

The Man From Yonder

By HAROLD TITUS

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SYNOPSIS

Ben Elliott—from "Yonder"—arrives at the little lumbering town of Tincup accompanied by Don Stuart, old, very sick man, whom he has befriended. He signals his coming by defeating Bull Duval, "king of the river," and town bully, in a log-birthing contest. Nicholas Brandon, the town's leading citizen, resents Stuart's presence. He tries to force him to leave town and Elliott, resenting the act, knocks him down. Elliott is arrested.

CHAPTER II—Continued

"Oh . . . That! I don't know. I didn't ask; I forgot it. I wasn't interested in your fine. We can take care of that. I was interested in finding out about you . . . what kind of a nut-cracker you are"

The young gray eyes were studying the old blue ones closely, now.

"I found out," Able continued. "He says you're no good." In the pause the justice chuckled softly. "He says you're absolutely no good to yourself or anybody else. He tells me that you know more about logging and sawmills than any man your age has a right to know and he's seen a lot of men. He says you can make the worst crew that ever infested a shanty eat out of your hand. He says you don't know what it is to be tired or afraid. . . . And then he says again that you're no use on earth, so far as he can tell!"

Elliott was grinning a bit foolishly now and rubbed his chin.

Able went on: "He told me that before the war—you war, not ours—they'd figured you as one of the prize young men in their organization but that since you've come home there's nothing you'll do. You can do anything, he says, but you won't. I asked him why and he said he guessed it was because everything they had to offer you was too simple, which I translated to mean that they haven't a good, tough hickory nut to offer you."

The other's rather embarrassed smile faded.

"Was he . . . mad?" he asked.

"Was he really sore at me?"

"Mad like anybody else would be, I take it, if they saw a young man they thought a lot of wasting his time."

"I'm sorry! I think a lot of Mr. Bridger. He certainly has been white with me. I've tried, Judge. Honest, I've tried to give 'em all I had but . . . But he's right. The war upset me, like a lot of others. I haven't got my feet on the ground yet. After the big show everything else seems too d—easy!"

"Likely. You haven't tried my job yet," Able said gravely.

"Being a justice in Tincup?"

"No. Not that. My real job—my real, tough nut—is being administrator for an estate. The McManus estate, which is nothing more than as pretty a piece of hardwood as ever stood outdoors. The Hoot Owl stuff, we call it. Trying to operate it to a profit and hang on as administrator so some other man won't step in and give that stuff away is my particular hard nut. And it's a chore, Elliott."

He eyed the younger man a brief interval and caught his breath quickly.

"I like the way you looked at Nick Brandon in court this afternoon. No young man has looked at him that way since I can remember. That's why I telephoned Bridger; because I liked the way you looked at Brandon and because I'm about worn out trying to crack a hard nut. That's why I'm here."

"Maybe, from what Bridger told me, and from what I've seen of you, you might maybe, perhaps, like to take a crack at this nut. . . ."

After a moment he repeated:

"You might, possibly. The fact is, I'm through, Elliott. I've given the job all I had. I'm at my wit's end and the estate's at its rope's end. We're licked, as we stand now, and the truth is that maybe, perhaps, possibly I might do a right fair job of begging you to come and help me!"

Elliott did not speak but watched Able as he fumbled in his pocket for a sketch map. Able paused for a moment, and then continued:

"Come over by the window. Now, here's the lay-out,—spreading the map on the sill. Here's the railroad, main line. This is Hoot Owl siding with our mill. Twenty men, there, some living in shanties and the boarding house taking care of the rest. It's a long, narrow strip, you see; seventy-six forties uncut. Four miles of slash to north of the mill. Our railroad goes up through the chopping, so. We're an old coffee-pot of twenty-ton rod engine and freight cars, all more or less ready for junk. Here's the camp now and we're cutting on the second forty north. Got thirty-odd hands there that pass for men."

"Harrington was handling it for me. Man named Buller's millwright and a fellow named Ruppert's boss at camp. Harrington's gone—driven out—and we're in the soup!"

He paused and looked at Elliott, whose keen eyes were studying the detail of the map.

"It's a haywire outfit. The locomotive broke down yesterday and unless the boys get her working, the mill will be out of logs in a week. The mill itself is a grand old ruin but saws,

after a fashion. The lumber in the yards is mortgaged up to the last cull piece, there's not enough in the bank to meet interest and pay-roll and there's no boss on the job."

Elliott looked at the old man.

"You said it was as pretty a piece of hardwood as ever stood outdoors. If so, why's it in this jam?"

Able Armitage lifted a hand in gesture and whispered sharply one word: "Brandon!"

Ben put down the map, replaced the pipe stem between his teeth and shoved his hands deep into pockets.

"Checks out on the stories I'd heard. . . . So Brandon's put you on the toboggan! Why?"

Able shrugged. "Probably because it's kept itself out of his hands for so long. And, besides, there are other reasons."

"Six years ago I was made administrator of this estate and to keep the carrying charges from eating it up, I started to operate. There wasn't a chance to sell the stumpage to anybody but Brandon. Nobody's going to put their money into a devil-ridden county like this! There are too many stories going round of what's happened to others who have tried to work alongside Nick. We had to cut and mill or sell the stumpage to Brandon at his own price. Maybe, if it had been mine, I'd have sold; but the owner of this timber is an orphan girl and . . . a man doesn't like to quit under those circumstances."

"But every man I've put on to run the thing has been beaten, and I've had some good ones there. They can't get decent crews in the first place. Buller, the millwright, Thomas, the camp cook, and a crazy Irishman named Bird-Eye Blaine, who's barn boss, are the only three men you can count on. Brandon spies the good men who come along and if they don't work for him he sees to it that his Bull Duval drives 'em out of the country. And this matter of labor is only one item that he makes hard to supply."

"Until now he hasn't been able to touch me. I've managed to hold out against him politically. But he's watching and the probate court is watching and unless I show some progress by the first of the year I'm going to be booted out as administrator. With another administrator in control he'll buy this timber for a song, a girl will be robbed and the shame of this community will be complete!"

"And what makes you think," Elliott asked, "that I've got a chance to put it over when other men have failed?"

Able did not hesitate:

"Because you have youth and a liking for tough nuts!" He did not smile; his eyes snapped and his voice rose.

"Son"—putting a hand on his shoulder—"I'd take Bridger's word on men quicker than I'd take the word of any man I know. He says you can do it if you will. I'm asking you, now, as an old man with his back to the wall, will you help me on this?"

Ben Elliott did not reply at once. He was staring at the floor as one will when debating with himself and preparing for argument with another. He twisted his head gravely and smiled.

Then he looked into Able's face.

"When do we start?" he asked.

The justice swallowed.

"You ready now? Without knowing any more about it?"

"I know enough. It's good timber and it's Brandon who's messing up the detail. . . . Let's go, Judge!"

.

It was just before whistle time next morning at the Hoot Owl mill.

"Who's th' young fellow with Able?" the trimmerman asked the flier.

"New boss."

"Him?" The trimmerman spat and leaned further forward for a better look at Ben Elliott as he stood talking to the sawyer in the gloom of early day.

"Say . . . Ain't he the lad that ducked th' Bull? 'Nd took a poke at Brandon?"

"Th' same."

"Well I'll be d—d! Only a kid. He may be a good hand on a birlin' log but won't Nick Brandon find him sweet pickin'! He likes 'em young, Nick does . . . and specially after this one took such pains to make himself unpopular with Mister Nick!"

"Yup. He'll be duck soup for Brandon all right!"

The hand of the millwright's watch approached the hour. The sawyer pulled the signal cord. The big shaft commenced to turn and from machine to machine went Buller while Able and Ben watched, examining belting, grease cups, seeing that live rollers ran steadily and true. The pulleys turned slowly for a full five minutes and then as the cracked whistle atop the boiler house cackled its message that another working day had begun, the carriage swept forward and the saw snarled its way into a good maple log.

Elliott stirred on his feet. It was the way a mill should start, anyhow.

But after that beginning the procedure was not so good. The sawyer was not quick in making decisions. Twice in a half dozen logs his slabs were thick to the point of waste; he did not turn one particularly good piece as soon as he should to grade his lumber to the highest point.

The setter, too, was mediocre. The deck man loafed and let the bull chain fill up and stop even when his deck was half empty.

The mill crew was not happy. They appeared to be men working for a cause they felt was lost.

Ben went with Buller, then, from man to man and watched each do his work.

In the yard they passed logs rolled to one side.

"Much veneer stuff good as that?" Ben asked, eyeing them.

"Not much coming in now, but there's a lot of it standing," Buller answered. "Buyer in here ten days ago looking up bird's-eye maple and veneer birch. Harrington was saving it as it came in; some of it. He had too many things to think about, Harrington did. The buyer's due back any day, though. Market's up, I guess. He'll probably pay a fancy figure for what we have to offer him."

Then he went to the particular problem confronting them. With the locomotive laid up the steady supply of logs from camp to mill would be cut off. Snow was falling lightly, now, but sleighing might be days distant. To log the mill by trucks was impractical, he declared, and unless the railroad equipment could be put in working condition they might be forced to shut down. Fortunately a reserve log supply of a sort was on hand, decked high beside the pond.

"We'll have to break out this one deck now," Buller said.

He whistled and waved to the pond man. Picking up a peavey he led the way toward that high bank of maple, beech and birch logs. Ben followed, watching the foreman as he surveyed the face of the deck and shook his head dubiously.

"Try the big birch first," Buller said to the pond man.

They engaged the hooks of their peaveys; they heaved. The log rolled away easily and lumbered down the incline to the water. Another . . . and still another, each coming away separately and starting no movement of others above them.

Buller spat. "That d—n beech butt's in their pick," he said, tapping the log with his peavey pick. "Try her, Jim; now be careful. When she comes, the whole deck'll move in a hurry."

They heaved to no result. With a sharp "Now!" they heaved again, but the beech, nestling in the face of the deck at the height of a man's hip, refused to budge.

"Hold on! Give you a hand," Ben picked up a peavey and approached.

"Here, take this end, Elliott," the foreman said, moving in toward the center which was under the towering facade of the deck.

"No, go on back. I'll do the risk-taking for this lay-out for a while."

Buller made no reply but grinned. The pond man looked at Ben approvingly and spat on his hands. Peavey hooks bit the log's ends again; a peavey point, with all Ben Elliott's strength bearing on it, pried beneath the center of the reluctant beech. . . . "Now. . . Together!"

He lifted his weight from the ground. His peavey handle bent.

"Look out!" Buller's voice was shrill on the warning as movement sent Ben Elliott swinging to the right. The key stick popped out, all but upon Ben. The logs above settled with a heavy mutter and then with that thunderous, ringing, booming sound of hardwood in motion, they rolled upon him.

Elliott had dropped his peavey, leaped nimbly over the beech as it struck the ground and bounced on its way to the water. He hopped to the first log and spurned it with his one foot, landed on the following with both, hesitated a split instant and stepped to yet another. Arms spread, balancing carefully, watching those logs as a boxer watches his opponent's blows, he went up that zooming, booming avalanche as it came down. He danced to the left as the end of one stick swung out to clout him to a pulp. He ran rapidly over three that lumbered down beneath him and paused.

Two came riding together, one atop the other, a moving barrier as high as his waist. Buller opened his lips in a cry of warning but thrusting out one hand, touching the topmost of the pair ever so lightly, Ben vaulted over, landing on another that rolled and grumbled behind the two. Crevasse between logs opened and closed before him. Sticks popped out of the tremendous pressure and rolled down slantwise, imperiling him. He did not run rapidly. At times he seemed to move with painful, with dangerous deliberation. But he was watching the logs and his chances and did not make a move until he was certain of where he was going.

Slowly the deck settled. Half of what had been piled logs now bobbed and swayed and rolled in the pond. The rest, reduced from the height to which it had towered a few seconds before, came to rest. And Ben Elliott, on its lowered crest, stood still a moment until certain the movement was ended and then came slowly down, looking not at the men who gaped at him but at the logs over which he walked with a critical, appraising eye. "Atta boy!" an unidentified voice yelled above the roar of the carriage

exhaust, but if Elliott heard this he gave no indication.

"Now, if Buller can't get that locomotive going by noon," he said to the pale and visibly shaken Able, "we'll telegraph for a new spider. No use taking more chances. Come on, Buller, let's look at the stuff you've got piled."

Blinking, the millwright followed him.

"Y G—d!" muttered the pond man. "Slick shod, he went over that face! Slick shod! Y G—d!"

An hour later the mill stood silent for five minutes while a broken conveyor chain was repaired. In that interval every man on the job had heard the story.

"Y G—d! Slick shod!" the pond man said again and again. "Cool? Like a watermelon on ice!"

When they started the head sawyer was grinning and it seemed as though the saw stayed in the log more constantly than it had before, as if the mill functioned with greater smoothness, as if something in the nature of enthusiasm went into the labor along with brawn and experience.

CHAPTER III

Not so in the camp where men and horses toiled to make decks of logs by night out of what at dawn had been standing trees. Nearly half the crew were Finns, stolid, uncommunicative fellows, good enough workmen but difficult to speed up.

"Aren't there any good men left loose around here?" Ben asked Able on his first trip to town.

"Old Tim Jeffers is the only man who's stood out against Nick and he's the best logger these woods have ever seen but he doesn't like Brandon, can't work for him and is so disgusted that he's quit the timber and settled down on a farm. He hasn't set foot in a camp for three years and swears he never will again. Neither will he be run out of the country."

"That's part of the hard shell of this nut, Ben; lack of good men who've got the sand to stick here and work for anybody but Brandon."

The next morning—Sunday—Ben sat over a table in his tiny office working with paper and pencil when Bird-Eye Blaine burst in.

"The Bull's here!" the little Irishman exclaimed in a whisper, closing the door behind him hastily. "Th' Bull's here . . . 'nd wearin' his river boots!"

"Th' Bull!" Bird-Eye repeated and swallowed. "He's come, loike he's come to other camps. He'll have evry dommed Finlander 'nd Injun hitting th' road to escape him!"

Ben shoved back his chair then.

"What's this?"

"Ah, it's Brandon that's hint him! He's Mither Brandon's pet bull 'nd he'll clane this camp av men loike he's done many a time before! He's wearin' river boots 'nd swillin' whisky!"

"Where?" Elliott got to his feet.

"In th' men's camp,"—gesticulating with his thumb. "He's just now come in 'nd they're commencing' to sift out th' dommed yellow bellies!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

Hay-Paucéfote Treaty, Involving Panama Canal

The Hay-Paucéfote treaty of 1901 was signed long before there was a Panama canal in existence and did not give England free use of the Panama canal, notes a writer in the Detroit News. It replaced the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850 as an Anglo-American agreement of policy concerning an isthmian canal, then supposed to be fived as across Nicaragua. Public feeling for some years had been growing sore over the Clayton-Bulwer treaty's restriction on the independent action of the United States, and there was grave fear lest congress might abrogate that treaty by open violence, a great blow to future amicable action. President McKinley in his annual message for 1898 declared that the canal had become a national necessity. Negotiations were opened with Great Britain and a draft treaty was sent by the President to the senate in February, 1900, providing for the construction of a canal, to be permanently neutralized. Disputes in the senate over the terms led to the formulation of a new treaty, ratified as the Hay-Paucéfote treaty in December, 1901. Before the opening of the Panama canal in 1914 there was a controversy with Great Britain regarding the provision of the Panama Canal act of 1912, exempting American vessels engaged in coastwise trade from canal tolls. This was regarded by the British as a violation of the original treaty. Eventually, after President Wilson had sent congress a message urging this action, this exemption of American ships from the canal tolls was repealed.

Quakers in World War

The Friends, or Quakers, did not actively participate in hostilities during the World War, but rendered invaluable service in relieving distress, providing food, clothing and hospital supplies. After the war the Society of Friends maintained for some years relief agencies, particularly for the starving children of Russia and Germany.

ENVIRONMENT, MENTALITY

From the writings of Sir Walter Scott, J. F. Rogers has gleaned the following quotation, "As for mind and body I fancy I might as well inquire whether the fiddle or the fiddlestick makes the tune," and from this he takes his title, "Fiddle or Fiddlestick," for an article in Hygeia Magazine.

He says in the article, "If a group of school children who are, on the average, physically and mentally superior to their fellows are studied as to their origin, it will be found that, on the average, they come from homes where there is more and better food, better air, more sunshine and more sources of interest than do their fellows. On the other hand, the children with smaller and more defective bodies come, on the average, from homes where the sanitation is relatively poor and where they receive inferior physical and mental attention."

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