A Healer of the Wilderness

BY HENRY WELLINGTON WACK

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"IGHT! I have a word with you, sir, without the cabin?"

Immediately leaving my associates, I followed the short, muscular, athletic figure of the camp doctor out to the edge of the forest. "What's up, Doc?" I asked expectantly.

"I want the clip of a man as has the nerve to do an ugly job before daylight," he whispered sententiously.

"Murder?" I tried to smile.

"Mayhap!" he quietly replied, to my amazement.

"That lets me out, Doc. I'm off for my bunk."

"No it doesn't", he hissed, following my hesitant retreat. "What brings me 'ere late at night in a storm is more important to the company and its hundred and sixty-two hands in camp, than to you and me. This job's goin' for-ard tonight, come what may. And you who are handy with a gun and I who have no talent for talk afterward—wels, it's we two for the perfawmence. I'm dead serious, I am, and you'll stand by—I'm certain of that. Come, the tide's just a-turnin'. We'll have to be movin' with it. Every moment we're nearer a stampede and a panic in camp. Get your gun and sneak to my hut right away. Not a peep to them gents from Boston, nor to any one else. We're going for bear, understan', plain brown bear—tomorrow."

That Alaskan night was of the foulest! A fretful kamook bayed dismally on the opposite shore where Haida Indians sometimes dwell on their canoe voyages among the Prince of Wales Islands. The Coplan Copper company's smelter cast fitful patterns of light and shadow upon the freezing bay. The wild voice of the hills smote the sea beyond with a hiss and roar. January was in angry mood in the wilderness as I kicked the snow from my boots before the doctor's cabin, and his hound uttered a long, low growl within. It seemed but a moment when our pipes were loaded, the "whuskey" on the rude table beside us, and the fire roaring in the doctor's little rusty stove.

Turning suddenly and bringing his fist to the level of my face, the little man unpacked himself brusquely:

"Am I correctly informed that you're leaving camp for the east on the next boat?"

"That's my intention unless this storm detains me."

"Well, sir," continued the doctor, as he placed a foot on the hound's thick neck and recharged his glass, "I hope nothing will interfere with your leavin'; but I can't see the horizon of a little mess down near the Indian quarters behind the mill. You see, I can't say anything to those timid city directors about it, fearin' of their indiscretion and a tangle with the health officer at the port o' entry. Them directors hate me! Now you've appealed to me as a man of the woods. You've been about some where a man's got to be several times a man. This d——d Indian must be handled mightily rough tonight. At least we can't weep over him: He sneaked in night before last without permission, and it'll explode any minute."

When the doctor rummaged for two black shroud-like gowns and carelessly threw them across the bed, I suspected that we were either to lynch somebody, commit a corpse to the sea or participate in some ghoulish ceremony of pagan belief amongst the Stikeen across the bay. Finally I blurted: "Doc, what are those black kimonas for? Looks like a hanging."

"It might better be a haugin'," he retorted, pawing amongst his apothecary stores, from which he occasionally set aside a package. "Its smallpox! That's what it is—in a camp of panicky miners ready to bolt on the first whiff. Smallpox—fourteen-day-stage, and a pest house harboring the d——d case. Do you understand? Smallpox!"

Then with a toss of his head and one of those sudden turns upon his auditor which characterized all his intense utterances, he growled: "Come along now, we're got to move that case out of camp before dawn or, well, you'll see the company's boat in the hands of mutinous miners, and its creditors dividin' its assets in bankruptcy, and me a-goin' to the coop for violatin' the law."

We skulked along the beach as far as possible from the glare of the smelter. Black buzzards, sheltering in a wood pile, chattered raucously.

The doctor whispered: "Our plan, remember. If the buck shows fight, do your part; I'll do mine. We'll avoid a rough-and-tumble as long as possible. Hear that sea racing past the inlet? Gad! what a night for women and children! This bread and bacon won't be needed, I'm believin'. I'll get aboard and see you off for

"POINTED HER NOSE TOWARD AN UNKNOWN AND DOUBTFUL FATE"

Poor brown devils—and yet—Stand by now, and if you feel yourself cavin', bite that cigar like a mink trap and work away. Mustn't bungle this!"

We remained for a moment in the shadow of the silent mill to rehearse the "job" about to be perpetrated. The Indian's ridely-curtained hut window gleamed faintly red—a bleared eye in the dark void. We knocked. A menacing grunt and a shifting of moccasined feet within—nothing more hospitable.

"The doctor, with food and medicine. Let me in." We let ourselves into the hut before the Indian had arisen from the floor.

The hut reeked with the foul stench peculiar to the domestic conditions of nomad Indians in this region.

We lured the Indian outside. Our return from pestilence to the cold, sweet air of the Alaskan forest, intoxicated me.

The doctor began menacingly: "Why didn't you ride out on the morning tide? You said you would last night. You lied and, damn you, endangered the health of the whole camp. You've got twenty minutes to paddle off with your family or get shot."

The Indian replied sullenly as he moved toward the canoe upon the beach. "Squaw too sick. Hunt for meat all day. I go when the water sleeps—mebbe soonly." He turned defiantly with clenched fists.

"See here," I think, you've come into this can with what miners would shoot you for. I've given you two days to clear out at the risk of infecting our men and wrecking the mine for three months. I've got twenty men in the shadow of that mill ready to pound you into pulp when my gun barks. You understan'? Now, we'll do this quietly or we'll do it fighting." Saying which the doctor drew his pistol while I entered the hut and seized the Indian's rifle.

A long dory-like canoe was torn from the thin ice into which it lay bedded. The brutal duty was under way.

The squaw, whose disease had advanced to the stage of desiccation, opened her terrible eyes—eyes sunken and deliquescent.

Go six miles down the coast; you'll find fresh water and game aplenty. Set your traps, and wait for the company's launch to pass on her way out. Paddle out to meet her when you hear her whistle—four days hence. If you attempt to land within this inlet, I'll sink your boat with a shot. Now, then, heave off."

Having given his commands, the doctor joined in some mighty shoving and cussing to get the boat away; the Indian's reluctant paddle caught the water lazily, and the deeply laden craft of disease and death, and hatred of the white man, finally pointed her angular nose toward an unknown and a doubtful fate. I looked around for Doc, before setting the hut afire and burning the last vestige of the case that had worried him. He was not ashore. He had vanished like a ghoul from the Indian's dying fire. I hollooed softly, and, gazing toward the disappearing boat—descried his squat figure with a paddle in the bow!

Was it possible? Yes, there he was and from there he called to me this weird adieu: "Good night, old chap. We've done a d——n fine job; but I'm going to finish it alone. Send a canoe after me day after tomorrow, or pick me up when the Mary Ann puts out to sea. I'm infected. I'll hang my pink shirt high in a fir tree near the beach, and don't you come within a hundred feet of me. If I'm all right, I'll get aboard and see you off for the states. I say—burn the Indian's hut, sneak to my shack and lay low. Don't explain anything. Those miners wouldn't stay in camp a minute, and the health officer'd hang me for not reportin'. Thanks, old chap, thanks. It was a dirty job for you."

I heard no more except the woolies gathering aloft and hitting the distant sea with a roar. The sturdy little Doc would "finish the job alone!"

Firing the hut from the inside, I sneaked through the camp toward the doctor's shack.

It so happened (as it always happens) that on the day after my gruesome job with Dr. Dickson, one of the visiting eastern directors had a "tremenjus case of cramps," as the superintendent impressively announced.

"Now, where was that good-for-nothing, lying, scheming little Doc? Why, drunk abed, of course."

So, with this verdict, a collection of exasperated directors visited Dickson's shack to rout him out. The door unlocked, but the doctor was nowhere in camp. A meeting of the directors was called which resolved that it was dangerous to the camp to continue the employment of a man who was this, that and the other bad, incompetent, unfaithful thing. So Doc was discharged on the spot, the while an invitation was prepared to another physician at Juneau to come and fill the exalted position.

It was an innate sense of responsibility which impelled me to steal away on the third night after Dickson had gone to sea with his sick wards. Packing my light kit I bundled up what remained and left it labeled to follow me in the Mary Ann when the visiting directors returned to Ketchikan. My note to them did not create a favorable impression of my attentiveness to their distressed business.

"Gentlemen: As I may serve you more by finding Dr. Dickson than by remaining in camp, I have left some of my duffle to accompany you on your voyage to Ketchikan. I am cruising down the bay to hunt for him and for—bears. While sailing, please look for my fire and a freshly-blazed spruce on your port side. Kindly blow the launch whistle every two miles down. I ought to be from six to eight miles south on the west coast of Prince of Wales Island."

From the doctor's shack I appropriated his rifle, a supply of ammunition and such medicines as I thought he might need; also I took some Scotch whisky, and brandy, pies and tobacco, a cot, tent and bedding, a stove, shotgun and shells, field glass, disinfectants, and all the provisions I could induce the cook to hand out.

One of the squaw's babies had died on the day following their rough voyage from the mine. "And the other little varmint," said Dickson softly, "will pass in his checks presently. The squaw'll pull through if the buck don't lay down this week. I'm goin' to stand by the case a while longer if you say the boss isn't cussin' of me."

Early the next day we heard the siren of the Mary Ann. The launch was sailing down the bay. What I said to the rubicund and pudgy Doc, and just what he said to me as he stood off twenty-yards or so with eyes of greater eloquence than his quaint tongue had ever known, doesn't matter here and now. Suffice it that I made my short but tangled way to the shore alone, stood under Doc's pink shirt and near the fat new blaze and waited for the Mary Ann. Her pirate captain, seeing me waving a small birch signal-fashion, stopped his engine and drifted as close as he deemed prudent. In a few moments the launch lifeboat had taken me aboard and to a cabin load of sleepy directors. They suddenly perked up with a chorus of questions concerning "the irresponsible little scamp."

Yes, I had found him in the interior of the island. He had fallen in with some Indians, and, well, to be quite frank, he had asked me if the management and directors missed him, and if I would convey to them his apologies for leaving camp without the usual polite exchange of a good-bye and so forth.

This twaddle exasperated them as I had intended. Their language of and concerning little Dickson shall have to be fumigated before public use can be made of it.

My violent and obsequious friend, Captain Furloso, and I were alone in the wheel house where he kept his eyes on the company's mail bag. As I espied the bag a villainous idea seized upon me.

"Have a smoke, Cap'n?" I offered the bandit this bit of eastern hospitality in my most persuasive pianissimo.

"Cap'n," I began, leaning over his smelly, little black and tan figure in a confidential, warm-hearted manner. "Cap'n, I wrote Dr. Bumpus of Juneau a letter at the mine which I think I ought not to send him until I have seen some one in Seattle. Just let me open that bag a minute and I'll withdraw it before I forget it in the rush at Ketchikan."

"Cert," piped the captain, like the good, brave soul that he is, "here's the key." Then looking around fiercely at nothing, he half whispered: "Just turn the key in the wheelhouse door. Them gents from Massychewsitt might butt in afore 'you' done it."

So, having "done it" in a jiffy, I felt assured that the temporary custody of Dr. Bumpus' letter gave me control of the situation created by my all-too-precipitate friends, the directors.

Just before we sailed from Ketchikan I enclosed the Bumpus letter in one of my own and addressed it back to the company's manager at the mine. These letters, therefore, went to the mine on the Mary Ann's return trip and were in the manager's hands on the fourth day following our departure from Ketchikan for Vancouver.

This is what I wrote the manager, a man preposterously jealous of his official prerogative:

"I beg to enclose the letter you addressed to Dr. Bumpus, pursuant to the direction of your board while I was in camp. In a fortnight Dd. Dickson will return and explain the important service he has been rendering your company.

"Inasmuch as my counsel and advice concerning your company has been the object of my examination of its properties and affairs, I suggest that nothing be said to apprise Dr. Dickson of the action of your board, nor of its injustice to him. I should regard the doctor's resignation from your staff, at this time, as a serious calamity.

"Meantime, I am explaining the doctor's absence to the directors while they are on their way to Vancouver."

"Great little runt, that camp doctor at the mine," I soliloquized, as we finally debarked from the steamer and settled into a Pullman bound for Seattle.

"What's that?" came a screeching and derisive chorus. "He's a little beast, said I—"

"Now, see here, gentlemen, I've determined to raise you to the lofty level of that little cut, between here and Seattle, or wreck this train in the attempt."

So I told them of the heroism of this runt of the wilderness, and heard their snivels and saw their tears, their hedging and squirming and justifying and all that men do when conduct should bring regret and remorse.

A month thereafter I received this assuring report:

"Ketchikan, SS. Alaska.

"Dear Mr. Bobst:

"I'm well again but badly pocked. Got away from the Cape as soon as I dared, and came here. The squaw pulled through, but her kiddies died. I envy them! The buck was almost decent while I was down. Still, I've a mind to lick him aplenty when I get strong again.

"Two of the boys went to the mine, sneaked my things aboard the Mary Ann, and left my written respects for that manager. I shall have him also to beat up when he comes my way. There's a rumor here that he has been discharged.

"I've heard something of what you did for me with them entomological gents from the East. Much obliged. I'm going to hammer the binacle off the one with the blue whiskers when he comes to Alaska again. Keep this quiet, so I'll have him to look forward to.

"Much obliged for the port wine and other good things from New York. I'm going on the staff of the Nellie Mine next month. A big bunch of the boys at the Coplan Mine want to go with me, but I won't do that sort of thing.

"Yours in Iodoform,

"DOC."

Eleven days later I received the following telegram from the jubilant Dickson:

"Met and mangled the manager today. He's in hospital. I'm in jail. All the boys satisfied.

"DOC."

SEE INTO THE LUNGS

X-RAYS VALUABLE AID IN FIGHTING TUBERCULOSIS.

By This Means Presence of the Dread Disease May Be Ascertained in Its Incipiency and Its Progress Checked.

Most people nowadays have learned that successful warfare on the "white scourge" — consumption — depends mainly on an early and correct diagnosis. As the lungs are invisible, ordinarily tuberculosis may not manifest its presence with certainty until the disease is too far advanced to be controlled by any means now known.

Recently new hope has been given to victims of this dread disease by instruments in the X-ray apparatus which make the instrument capable of revealing to its operator the very earliest appearance of the germs of consumption.

So accurate have been the results obtained that a careful X-ray examination of the chest is now the routine treatment for all new lung cases, the symptoms of which give the slightest difficulty to the examining physicians in the receiving wards.

The patient takes his place on a bicycle seat fixed on a pedestal. Close to his back, in a large black box which can be raised or lowered, or swung to one side or the other, by a delicate system of balancing weights, is the X-ray tube. All but a small area of its luminous surface is protected by a lead glass screen, so that only a narrow stream of light falls on the patient's back. When the patient is in position the examiner puts on a pair of thick lead glass spectacles to protect his eyes, pulls over his hands a large pair of lead impregnated gloves, and wheels into position between himself and the patient a thick lead screen four feet high.

With a movement of his foot he touches a button and the room is in absolute darkness. Then he waits ten minutes until his eyes get used to the darkness, for experience has taught that after the eyes have become thoroughly accustomed to the presence of white light the sensibility of the retina to the light of the fluorescent X-ray screen is increased from fifty to two hundred times.

With another touch of the foot the X-ray current is turned on and the bones and tissues of the patient's chest are visible on the screen. The upper parts of the lungs, the points most likely to be attacked first by tuberculosis, are then carefully studied. The patient is told to empty his lungs of air by slowly exhaling his breath. The lung tissues become more pervious to the rays and the whole surface brightens in color.

The failure of any portion of the lung to brighten evenly with the rest of the tissues shows some abnormality and strongly suggests deficient air entry to the part, one of the earliest signs of consumption.

Woman Suffrage Plea.

"The feministic movement today is the last stage in the struggle upward. Woman proposes no longer to be just the pet, the idol, the slave, the queen; she wills to be the equal of man; she feels in herself that power and she now claims her birthright. Civilization as we know it has meant the moving upward to light of one social stratification after the other. The French revolution meant the upheaval of the lowest stratum. Our own movement is the final step in the achieving of complete democracy. Democracy is averse to war. A whole people does not flame up in hate against another people. It needs the incendiarism of the few or the brutal autocracy of one to force a conflict. The Roman republic is not a counter-argument. My democracy is a democracy of millions, not of thousands. And the millions, who know how painfully they have to piece together all the little elements that go to make up a life, are not disposed to smash and destroy their handiwork."—Madeleine Black.

He Thought It Was a Kindness.

"I'm never going to play the Good Samaritan again," a friend said. "One night last week I met a man who I know well. He was very much under the influence of liquor. I decided to send him home. I knew that he lived on Westminster avenue, so I got him on a Woodward avenue car, paid his fare and told the conductor to put him off at that street. I met him for the first time since then just a few minutes ago. I laughingly reminded him of the favor I had done him.

"'Oh, it was you, was it?' he said. 'Well, hereafter I'll thank you to mind your own business. You shipped me out to Westminster avenue and I wandered about for nearly two hours before I managed to collect my senses long enough to remember that we had moved from there two weeks ago to the far eastern side of the city."—Detroit Free Press.

The Farmer's View.

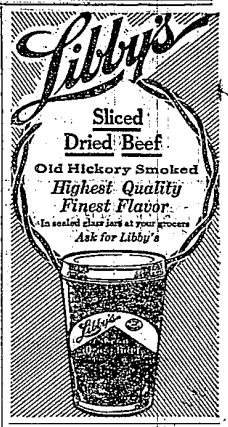
Farmer Silow—Do you alternate your crops?

Farmer Timothy—Yep. Have 'em killed by one thing one year and another the next.—Puck.

Between Husbands.

"My wife goes to her club a good deal."

"Are you doing all you can to make home attractive?"



200% Agents wanted in every county to sell our new invented Stove Pipe Holder and Rivet Clasp. Great seller; necessary article in every home; 200 per cent profit to Agents; retails 10c; small complete samples for 5c. District Agents wanted to appoint agents. National Stove Pipe Holder Company, Ottawa, Ohio.

Riches.

Knicker—Brown counts his wealth in seven figures.

Bocker—Perpendicularly?

Fitting.

"Did your nephew make a suitable marriage?"

"Yes," replied the man who habitually thinks along erratic lines. "He has curly blond hair, and has never done anything more herculean than to pick flaws on a guitar, and—well, he married a female baseball player."—Puck.

Head on Crooked.

Little Paul had always been taught by his mother that God had made him as that he ought to be thankful that he had been made so perfect; eyes, ears, feet, hands and all complete. His mother had bought a new cook stove and Paulie was examining it. He lifted the reservoir lid and looked in. There was his picture, as natural as life, in the water, but he was sorely troubled, while looking at it. When asked, by his mother, what the trouble was, he said:

"God might o' made me persect, but he put my head on crooked."

DRAWING HIM ON.

Edith—What would you do if I attempted to run away and leave you here in the parlor alone?

Ernest—Why, I—er—would try to catch and hold you.

Edith—Well, get ready then, I'm going to attempt it.

MENTAL ACCURACY

Greatly Improved by Leaving Off Coffee

The manager of an extensive creamery in Wis. states that while a regular coffee drinker, he found it injurious to his health and a hindrance to the performance of his business duties.

"It impaired my digestion, gave me a distressing sense of fullness in the region of the stomach, causing a most painful and disquieting palpitation of the heart, and what is worse, it muddled my mental faculties so as to seriously injure my business efficiency.

"I finally concluded that something would have to be done. I quit the use of coffee, short off, and began to drink Postum. The cook didn't make it right at first. She didn't boil it long enough, and I did not find it palatable and quit using it and went back to coffee and to the stomach trouble again.

"Then my wife took the matter in hand, and by following the directions on the box, faithfully, she had me drinking Postum for several days before I knew it.

"When I happened to remark that I was feeling much better than I had for a long time, she told me that I had been drinking Postum, and that accounted for it. Now we have no coffee on our table.

"My digestion has been restored, and with this improvement has come relief from the oppressive sense of fullness and palpitation of the heart that used to bother me so. I note such a gain in mental strength and acuteness that I can attend to my office work with ease and pleasure and without making the mistakes that were so annoying to me while I was using coffee.

"Postum is the greatest table drink of the times, in my humble estimation." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.