Out of the Fire

By JOSEPHINE R. MARTIN.

Day after day the fores fires had crept nearer and nearer the little clearing where Bunt Doble's cabin stood, away back toward Cat Mountain. The sky was lit each night by the sickening glare, the air was full of smoke, and terrified and strange birds flew wildly about.

Sometimes the smoke stayed them, then as the wind shifted, for a little while they breathed easier, but still the great army of flames marched steadily onward, while overhead blazed a relentless sun in a cloudless sky, with no promise of rain to end the dreadful destruction.

"Pears like we ain't goin' ter hev no more rain. I guess it's the end of all things a comin' slowly," remarked Bunt Doble, and Lora wearily assented. To Lora it did not seem to matter much; she looked out on life with beautiful, tired eyes. Forced into an early and unwilling marriage with Bunt, Doble, by her French Canadian father (who owed Bunt money and thought this was the best way of paying his debt), she rebelled against fate with all the strength of her beautiful young womanhood. She hated the little clearing, thick set with tangled shrubbery; she hated the thick forest, and the mountains farther away that seemed to shut out all that was great and good in the world beyond; she hated more than all Bunt Doble, gaunt and gray, with an ugly leer in his green eyes, and a fierce set of his lean jaw; and sometimes she even hated herself for her own beautiful face and perfectly formed womanhood.

Bunt Doble, outlaw, and the terror of all game wardens the country through, was certainly no fit mate for the beautiful wild creature who was bound to him for life; and Lora was afraid of him, so afraid that she paled before the leer in his eyes and the firm set of his hateful mouth.

All this day they had fought the fire, with their few bits of household goods packed in readiness for flight, but at night the wind shifted and the gentle patter of rain on the leaves brought the belief that the worst was over. Bunt sneered beyond endurance drank deeply, and threw himself down in stupid sleep, but Lora crept out to the edge of the clearing to cool her hot face in the water of the brook. As she plunged her wrists deep in the coolness, a whisper startled her, and a dark, handsome face peered out of the bushes. "It's only Pete, Lora," he whispered. Pete Carado, the young guide, who had loved Lora long and hopelessly and Lora knew it him, too, but would not acknowledge it, for was she not bound to Bunt?

"I only wanted to make sure you was all right, Lora; that brute will kill you yet, and I'm always fearful. I wish I could take you away, Lora." Pete's voice was full of feeling.

"Don't, Pete," she half sobbed, "I'm his wife, you know, and I'd ought not be here talking with you, but, oh, Pete, I wish I could die." She sobbed softly and Pete watched her, his face full of misery.

"If you want me, Lora, I'll be near," he said gently. "You can call; I'm never far away. I guess the worst is over, but come to me if you want me. I must go," and with a reassuring grasp of her hand he went silently away. It was after midnight when Lora awoke with the sensation of smothering. She sprang up and rushed out of the cabin, fighting her way through the smoke; the wind had shifted again and the fire was creeping up closer, the cracking of the boughs sounded like the firing of musketry, the heat was unbearable, the smoke stifling; there was no time to lose, already the brands, glowing red, were falling in to the clearing.

Lora rushed back into the cabin, "Bunk," she cried, "wake up, the fire is upon us, but drunk deep in drunken slumber was not so easily aroused. A feeling of frenzy arose in her heart, "Lie there," she cried. "Lie there and burn; it'll be the best night's work the fire has yet done." Hastily snatching a few things she rushed out and plunged into the thicket toward the road leading to Pete's cabin. But ever as she flew onward, remorse flew more quickly and overtook her; with a groan she stopped and wrung her hands. "I can't do it," she moaned. "I know he's a brute, but I'd feel like a murderess. I must not leave him so."

Back through the underbrush she plunged again, her eyes smoke blinded; the trees were falling everywhere with crash and roar, while overhead the stars shone mockingly in the clear rainless sky.

Lora had almost reached the clearing when she stumbled over the body of a man. "Get up, Bunt," she cried, realizing he was overcome by heat and smoke. "Get up! you'll burn. I'll help you." She helped him struggle to his feet, her eyes so blinded she could not open them; roused by her words the man staggered blindly on, dragging on her helplessly; but fear gave her strength and half leading, half dragging him she plunged on until she reached the river, then summoning all her courage she half carried him in her strong arms across the foot log, and dropping her burden, sank beside him. Dipping her head in the cool water she bathed her smoke blinded eyes until the smarting ceased, and then in the darkness she filled her hands with water and dashed it into the face of the unconscious man. "I've saved you, God help me," she murmured.

The dash of cold water aroused the man and he staggered to his feet, and as the glare of the fire fell upon his face Lora gave a startled cry, for it was not Bunt who stood before her, but Pete, brave, handsome Pete, who had started to save her and had been overcome in the clearing.

"Oh, Pete, Pete!" she cried. "He's back there in the cabin! I thought you were him, and I tried to save him. Oh, Pete, what can we do!" Pete lifted the terrified girl to her feet, the realization of what she had done sweeping over him. Suffering as she had from the brutality of that man, she had risked her life to save his so worthless.

"Lora, you are an angel," he said reverently. "God knows you did your best to save him, and he knows, too, that you have borne your burden long enough. See, it is too late to go back now," and even as he spoke a great tree blazing fiery red fell across the little cabin, blotting out the worthless life within. Praying softly, Lora covered her eyes from the dreadful sight, and then Pete's arm was about her, and he drew her hands gently down and turned her face toward him. "Lora, you are his wife no longer. I have waited long; will you come to me now?"

Lora gave him her lips for her answer, and regardless of the destruction sweeping down upon them, Pete gathered her in his arms and kissed not only her lips, but her eyes and face and dusky hair as well, and then with his strong arm about her, they turned their backs on the scene of death and desolation, and plunged down the trail leading them away from the forest which had held for them little besides misery and sorrow, out into God's country, under the silent stars, leaving the old life behind them and going forward into the new, a better and cleaner life, purified by fire.—Boston Post.

Rain Poor Substitute for Irrigation.

Irrigation is better than rain, infinitely better. That also sounds like a paradox, but instead it is almost a truism. What is better—to give a plant just as much and no more water than it needs and just when it needs it; or to parch it or drown it according to the whim of the clouds? The rain falls upon the just and upon the unjust alike; upon your strawberries that cry for it and upon your sugar-beets that want uninterrupted sunshine. Rain is all right in its place, but it is a very poor substitute for irrigation. Otherwise why would the lawns of our cities be sprinkled or irrigated, instead of leaving them to the tender mercy of the clouds? No. Arid lands are more fertile than ordinary lands, and irrigation is better than rain.

A Bridge of Coffins.

When the British forces were marching to Pekin in 1860, after the capture of the Taku forts, one of the rivers became so swollen with the heavy rains that it was rendered almost impassable. While in this quandary a bright idea suddenly struck one of our officers. Being well aware that the Chinese generally order their coffins years in advance and keep them on the premises and also that they are perfectly air tight, he consulted with his brother officers, with the result that orders were given to search all the houses of the village and collect every coffin. With the aid of a few empty casks the soldiers constructed a pontoon bridge of coffins sufficiently strong to bear the artillery, and the river was thus passed in safety.

A Spiritual Carrot.

The lay preacher has his rewards, but he has also many discouragements. A veteran brother once, at a conference of lay preachers, gave them some cheer. He said: "When I was a lad I used to drive a donkey-cart. Sometimes the donkey would not go, but I tied a carrot on the end of my whip and dangled it in front of his nose, and then he went. My brothers, let me dangle a spiritual carrot before you—'Be not weary in well doing, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not.'"

Where Great Writer Lived.

Craigenputtock, where Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" was written, has just been the scene of a notable wedding. The bride was Miss Mary Carlyle of Craigenputtock, a grand-niece of Thomas Carlyle, and the bridegroom James Carlyle, a farmer of Pingle, Dumfriesshire, a son of Thos. Carlyle's favorite nephew. Pingle is about four miles from Ecclefechan, Carlyle's birthplace, and this village is the original of the Entuphl of "Sarto Resartus."

Window Glass at Pompeii.

Recent discoveries in the ruins of Pompeii prove that the ancient Romans used window glass; but for centuries houses in England were without window glass, the place of which was frequently supplied with waxed linen or oiled paper. At the end of the eighteenth century there were men living whose occupation it was to paste oiled paper into window-sashes.

An Awkward Fix.

"What! You say that old Doemall, the merchant, has gone blind? Here's a pretty how d'ye do—I've got a bill on the man which is made out 'payable at sight'"

THE SMALLEST THING

An Ion Has Been Measured By a College Professor.

The smallest thing in the world has been discovered. It is an ion. For a long time the atom held this place, being so small that it could not be seen with the most powerful magnifying glass. The next smallest thing was a molecule, made up of atoms of various elements. Thus a molecule of water is made up of one atom of oxygen and two atoms of hydrogen.

Now we hear that the atom may be broken up into fragments called ions. The ion is both the smallest quantity of electricity capable of existing in a free state. It is so small that if enough electricity to generate the hydrogen in a toy balloon were to be obtained by a counting out the ions, 100 to the minute, the task would occupy 100,000,000 persons 4,000,000 years.

And yet these ions have been isolated and measured in the labratory of Prof. R. A. Milliken of the University of Chicago. Professor Milliken has modified and improved upon the methods of previous experiments. Whereas those used for their experiments a fog of tiny water particles, whose average size and weight could be calculated, as well as the average electric charge on each, Milliken isolates and observes a droplet of oil, which he controls and experiments upon as easily as one might measure and test a block of steel. The droplet serves as a trap for flying ions, the occasion of which to the drop is at once detected by a sudden change in its behavior.

Care of the Pig

No animal will stand as poor treatment as the hog and thrive as well, and it can be said with the same degree of truth that no animal will respond more quickly under good treatment.

To have a pig make a hog of himself in the shortest possible time with the least cost must be the aim of the successful swine grower. This pig of a few weeks, from the very first nourishment it obtains other than through the mother sow, must have feed both of the right quality and quantity. He must start right and then things run smoothly if he is kept in his straight and narrow way.

A pig, it has been well said, is like a car standing on the track, it takes a good deal to start it but when once started it keeps going. Let it stop and all new energy has to be applied again to get it to move.

There are two main things in the care of a young pig which I have found must be insisted upon in order to make him a profitable two-hundred-pounder in the shortest possible time, at the least cost. The first is never let him become "poddy." The result is that he will be as lively as any, eat just as well, and feel just as well, in fact he will do anything you would naturally expect of a pig except grow. By his overeating he has pushed his diaphragm towards his vital organs and his digestive organs assume abnormal proportions, and he is the hog which, when crated and placed on the scales on market day, will weigh the least. The other main point to be insisted upon is never let your pig get the scours, for a scouring pig, for the time being, is as bad off as your poddy one. Weigh a six-weeks-old pig and he tips the beam, we will say, at thirty-five pounds. Let him have the scours badly for ten days and in nine times out of ten he will not gain a pound. He has simply stood still and he is ever after, other things being equal, ten days behind the others. Yes, ten days behind when market day comes. This difference in the last ten days of a hog's life is a large per cent. of the profit, for remember, it is not the difference of ten days on a thirty-five pound pig, but the difference of ten days on a two-hundred pound hog.

We lay special stress on these two points of a young pig's life, for we have found by experience that they are very essential in the swine business and yet the two often are overlooked.

Farm Garden Pointers

Let the rows run north and south; this gives the most sun exposure.

Set the strawberries in rows four feet apart and two feet in the row.

The spring is the time when asparagus roots are usually set, though the work may be done in the fall.

Unless one is gardening on a large scale it is cheaper to buy cabbage plants for early crop than to grow them.

Seed in well-prepared soil which has been compacted will germinate much quicker than where the soil is too coarse and loose.

Sow radish seeds in the same row with some slow-germinating seeds. They will come up in a few days and mark the rows for cultivation.

The larvae of the May beetle, the common white grub, is the worst insect enemy of the strawberry, and breeds largely in the grass land.

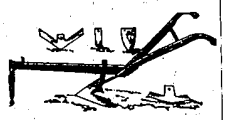
Root crops should be planted together, as well as vine crops, such as cucumbers, etc., also tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and the like. Never plant melons near squashes or pumpkins.

For shingles alone, 750 million feet of timber is cut in that part of the state of Washington which lies west of the Cascades.

PROPER FARMING TO DOUBLE YIELD

It is possible within a few years to double the average production of corn per acre in the United States, and to accomplish it without any increase in work or expense. It is not to be understood from this statement that it is desirable to double the present corn crop, but that it is desirable to produce the same yield on a smaller number of acres and with less labor.

If 60 bushels are raised on one acre instead of on two acres, the labor of plowing, harrowing, planting, cultivating, and harvesting is greatly reduced. Demand controls the quantity that should be grown. To meet the demands the producers of the United States have, during the last ten years averaged in round numbers 2,500,000,000 bushels of corn yearly. In producing this quantity a little more than 95,000,000 acres have been devoted to corn growing. The average production per acre has been 26 bushels. Very few farmers would like to acknowledge that their average production for the past 10 years has been as low as 26 bushels per acre, but from the best estimates that have been made the conclusion is unavoidable that half of those who grow corn harvest less than 26 bushels per acre. Twice this quantity is a fair crop, three times 26 bushels is a good crop, and four times 26 bushels per acre are frequently produced.



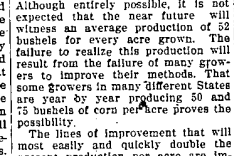
Home-made Shovels Adapted to Surface Cultivation and Weed Destruction.

Since the average crop in the States best adapted to corn growing is but little above the general average of the entire country, it is evident that the average is not lowered to any great extent by the poor crops in section unsuited to corn growing. Moreover, the yield per acre in the New England States, with their short growing season, is as great as in any other part of the country. This clearly indicates the possibility of greatly increasing the yield per acre in the corn belt. This is especially easy of accomplishment in the Southern States, where the present production per acre is low and where the growing season is not shortened by frosts.

Poor corn crops are usually attributed to unfavorable weather conditions, and frequently this is the true cause, for there are but few summers during which this crop does not suffer more or less at some stage in its growth. The most that can be done regarding the weather is to take the best possible advantage of the conditions as they exist. But there are other conditions that are responsible for low production—conditions that are directly under the control of the farmer—and it is these that make possible the doubling of the average yield per acre within a few years. Although entirely possible, it is not expected that the near future will witness an average production of 52 bushels for every acre grown. The failure to realize this production will result from the failure of many growers to improve their methods. That some growers in many different States are year by year producing 50 and 75 bushels of corn per acre proves the possibility.

The lines of improvement that will most easily and quickly double the present production per acre are improvement in the quality of seed planted; improvement in the condition of the soil; improvement in methods of cultivation.

The methods of cultivation in general use in one section of the country differ greatly from those in another section. The implements and methods employed in Iowa are as different



Sweeps and Shovels Used on Single and Double Cultivators.

from those of Connecticut as these in turn are different from those of Georgia; and while these differences are to some extent due to the nature of the farm land or to class of labor employed, they are to a still greater extent due to the conservatism of the farmers themselves. That certain kinds of cultivators or plows or methods of planting have been in use in Georgia or Iowa for many years does not prove that implements or methods found successful in other States might not be used there to advantage.

IN THE GARDEN.

Let the rows run north and south; this gives the most sun exposure.

Two essentials are necessary for the rapid maturing of vegetables—a soil made light with sand, and rich with well rotted manure, and a wind break.

Plant your windbreak in May, and a hemlock hedge is the thing.

Plan to plant crops that live from year to year, like asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries and the like, at one end, so that they will not interfere when you cultivate the annual vegetables.

Root crops should be planted together, as well as vine crops, such as cucumbers, melons, etc., also tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and the like.

Wrongly Labeled.

George C. Boldt said at a luncheon in New York:

"Americans can no longer be said to judge a wine by its label. I doubt if that charge was ever true, and certainly it hasn't one iota of truth in it today.

"But a lot of foreigners, failing here, try in their disappointment and rage to impute to the American business man a wine ignorance equal to that of the German innkeeper.

"To a German innkeeper, you know, a guest once said:

"'Look here. I ordered Jonket Canet, and you've brought me a bottle labelled Medol.'

"'Ach,' said the inkeeper, disgustedly—'Vat a stooped donkey dot Fritz is. I distinctly told him to put a ponket Carnet label on.'"

And They Play Every Night.

"So Bronson doesn't play on your ball team any more?"

"No; he's married, settled down and is the father of twins."

"I see; he has a bawl team of his own."

A Costly Difference.

Senator John Tilden Murphy recently evolved what he considered to be a fine conundrum. This is it:

"What is the difference between a druggist and a farm laborer?"

The answer, so Senator Murphy says, is:

"One is a pharmacist, the other is a farm-assistant."

The other night he strolled into a drug store in his district to get a prescription filled, the chief ingredient of which was borax. He propounded the conundrum to his druggist friend. After a slight mental struggle the clerk gave it up and was told the answer, and in duty bound laughed heartily. A few minutes later the prescription which was filled and the price was 65 cents.

"Thanks," said Senator Murphy. "I can understand the 15 cents, but what is the 50 cents for?"

"Oh, that," replied the druggist blandly, "that is the difference between the pharmacist and the farm-assistant."

Nobody Knew.

The late Professor Sophocles of Harvard, was a short but finely built man, with bushy snow-white hair and beard, olive complexion, and piercing black eyes and looked like some venerable Arab sheik. Reserved and shy in manner, he was ye full of genial humor. Once, in the class-room he asked a student, "What was Xerxes with the bodies of the Greeks who were killed at Marathon?" "They were buried, sir." "Next!" "Why, then—they were burned." "Next!" "I don't know, professor." "Right. Nobody knows!" He was never married, but lived alone in one of the college buildings, and prepared his own food, getting up curious Turkish dishes. He allowed a servant to visit the room to make up his bed, but would endure no further disturbance, and the floor was unswept from October to June.

Her Idea of Politics.

Senator La Follette, apropos of certain scandals, said at a dinner in Madison:

"These things recall the legislator who remarked to his wife with a look of disgust:

"'One of those land lobbyists approached me today with another insulting proposition.'

"The wife, a young and pretty woman, clapped her hands.

"'Oh, good!' she cried. 'Then I can have that sable stole after all; can't I, dear?'"

A Parental Diplomat.

"What did you name that boy of yours?"

"His name is Insurgent Standpat Johnson," answered uncle Raspberry. "Isn't that rather contradictory?"

"I spects so. One of 'em's temporary an' I's gineter keep on readin' de paper an' cross it out when de proper infohmation materializes."

"Hello, Johnny," said the village blacksmith, "I hear your paw has gone into politics."

"Sure."

"How'd that happen?"

"Well, my uncle left him a silk hat and a Prince Albert coat in his will, and paw had to do something with them."

A fond mother in Valparaiso hearing that an earthquake was coming, sent her boys to a friend in the country, so that they might escape it. In a few days' time she received a note from the friend, saying:

"Take your boys away and send along the earthquake."

A New York professor has found precisely what the world weighs. At least, he insists that he has weighed it. But did he have his scales inspected by the sealer of weights and measures? There has been a great deal of fraud in New York in weighing things with fixed scales.

"Ruggles, you ought to go into the business of raising chickens by hand. It's great."

"I believe I would, Ramage, if I could buy a good incubator cheap."

(With eagerness) "I've got one, old chap. I'll sell you for a third of what it cost me."

"Why did you tell me you were working your way through college?"

"I am."

"But nobody seems to know about it."

"Certainly not; my work consists in getting money from dad."

The Secret of The Oak

Apart from a group of men and boys, the idlers of the village, who were watching the woodmen work their havoc in the small patch of woods, stood John Matthews. To all save one or two he was a stranger, yet less than half a score of years before he had been known by almost everyone in this village.

He had returned from Africa the day before, turned upon the urgent request of his solicitors, who needed his assistance in settling the estate. He had come from the city on an early morning train, anxious to close up his affairs at once and get away from the village as soon as possible.

He had expected to find strange faces and many changes, but was hardly prepared for the scene before him, the destruction of this woodland—the Black Forest of his boyhood days, in which he had slain imaginary giants and dragons and where in his gentler moods he had hunted for fairies with Mary, his little playmate, his later sweetheart and the cause of his desertion of home and country.

As he stood looking on, the choppers paused to select another tree, and a cry almost escaped him when he saw that their next victim was to be a great oak. It seemed to the man that an old friend was about to be sacrificed to this sudden land boom which was to make the villagers richer, perhaps, but would destroy so many old landmarks.

Under this great oak tree, centuries old, perhaps, he had spent the happiest hours of his life. There was a hollow in it that they had discovered one day. Mary had trained wild vines to grow over it, and they had called it the treasure keep of their castle. Then when they had gone away to school and college it had been their post-office. Returning for the holidays, if Mary was absent he was sure to find a letter waiting for him in the hollow, and he would leave one for her when he went away. At last, when school days were over, and they were home once more the oak had been their trysting place, until the summer that his rival had come to the village.

A strong will, new scenes and friends, had helped him to forget, but now the memories came rushing back. Once more he could see Mary as she paused at the entrance of the woods when he had pleaded with her to give him her answer to the question he had asked so many times that summer. "You will find your answer in the oak at sunset," she had said. He had come back at sunset only to find the hollow empty and then knew her answer, knew that the other man had won, and that she had let their old friend, the oak, tell him what her lips could not. That had been the end, for he left the village that night, and now after 10 years one would scarcely recognize the boy in this stern, gray-haired man.

The blow of an axe brought John back to the present. As he was about to turn from the scene of destruction, he saw something small and white balance a moment on the edge of the hollow and fall to the ground. The woodmen picked it up, consulted a moment and then one of them came toward him.

"The boss thinks this belongs to you," he said, handing John a small envelope, stained and yellow.

John nodded to the foreman, one of the few that had recognized him, and with quick-beating heart, hurried away from the curious throng. Arriving at the house he went quickly to the study that the caretakers had made ready for him. Hastily he tore open the little yellow envelope. The note it contained was dated 10 years before. "Don't you know the answer is yes, Jack?" was all it said.

Then the truth came upon him like a flash. A wind had carried the note upward as she tossed it into the hollow which she was not quite tall enough to reach, and it had lodged in a crevice above instead of dropping to the bottom. The woodman's axe had jarred it from its resting place of years. In his haste that day long ago he had overlooked it and had misunderstood. It had been he that she cared for after all and not the other man. But what must she have thought of his sudden departure, what had she thought during those years of silence? He would find her. No doubt the caretakers knew where she was. He had never heard of her marriage, so the world might hold some happiness for him after all.

There was a gleam of the fire of youth in his eye and the sternness had vanished from his face as he hastily glanced over some mail which his lawyers had forwarded. "That can wait," he said but one postmark seemed to catch his attention; he could not understand why, but it seemed vaguely familiar, and he opened the envelope.

Slowly the brightness died from his eyes, the hard lines deepened once more about his mouth, and the sternness settled again upon his features. He sank into a nearby chair and the paper fluttered to the floor. Through the open window came the shouts of the woodmen and a mighty crash told the man that the great tree had fallen.

"You gave up your secret too late, old oak," he murmured as he covered his eyes with his hand. For the half-folded sheet which gleamed so white against the crimson carpet was the announcement of Mary's marriage to his old-time rival—Mollie L. Boody.