

TALES OF THE PINERIES

BY HAMIL GARLAND.

A LYNCHING . . . IN MOSINEE

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Five hundred men within a minute passed the word down the street: "Frank Willey's shot!"

All order disappeared. The parade broke into a disordered mass, hastening toward the band. The boys' brigade, the center of the mass, illuminated with their flaring torches, the wash and restless surge of humanity.

From every direction streams of men debouched into the main street like a spring overflow. Women and children lined the sidewalk.

"Who done it?" shouted furious voices.

"Some damn Dimblebat, of course."

"Where is he?"

"Clark run 'im into the jail."

"Where's Willey? Is he livin'?"

"Yes. He's in the drug store."

Then a sort of silence fell on the crowd. They stood in dense groups surrounding some eyewitness of the shooting. From time to time news emanated from the drug store.

"He's bad. They've sent for his wife." Then the talk would go back to the prisoner.

"What in God's heavens any man has against Frank Willey I don't see."

A carriage drove up through the crowd with a white-faced woman in it. The moaning hysterical sobs went to the heart like the thrust of a jagged knife. They stood aside in awe of her grief as she was hurried into the store by two men.

"My God! Just think what's on her!" was the universal comment of the crowd surged against the door.

"Stand back there! Don't crowd!"

There came a piercing shriek that made every man shiver as if an icy blast had blown on his naked heart. Then the word came out and was flung from lip to lip.

"He's dead!"

"What? No!"

"Willey's dead! He didn't know her."

Few questioned it, coming after the wife's cry. Men stood staring into each other's faces and swearing great oaths, helplessly.

"Frank Willey dead!" sobbed one great bearded fellow, his voice high and broken. "Why, my God, gentle-men, he stood right here ten minutes ago—I had my hand on his shoulder."

Nobody laughed at his crying—there were too many with tears on their cheeks. Everybody knew the captain; everybody had felt the pressure of his hand. Some had been his comrades in the war. Some of the young fellows were in the militia which he commanded—all loved him.

The street grew darker as the torches went out. The crowd again broke into knots. "He ought to hang to-morrow morning," was a remark made here and there.

"We ought to 'a' lynched him when we had him."

Mrs. Willey, in that utter despair which is like the surrender of life, was carried out to the hack and taken away. The men silently looked on.

But as the carriage disappeared up the street, a crowd of men came out of a saloon, and there arose a strident, overtopping, ferocious voice in a far-reaching howl.

"Every man that's got any sand, follow me."

"Where to?"

"To the jail to hang that—"

Scores of voices replying cut off his terrible oaths.

"That's right. The jail. Smash it in."

"Come on, you cowards!"

Like a mass of logs let loose in a swift current, the "pack" of men began to move down the street toward the jail. As they moved they gathered strength. Each man seeing his neighbor moving moved with less fear. A sort of inhuman joy and elation came into their souls; many of them felt like singing as they marched.

Dan and Annie were standing on the steps of the jail, listening.

"There's no telling what they'll do," he was saying as he heard some of the wild voices. They heard a new sound—a chorus of savage shouts. The trample of feet grew plainer and more rapid, beating the frozen ground and the hollow sidewalk till an ominous roar arose.

"They're comin', Dan." Annie turned her resolute face to her husband. "They're after him."

"They won't get 'im. I won't open up—Listen to that, will ye?"

The roar came nearer, and the shouts now stopped.

"Bring a rope—a rope!"

"We'll hang 'im right now."

That terrible voice seemed to inflame the whole mob, as a ravenous snarl of a tiger rouses the beasts of a manager to primitive ferocity.

"Now, Annie," said Dan, "you go in and—"

"But you're goin' to need me out here, Dan. I'd rather be out here with you."

"Annie," said Dan, quietly, "you're inside. Lock all the doors. Lock this door behind me and hide the keys. I'll stand right here alone."

"All right, Dan," she replied without a quiver. "But I'm afraid—"

"Don't open the doors for anything or anybody till morning—not even to me." His voice had a peculiar inflexible quality. "I don't need any help."

She knew him in these moods. "All right, Dan. It's your duty."

After she went in and shut the door behind her, Dan put his ear to the door till he heard the bolt slide with a click, and the chain rattle into place. Then he took out his revolvers, examined them as well as he could in the shadow, and calmly waited the approaching crowd.

Suddenly the city marshal dashed up.

"Dan, they're comin'!"

"Let 'em come, Joe. We're here first."

"They're goin' to lynch 'im."

"Not while I stand here."

"But we can't stand out against the whole county, Dan."

"The whole county ain't here."

"Yes, they are. They've telephoned the news all over the county and teams are pouring in. Some o' the best men in this town are in that mob, Dan—lawyers and—"

"Can't help it. You stand right here!"

"O, I can't do that. I daresn't do that."

"All right, I'll do it alone."

"But, Dan, they'll—"

"What?" asked Dan, coldly.

"They're wild. You better open the door—"

"Open mawthin'. Get out o' here, you white-livered skunk!"

The crowd turned in at the gate, hooting like demons, and Joe flattered along the shadow of the jail wall and disappeared, to be seen no more that night. At those in advance came up, they saw Dan standing in the shadow grimly.

"That you, Dan?"

"It's me. What you want?"

"Want that man," burst from several throats, as if they already smelled opposition from Dan.

"Open the door, Mr. Sheriff."

"I won't do it."

"Then we'll smash it down."

"What y' think y'r doin'?" asked Dan coolly.

"Smash in the lip in the lip," yelled a voice farther back in the throng, which was packing denser each minute.

Dan's blood began to stir.

"I'm the sheriff of this country. That man was put into my hands for safe-keeping, and, by the Great Eternal he's goin' to stay there."

"Don't be a fool. You can't stand out against this mob."

"I don't know the man's guilty—"

"I do! I saw him shoot!" shouted a score of voices in reply.

"I don't care if the man had killed ten men, it's my duty to keep the door of this jail shut."

"You'd better open—"

Again that strident, far-reaching, in-flaming voice awoke:

"Throw him out of the way."

A small section of the advancing line made a movement upon the sheriff.

"Halt!" stop right there. I give you notice I mean business. I'll let the moonlight through the first man that

made a movement upon the sheriff.

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