

# CAUGHT in the WILD

By **ROBERT AMES BENNET**

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## CHAPTER VI—Continued

Even after this, Garth had to bear the brunt of the heavy work. Much of the time the others were forced to stop off, to get the camp out of their knees or rest their arms. And when they paddled, their unskillful stroke kept Garth twisting his own stroke to keep the canoe from being swerved from side to side like a ship with the jaws.

Had work been the only consideration, he would as soon have done it all. There were, however, reasons for more speed than he could make alone with the heavily loaded skin-covered craft. The summer was now far along. The days were rapidly shortening, the nights becoming colder and darker. Delay would mean a serious chance of being caught in early autumn blizzards. Even Lilith Ramill might not be able to survive an all-day drive of sleet. Such a storm would undoubtedly kill her father and, not improbably, Huxby also. Persistent use of the paddles would continue the toughening of the three chechacos. It would also quicken the speed of the canoe as they acquired skill from practice.

He himself kept to his stroke like the born voyager he was, dipping his paddle for hour after hour. His steady pull never varied except when, at long intervals, he shifted the paddle over to the other side. He stopped that clocklike stroke only when landings had to be made for food or sleep.

On the third day Lilith attempted to keep stroke with him. She paddled until so exhausted that she broke down and wept. After that Huxby quit less often, though he never came so near to overruling himself.

They had twice camped on muskeg. The third afternoon brought them to broken ridges where the stream dashed through a gorge. So far as could be seen, the rapids looked easy to shoot. But Garth said it was a portage.

He slung a pack from his stump-line and took the canoe on his shoulders. The total load was a full two hundred and fifty pounds. At sight of it, the others took on all the rest of the meat and equipment. For miles Garth led them up and down rocky slopes, through brush and bogs. Twice they skirted sheer falls that showed why he had taken to land.

At last, below the lower fall, he launched the canoe in the eddy of a deep pool. The others sank down on the bank, outspent. He built a fire and boiled tea for them. They expected to camp overnight. He ordered them back into the canoe.

"Can't chance waiting here. May be too foggy to see tomorrow," he explained. "Sit flat in the bottom, and keep your paddles inboard."

They understood when a few strokes of his paddle brought the canoe to the foot of the pool. For a long two miles they crouched low in the bottom while the frail craft glided down the foaming, swirling torrent of white water. Garth smiled at their cowering backs. He had often shot worse rapids, and he had been down these once before. Skillfully as an Athabaskan Indian, he drove the canoe clear of dangerous whirlpools and dodged past rocks with deft twists of his paddle.

At the foot of the rapids, he headed in alongside a bit of gravelly beach and helped Mr. Ramill and Lilith ashore. When he remarked that there was gold in the gravel, Huxby nearly upset the canoe in his haste to get out and look.

"Gold! Why didn't we bring the gold pan?"

Garth laughed and stretched out on the dry grass above the gravel. "Gallant gentleman, your lady is building the fire."

"Don't mind him, Vivian," Lilith chimed in on the banter. "You can use the cup for panning. I need only the pot to boil Alan's tea."

Huxby glanced sidelong at Garth and hastened to help the girl. Her father had flattened out beside Garth. With a yawn, Garth stretched up his arms and let them fall. The left one came down across the millionaire's body. The back of the hand felt a lump under the leather coat. Huxby had not again gained possession of the pistol.

Nothing would have been easier than to have pulled out the weapon and flung it into the stream. The impulse to do so passed as quickly as it flashed into Garth's mind. He was not the kind of sportsman who shoots lions from a boma, or tigers from the backs of elephants. There is far more sport stalking a beast that has a chance to kill the stalker.

The chechacos had now experienced the different phases of canoeing—days of paddling through muskeg, a portage, and the running of rapids. But all proved to be no more than a mild sample of the difficulties and hardships that followed. In the next two weeks three more rapids had to be shot and two very hard portages made. Between times, the canoe was paddled interminably through meandering channels that twisted and looped and split off in blind leads.

Down in the lower country, the pests of black gnats, mosquitoes and stinging flies became worse. At the same

time the flask of grease and pitch dope began to give out. Most of the camps were on wet ground. For days the party were drenched by a steady drizzle, varied only by downpours that kept Lilith and her father bailing the canoe.

Several times fog on the water compelled Garth to put ashore. Without sight, even his training could not enable him to follow the right channel. He was not an Indian. But between the forced halts, he put in still longer hours of paddling.

Matters were coming to a pinch. After the first wetting by the rain, what remained of the meat spoiled. It became so flyblown and tainted that Lilith threw it away before Garth could prevent the wastage. He decided to give them all another lesson.

In the fast that followed, Mr. Ramill was the first to fall. Huxby came next; Lilith last of the three. By the third day they had given up all paddling. On the fourth, they lay slumped in the bottom of the canoe. Garth only tightened his belt again and dipped his paddle in his strong, steady, seemingly tireless stroke.

Whenever he found himself nearing his limit, he headed ashore, boiled tea, slept, and then put off again. The fifth day began to draw on the last reserve of his wiry endurance. Towards noon he made the boggy shore, almost outspent. He dragged out the wolfskin knapsack anchor, with its load of platinum alloy. The girl and the two men lay in a stupor of starvation. He himself was so tired that he could not have lifted even Lilith ashore.

As he rested on the west sedge he recalled the place as one of his former camp sites. A spruce-covered ridge of higher ground here thrust out into the muskeg. The first remembrance brought another. The second gave him strength to pull his rifle from the canoe and climb asslant the ridge end. There was a berry patch on the east slope. The fruit would be better than nothing. He hoped, however, for something more.

Circling to get the wind in his face, he crept through the spruce thickets until he could peer out on the open



"Out of the Muskegs; but a Long Way From Out of This D—d North!"

ground of the berry patch. Luck was with him. The old black bear had gone off and left her cub. He rested the rifle barrel on a spruce branch to get a sure aim.

That was the end of famine. Gorged upon the fat, tender meat of the bear cub, even Mr. Ramill rapidly regained strength. He was still rather weak, however, when they came to the last portage.

The approach to solid ground was across a narrow belt of muskeg. Near the far side of the swamp, the millionaire failed to jump squarely upon a tussock of niggerhead grass. He slipped and plunged headfirst into a pool.

Huxby was following close behind, alert for every move of his partner. He sprang to grasp the feet of the sinking man. A heave dragged him out, slied and spluttering. Huxby worked over him, scraping off mud, until Lilith hastened back to help assist her father across the rest of the quagmire. Once on firm ground, the millionaire joked about his mishap.

"Haven't had a bath since the last rain," he said. "This one is higher class—equal to the mud baths at Hot Springs. How about my pack Lilith?" She looked in his foxskin bag. "Everything there, Dad—with some mud added."

Garth had been too far ahead, with his heavy pack and canoe, to see or hear the accident. Mr. Ramill joked again about his extra bath when they took to the canoe at the far side of the portage. But all the time until they reached the evening camp and he started to wash the mud from the leather coat, he did not notice that the pistol was missing.

At the announcement of the loss,

Huxby met Garth's gaze with a stare of cold hostility. Garth walked up to him, empty-handed.

"If you've done what I think you have," he said, "I call you for a showdown."

The engineer's lips tightened in an ironical smile. He put up his hands. Not to be fooled by the seeming bluff, Garth went over Huxby's tattered clothes, from coat collar to moccasins. The pistol was nowhere on the engineer.

"This is one time I'm due to apologize," Garth admitted.

"I accept no apology from you," Huxby replied.

Lilith looked from one to the other, her own lips tightening.

Mr. Ramill good-humoredly interposed, as he hung the washed leather coat before the fire: "Postpone your fight, boys. We're still in the muskegs. I'll build a cockpit for you when we get out."

That won a chuckle from Garth. Huxby smiled with his lips—not with his eyes. As Lilith looked from Garth to him, her eyes narrowed and her lips tightened.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Gaffed Wolf.

Mr. Ramill's good-humor over his fall into the muskeg pool had not been forced. It was based upon his feeling of physical well-being.

Instead of having been broken down by the hard toil and exposure of the trip and that severe lesson in the meaning of famine, he had come through it all in even better shape than before the start from the lost valley. The days of starvation had completed Nature's raid upon the degenerate fats and poisons of his once obese body.

There had followed the feasts of tender bear-cub meat. He was again putting on weight, but it was hard muscle. The healthy blood flooded his brain with a comfortable glow that was not to be dampened by any amount of toil or discomfort.

He was paddling as vigorously if not as skillfully as his daughter, when, mid-morning of the twenty-fourth day from the valley, the canoe neared a wooded point that rose well above the swamps. Garth called out from the stern of the canoe:

"If you want a surprise, friends, shut your eyes while we take ten strokes."

He knew that Huxby would keep on staring ahead. But he guessed right about Lilith and her father. At the end of the tenth stroke, the girl flung up her paddle and uttered a shriek of joyous amazement:

"The river! The river!"

Close upon the cry came the deep-lunged shout of her father: "By the Almighty, you've done it, Garth! We're out."

Huxby continued to stare fixedly ahead at the mighty flood of the Mackenzie. He was last to speak: "Out of the muskegs; but a long way from out of this d—d North!"

"Long by canoe or even by steamer," Garth agreed. "Not so far, though, by air passage. We can make the emergency supply post by two or three hours' paddling downstream."

"What of it? That fellow Tobin told us planes never stop there, unless foul weather runs them short of gas."

Garth met the suddenly anxious looks of Lilith and her father with a smile.

"All pilots have orders to sight non-stop posts in passing. Tobin has a distress signal. There'll be a plane coming south from the Arctic coast within three days—probably tomorrow. You'll be lying in the lap of luxury at Edmonton within a week or ten days."

The millionaire felt at the grease-and-pitch mat of his month-old beard. He chuckled. "A bath and a barber! Hand over that last cigar, Garth. Here's where I celebrate."

He opened the gold-mounted case, bit off the tip of the sole surviving Havana, and snapped his patent lighter. It failed to flint. He tossed it over into the water, and turned to Garth, with an impatient command: "Give me a light."

"Only two matches left, sir."

"Enough to light a cigar. Pass them over."

Instead of taking out his waterproof match case, Garth took up his paddle. "The rule is, never burn your last match until you have to. You've thrown away that little flint and steel. The fire-drill is all right in dry weather but hard to use in wet."

Huxby dipped his own paddle. "Come on, Mr. Ramill. By his own account, three hours more will rid us of him and his insolence."

"Wait," said Lilith. She pointed to the bank where the pleasant green of young spruces showed among the weathered white trunks of fire-killed birch trees. "If we have so much time, we'll land there and clean up."

"But—with the post so near, my dear Lilith!" Huxby protested. "That fellow Tobin had any amount of soap."

"All the more reason, I'll not have even a common navy soap in this condition. The rags can't be helped. But the dirt!—" Out burst her sup-

pressed loathing for all the grease and grime that smirched herself and the men. "Mud! slime! rancid fat! spoiled meat! Alan Garth, I know that I have to go in dressed like a squaw. But this—this filth!"

He surged the canoe around shoreward with a powerful sweep of his paddle.

"Not necessary, Miss Ramill. A scouring with hardwood ashes and sand will do the work of soap. We can go in sweet."

They landed where an ice jam of some spring break-up had gouged through the muskeg mud at the end of the ridge and left a clear beach of glacial sand and gravel. Up over the ten-foot cut bank, Garth started a fire with one of his two remaining matches.

Even Huxby joined in gathering other piles of fallen birch branches for more fires. While they were burning, Garth beached the canoe and tilted it so that the sun would dry the soggy inside. Huxby stirred the fire, and Mr. Ramill broiled the last of the partly spoiled bear-cub meat, while Lilith tried out a cupful of the rancid fat for a final mess of mosquito dope. Garth brought the girl pitch for the mix from the nearby thicket of young spruces.

No cleaning could be done until the fires burned out. When Mr. Ramill took off the spits of cooked meat, all squatted down as usual to share the meal. Garth smiled his thanks as he took the slab of hot meat handed to him by the millionaire. The smile hardened.

A sudden change had fallen upon his three companions. He could easily guess the cause. They realized that this was the last meal they were to share as fellow voyagers with him.

The moment they stepped from the canoe onto the wharf at the emergency refueling post, their forced companionship with him in the lost valley and on all the long trip out would be at an end. Instead of a trio dependent upon their opponent for food and guidance—for life itself—they would be a trio not only independent of, but hostile to him and his interests.

That was at least true of the two men. And even Lilith betrayed in her look and manner a vivid consciousness of the impending change of relationship. As for Huxby, the cold gloating in his stare showed how he was anticipating the robbery and ruin of the man who had so far outplayed him.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

### Coronation of New King or Queen Is Great Event

A great thing to see in London is the crowning of a new king or queen. It does not happen often, but when it does it is an event to remember, says a writer in the Detroit News.

The actual crowning, or coronation, takes place in Westminster abbey and the archbishop of Canterbury is in charge of the ceremony. The new king sits in the famous Coronation chair, which is covered for the event with cloth-of-gold. He promises that he will govern by the laws made by the British parliament; that he will carry out a rule of justice and mercy; and that he will maintain the Protestant religion.

The Coronation chair dates back to the time of King Edward I, who ruled six and a half centuries ago. It is made of oak, but under the seat is "the Stone of Scone," which was taken away from Scotland during the reign of Edward. Before that the stone had been used during the crowning of Scottish kings.

There is a legend that the Stone of Scone was used as a "pillow" by Jacob, the Hebrew patriarch. The legend says that the stone was moved from Palestine to Ireland, and from there to Scotland before it fell into the hands of the English. There is reason to believe, however, that it was obtained from a quarry near Scone, a town in Scotland.

Unlike Britain, where schools are built so as to admit as much fresh air and sunlight as possible, the Lapps burrow under the earth. Only the thatch or tiled roofs of their schools can be seen. The rest is all cellar. Sunlight does not matter, because for at least six months of the year it is perpetually dark, while for only three months does the sun shine continuously. Fresh air in the form of cutting blasts is most unwelcome, and in winter, spring, and autumn everything is done to keep it out. The atmosphere in Lapp schools, with every crevice blocked and heating apparatus full on, is more than English lungs could bear, but the people there are used to it.

**Seneca Root**  
Seneca root or seneca snakerooot is a plant of the milkwort family known to botanists as Polygala senega and found growing mostly in rocky woods and on eroding hillsides. It is a smooth, perennial plant with a short rootstock as thick as a lead pencil and rather thick roots. The roots and rootstocks have medicinal value.

## TALL TALES

As Told to:  
**FRANK E. HAGAN and ELMO SCOTT WATSON**

### The Faithful Crutches

MOST people know about the loyalty of dogs and other dumb animals that serve mankind, but they do not realize that inanimate things are frequently just as faithful. So says Herbert Sharples of Montreal, Que., who tells this touching story of the faithful crutches.

One day he saw a traveling doctor in the market place offering for sale a marvelous salve which, he claimed, would cure all ills. One of the first purchasers was a man whose legs were so shriveled and twisted that he had to use crutches to get along. One minute and eight seconds after he had rubbed some of the salve on his legs they were so straight and strong that he cast away his crutches and started to walk home without them.

The doctor, having no use for the salve left in the box by the man, and noticing that the crutches were very dirty from long use, began rubbing some of the ointment on them to see if it would brighten them up. At once the crutches began to dance and caper around him, stopping now and then to admire each other's bright, shiny appearance.

Suddenly they paused in their antics and the next moment they were trotting gaily down the street until they caught up with their former master. After that they walked sedately at his heels, ready to come to his assistance if need be, even though he had cast them off without a single thought.

### Victims of Imagination

JOSEPH THOMPSON, of Nashville, Tenn., who gets around the country quite a bit in his work for a railroad, is seldom surprised by the queer things that folks do—like putting tacks in a dining car meal, eating them and threatening to sue the carrier.

The reason Joe preserves his calm is that once he operated a farm and most everybody knows that the queerest sort of things are forever happening there.

Joe's plantation featured fine hams and a herd of nervous goats but he still likes to talk about his trials and tribulations with a patch of popcorn. "Never had any decent luck with the popcorn," Joe testifies. "Gets hot as blazes down at Nashville and first thing you'd know my field would begin to pop and I'd lose practically everything I'd put into it. Don't suppose I ever got to market more than half a crop."

"What I finally did was to plant the popcorn at a spot very close to the house. The noise of its popping kept the children amused and sometimes they would be quiet for hours, just listening to the cheery noise of the popping corn."

"One time, though, the whole field began to pop at the same time. The white pellets flew into the air in a thick cloud and fell in the pasture with my nervous goats. Eighteen of the goats thought it was snowing and lay down and froze to death."

### The Unfinished Story

CHARLES M. WALKER tells tall tales because of silent hours with feeding sheep in the Big Horn mountains of Wyoming. But, strangely enough, his favorite yarn concerns the heart of Chicago instead of the great open spaces.

"In 1923," Charlie tells, "downtown Chicago had numerous banks and many bank vice presidents. Despite their numbers, however, some of the latter were obsessed of self-importance. It is of one of these I sing.

"He lived fashionably on the north shore, commuting daily to the loop. One crisp morning he discovered the family cat dead at his back door. It was only 18 paces to a small garden but the banker revolted at being seen burying a cat. He wrapped the carcass in oiled paper, intending to cast it into the Chicago river which he always crossed downtown.

"Two friends joined him at the river's edge, which meant that the parcel was cached in an empty safe deposit box at the bank.

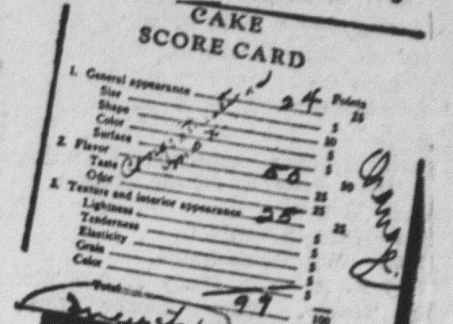
"Homeward bound, the banker retrieved his demised animal, planning quick interment on recrossing the river. Once again, however, friends accompanied him. He boarded a crowded train, placed his ghastly parcel in a luggage rack.

"At his station, the banker seized a brown-paper parcel and bolted. Swallowing pride, he decided on burial in the garden. But when he opened the parcel there was revealed a T-bone steak which an unknown but soon-to-be-shocked commuter had selected."

**Mystery Springs in Queensland**  
Fifty miles southeast of Boulia township, in the far west of Queensland, are two mystery springs. One, known as Elizabeth spring, consists of a circular hole four or five feet in diameter in which tepid water is continually bubbling up and overflowing. The water, which is perfectly clear, is peculiar in that the human body cannot sink in it owing solely to the force of the water bubbling up from below. About 50 yards away is another called Lubra spring. Its water is always icy cold and is jet black. The human body sinks like a stone in it. According to the aborigines of the locality, the water in this spring turned black ages ago when a lubra (native woman) jumped into it and was never seen again.

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