of some use to you.'

It was of some use! That grimy bit of paper brought half a million of money to the lucky hairdresser, and became the foundation of a very famous business.

THE STEEL TRACK.

By HAROLD BINDLOSS.

(Concluded from page 298.)

'WHERE in thunder have you come from?' the engineer asked.

'We got on board as you crossed the switches,' Jake answered breathlessly.

'Then you'd get off right now if this was a common freight train,' said the engineer. 'But nothing stops the Express while she has water in the tank. Why did you want to get on board, anyway?'

When Jake told him, he knitted his brows. 'Well, as you're not railroaders, I allow you have some sand.* Didn't want the old folks to be anxious? That's a pretty good reason. But how'd you know the best place for you to get up?'

He looked at the fireman, who began to break some coal.

And Jake replied: 'We knew we had to find a place where we wouldn't be seen. It was plain that you wouldn't let her go until you'd run over the switches, and they'd given you *clear track*.'

The engineer nodded, although he did not look quite satisfied. 'As I ain't put you off, you have got to stop; but I see no reason you shouldn't be useful. Suppose you take the hammer and smash those big lumps of coal.'

They set to work, while the floor shook and heaved under their feet. It was nearly impossible to stand still, and both were glad when the coal was broken, and they could sit down out of the way and look about. Except for the lamp beside the steam and water gauges, the cab was nearly dark, until the fireman pulled up the lever that opened the furnace door. Then there was a roar, and the draught licked up the dust and small bits of coal. Red flame licked about the hole, and Dawson blinked as he looked down into a dazzling sea of fire.

The door slammed back, and the engineer's dark form was outlined against the faint reflection of the lamp. He had his hand on the throttle, and his eyes were fixed on the rattling glass in front. Dawson thought this was from force of habit, because it seemed impossible to see anything but the misty beam of the head-light quivering in the snow.

Then he noted a change in the rhythmic snorting and roll of wheels. The beats were quicker, and there were no more separate notes; the throb and clang of the two great locomotives had swelled into a deep, pulsating roar. They had reached the summit of the short incline and were running furiously down-hill.

In a sense, it did not matter much if the engineer could see or not. It was somebody else's business to keep the line clear, and his to bring the cars to Vancouver wharf on time. He must take the risks this implied, and Dawson knew there were risks that engineers in England did not run. Frost-split rocks rolled down the hillsides and smashed the rails; the angry river the track followed sometimes washed out its bank, snow-sheds caved in, and now and then an avalanche swept away the track. The train-hands faced these dangers in blinding snow and driving rain, and Dawson felt a thrill as he watched the engineer who stood, highly-strung but quietly vigilant, grasping the throttle. He was doing a man's work, and one felt proud that men had made the huge machine that hurled the banging cars down the mountain-side through the snow-laden gale.

By-and-by the roar suddenly swelled into a deafening noise. The cab was filled with choking fumes, and the snow no longer beat upon the glass. There was an intense vibration, and Dawson could not keep still; his feet slipped and he shuffled about the floor.

'She's running through the big snow-shed,' Tom, the fireman, remarked. 'Watch out while I feed her this lump of coal.'

The furnace door swung open, and a long yellow flame

flickered across the cab as he flung in the heavy block. Then there was a clang, the cab got dark again, and the air was thick with smoke. The track was roofed over with massive beams that followed the slant of the hillside, so that the avalanches, which brought down rocks and broken trees, could roll across without rubbing out the line. The noise the train made in the wooden tunnel was tremendous, but it presently sank and the air cleared. They were in the open again, and going, Dawson thought, faster still.

After a few minutes, the engineer looked at his watch and signed to the fireman. 'We're near the loop; hope they've got the up freight side-tracked. Tell our partner to watch out.'

A short blast of the whistle pierced the din, and when it was answered by the engine behind, Dawson got on a locker with his face close to the glass. There was a station not far ahead, where the other train ought to have been run into a siding, if she had kept her time. At first he could see nothing but whirling snow, but presently a faint twinkle appeared down the line. The two whistles shrieked and confused echoes rolled among the rocks. Dawson knew the spot—the track wound steeply down the gorge, and he thought no breaks could pull up the heavy train; besides, the orders were that nothing was to stop the Express freight.

The twinkle grew into a dazzling blaze; he saw a low building with a tall tank behind it, and then men with lanterns in the snow. He could not see the other train because it was behind the light, but he felt a keen relief when one of the lanterns moved up and down. Next moment, the man who held it vanished, the dazzling beam went out, and with a deafening clamour they plunged into the dark. Dawson imagined the row of cars a few yards away was throwing back the roll of wheels, because the noise broke off suddenly and the steady, pulsating throb began again. They had passed the station and were racing on down the gorge.

After this, nothing particular happened, and some time later the engineer looked at his watch and then turned to the boys. 'We shall pull up in about ten minutes, and you had better get down on the off side, and keep that side until you're clear of the agent's shack. You don't want him to see you leave the train.'

'Certainly not,' Jake agreed. 'Well, we have got to thank you and Tom for bringing us down, and we have some pretty good winter apples at the ranch, besides some prunes that they can't beat in California. If you would like a bag—'

'Shucks!' said the engineer. 'I didn't bring you down—you want to remember that you stole this ride. Tom and I don't take fruit for breaking the Company's rules.' Then he smiled and added: 'Anyhow, if you do bring those prunes and apples, leave the bag with the tank-man, not the station-agent.'

The whistles screamed, the speed slacked, and two bells began to toll. Lights twinkled, a low building came out of the snow, and when the engines stopped the boys jumped down on the opposite side from the water-tank. Nobody saw them leave the track at the other end of the long train, and a few minutes later they came to a narrow opening in the forest.

'It's snowing pretty fierce, but if we feel for the waggon-ruts, we can't get off the road,' Jake remarked. 'After all, I reckon we have had a bully day up the track.'

* Grit, courage.



“The furnace door swung open, and he flung in the heavy block.”