

NORTH OF FIFTY-THREE

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

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UNUSUAL COMBINATION FOUND IN THIS GRIPPING STORY OF THE GREAT NORTHWEST

Plenty of stories have been written of the great Northwest because there are real people there—red-blooded men who fit in with the vigor and the strength of the rugged country where they dwell, but it is unusual to run across a tale which combines a vivid and convincing picture of life in the far North with a genuine and wholesome love story and glimpses of life in what the world calls civilization "back East" or "down South." Such a combination is found, however, in "North of Fifty-Three," the first installment of which appears below. Bertrand Sinclair, the author, knows the wild life of the frontier as well as the conventional life of the modern city, and the contrasts between the two are brought out vividly as this gripping tale unfolds.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

Which Introduces a Lady and Two Gentlemen.

Dressed in a plain white shirtwaist and an equally plain black cloth skirt, Miss Hazel Weir, on weekdays, was merely a unit in the office of Harrington & Bush, implement manufacturers. Neither in personality nor in garb would a casual glance have differentiated her from the other female units, occupied at various desks. A business office is no place for a woman to parade her personal charms. The measure of her worth there is simply the measure of her efficiency at her machine or ledgers. So that if any member of the firm had been asked what sort of a girl Miss Hazel Weir might be, he would probably have replied—and with utmost truth—that Miss Weir was an capable stenographer.

But when Saturday evening released Miss Hazel Weir from the plain brick office building, she became, until she donned her working clothes at 7 a. m. Monday morning, quite a different sort of a person. In other words, she checked the plain shirtwaist and the plain skirt into the discard, got into such a dress as a normal girl of twenty-two delights to put on, and devoted half an hour or so to "doing" her hair. Miss Weir then became an entity at which few persons of either sex failed to take a second glance.

Upon a certain Saturday night Miss Weir came home from an informal little party escorted by a young man. They stopped at the front gate. "I'll be here at ten sharp," said he. "And you get a good beauty sleep tonight, Hazel. That confounded office! I hate to think of you dragging away at it. I wish we were ready to—"

"Oh, bother the office!" she replied lightly. "Anyway, I don't mind. It doesn't tire me. I will be ready at ten this time. Good night, dear."

"Good night, Hazel," he whispered. "Here's a kiss to dream on."

Miss Weir broke away from him laughingly, ran along the path, and up the steps, kissed her finger tips to the lingering figure by the gate, and went in.

"Bed," she soliloquized, "is the place for me right quickly if I'm going to be up and dressed and have that lunch ready by ten o'clock. I wish I weren't such a sleepy-head—or else that I weren't a 'pore wurkin' girl.'"

At which last conceit she laughed softly. Because, for a "pore wurkin' girl," Miss Weir was fairly well content with her lot. She had no one dependent on her—a state of affairs which, if it occasionally leads to loneliness, has its compensations. Her salary as a stenographer amply covered her living expenses, and even permitted her to put by a few dollars monthly. She had grown up in Granville. She had her own circle of friends. So that she was comfortable, even happy, in the present—and Jack Barrow proposed to settle the problem of her future; with youth's optimism, they two considered it already settled. Six months more, and there was to be a wedding, a three-weeks' honeymoon, and a final settling down in a little cottage on the West side; everybody in Granville who amounted to anything lived on the West side. Then she would have nothing to do but make the home nest cozy, while Jack kept pace with a real-estate business that was growing beyond his most sanguine expectations.

She kissed her finger tips to him again across the rooftops all grimed with a winter's soot, and within fifteen minutes Miss Weir was sound asleep.

She gave the lie, for a moment, to the saying that a woman is never ready at the appointed time, by being on the steps a full ten minutes before Jack Barrow appeared. They walked to the corner and caught a car, and in the span of half an hour got off at Granville park.

The city fathers, hampered in days gone by with lack of municipal funds, had left the two-hundred-acre square of the park pretty much as nature made it; that is to say, there was no ornate parking, no attempt at landscape gardening. Granville park was a bit of the old Ontario woodland, and as such afforded a pleasant place to loaf in the summer months.

When Jack Barrow and Hazel had finished their lunch under the trees, in company with a little group of their acquaintances, Hazel gathered scraps of bread and cake into a paper bag.

Barrow whispered to her: "Let's go down and feed the swans. I'd just as soon be away from the crowd."

She nodded assent, and they departed hastily lest some of the others should volunteer their company. It took but a short time to reach the pond. They found a log close to the water's edge, and, taking a seat there, tossed morsels to the birds and chattered to each other.

"Look," she said suddenly; "here's one of my esteemed employers, if you please. You'll notice that he's walking

and looking at things just like us ordinary, everyday mortals."

Barrow glanced past her, and saw a rather tall, middle-aged man, his hair tinged with gray, a fine-looking man, dressed with exceeding neatness, even to a flower in his coat lapel, walking slowly along the path that bordered the pond.

His gaze wandered to them, and the cool, well-bred stare gradually gave way to a slightly puzzled expression. He moved a step or two and seated himself on a bench. Miss Weir became aware that he was looking at her most of the time as she sat casting the bits of bread to the swans and ducks. It made her self-conscious. She did not know why she should be of any particular interest.

"Let's walk around a little," she suggested. The last of the crumbs were gone.

"All right," Barrow assented. "Let's go up the ravine."

They left the log. Their course up the ravine took them directly past the gentleman on the bench. And when they came abreast of him, he rose and lifted his hat at the very slight inclination of Miss Weir's head.

"How do you do, Miss Weir?" said he. "Quite a pleasant afternoon."

To the best of Hazel's knowledge, Mr. Andrew Bush was little given to friendly recognition of his employees, particularly in public. But he seemed

inclined to be talkative; and, as she caught a slightly inquiring glance at her escort, she made the necessary introduction. So for a minute or two the three of them stood there exchanging polite banalities. Then Mr. Bush bowed and passed on.

"He's one of the biggest guns in Granville, they say," Jack observed. "I wouldn't mind having some of his business to handle. He started with nothing, too, according to all accounts. Now, that's what I call success."

"Oh, yes, in a business way he's a success," Hazel responded. "But he's awfully curt most of the time around the office. I wonder what made him thus out so today?"

And that question recurred to her mind again in the evening, when Jack had gone home and she was sitting in her own room. She wheeled her chair around and took a steady look at herself in the mirror. A woman may never admit extreme plainness of feature, and she may deprecate her own fairness, but she seldom has any illusion about one or the other. She knows. Hazel Weir knew that she was far below the average in point of looks.

She was smiling at herself just as she had been smiling at Jack Barrow while they sat on the log and fed the swans. But even though Miss Weir was twenty-two and far from unsophisticated, it did not strike her that the transition of herself from a demure, businesslike office person in sober black and white to a radiant creature with the potent influences of love and spring brightening her eyes and lending a veiled crease to her every supple movement, satisfactorily accounted for the sudden friendliness of Mr. Andrew Bush.

Miss Weir was unprepared for what subsequently transpired as a result of that casual encounter with the managing partner of the firm. By the time she went to work on Monday morning she had almost forgotten the meeting in Granville park.

Hazel's work consisted largely of dictation from the shipping manager, letters relating to outgoing consignments of implements.

It was, therefore, something of a surprise to be called into the office of the managing partner on Tuesday afternoon. Bush's private stenographer sat at her machine in one corner.

Mr. Bush turned from his desk at Hazel's entrance.

"Miss Weir," he said, "I wish you to take some letters."

Morrison's work, and a trifle dubious at the prospect of facing the rapid-fire dictation Mr. Bush was said to inflict upon his stenographer now and then.

When she was seated, Bush took up a sheet of letters, and dictated replies. Though rapid, his enunciation was perfectly clear, and Hazel found herself getting his words with greater ease than she expected.

"That's all, Miss Weir," he said, when he reached the last letter. "Bring those in for verification and signature as soon as you can get them done."

In the course of time she completed the letters and took them back. Bush glanced over each, and appended his signature.

"That's all, Miss Weir," he said politely. "Thank you."

And Hazel went back to her machine, wondering why she had been requested to do those letters when Nelly Morrison had nothing better to do than sit picking at her type faces with a toothpick.

She learned the significance of it the next morning, however, when the office boy told her that she was wanted by Mr. Bush. This time when she entered Nelly Morrison's place was vacant. Bush was going through his mail. He waved her to a chair.

"Just a minute," he said. "Presently he wheeled from the desk and regarded her with disconcerting frankness—as if he were appraising her, point by point, so to speak.

"My—ah—dictation to you yesterday was in the nature of a try-out, Miss Weir," he finally volunteered. "Miss Morrison has asked to be transferred to our Midland branch. Mr. Allan recommended you. The work will not be hard, but I must have someone dependable and discreet, and careful to avoid errors. I think you will manage it very nicely if you—ah—have no objection to giving up the more general work of the office for this. The salary will be considerably more."

"If you consider that my work will be satisfactory," Miss Weir began.

"I don't think there's any doubt on that score. You have a good record in the office," he interrupted smilingly. "Now let us get to work and clean up this correspondence."

Thus her new duties began. There was an air of quiet in the private office, a greater luxury of appointment, which suited Miss Hazel Weir to a nicety. The work was no more difficult than she had been accustomed to doing—a trifle less in volume, and more exacting in attention to detail, and necessarily more confidential, for Mr. Andrew Bush had his finger tips on the pulsing heart of a big business.

The size of the check which Hazel received in her weekly envelope was increased far beyond her expectations. Nelly Morrison had drawn twenty dollars a week, Miss Hazel Weir drew twenty-five—a substantial increase over what she had received in the shipping department. With that extra money there were plenty of little things she could get for the home she and Jack Barrow had planned.

Things moved along in routine channels for two months or more before Hazel became actively aware that a subtle change was growing manifest in the ordinary manner of Mr. Andrew Bush. She shrugged her shoulders at the idea at first. But she was a woman; moreover, a woman of intelligence, her perceptive faculties naturally keen.

The first symptom was flowers, dainty bouquets of which began to appear on his desk. Coincidentally with this, Mr. Bush evinced an inclination to drift into talk on subjects nowise related to business. Hazel accepted the tributes to her sex reluctantly, giving him no encouragement to overstep the normal bounds of cordiality. She was absolutely sure of herself and of her love for Jack Barrow. Furthermore, Mr. Andrew Bush, though well preserved, was drawing close to fifty—and she was twenty-two. That in itself reassured her.

Thus the third month of her tenure drifted by, and beyond the teatime glances aforesaid, Mr. Bush remained tentatively friendly and nothing more. Hazel spent her Sundays as she had spent them for a year past—with Jack Barrow; sometimes rambling about in the country or in the park, sometimes indulging in the luxury of a hired buggy for a drive.

But Mr. Bush took her breath away at a time and in a manner totally unexpected. He finished dictating a batch of letters one afternoon, and sat tapping on his desk with a pencil. Hazel waited a second or two, expecting him to continue, her eyes on her notes, and at the unbroken silence she looked up, to find him staring fixedly at her. There was no mistaking the expression on his face. Hazel flushed and shrank back involuntarily. She had hoped to avoid that. It could not be anything but unpleasant.

She had small chance to indulge in reflection, for at her first self-conscious move he reached swiftly and caught her hand.

"Hazel," he said bluntly, "will you marry me?"

Miss Weir gasped. Coming without warning, it dumfounded her. And while her first natural impulse was to answer a blunt "No," she was flustered, and so took refuge behind a show of dignity.

"Mr. Bush!" she protested, and tried to release her hand.

But Mr. Bush had no intention of allowing her to do that.

"I'm in deadly earnest," he said. "I've loved you ever since that Sunday I saw you in the park feeding the swans. I want you to be my wife. Will you?"

"I'm awfully sorry," Hazel stammered. She was just the least bit frightened. "Why, you're—"

The thing that was uppermost in her mind and what she came near saying, was:

"You're old enough to be my father." And beside him there instantly flashed a vision of Jack Barrow. Of course it was absurd—even though she appreciated the honor. But she did not finish the sentence that way. "I don't—oh, it's simply impossible. I couldn't think of such a thing."

"Why not?" he asked. "I love you. You know that—you can see it, can't you?" He leaned a little nearer, and forced her to meet his gaze. "I can make you happy; I can make you love me. I can give you all that a woman could ask."

"Yes, but—"

He interrupted her quickly. "Perhaps I've surprised and confused you by my impulsiveness," he continued. "But I've had no chance to meet you socially. Perhaps right now you don't feel as I do, but I can teach you to feel that way. I can give you everything—money, social position, everything that's worth having—and love. I'm not an empty-headed boy. I can make you love me."

"You couldn't," Hazel answered flatly. There was a note of dominance in that last statement that jarred on her. Mr. Bush was too sure of his power. "And I have no desire to experiment with my feelings as you suggest—not for all the wealth and social position in the world. I would have to love a man to think of marrying him—and I do. But you aren't the man. I appreciate the compliment of your offer, and I'm sorry to hurt you, but I can't marry you."

His face clouded. "You are engaged?"

"Yes."

He got up and stood over her. "To some self-centered egotist—some puny egotist in his twenties, who'll make you a slave to his needs and whims, and discard you for another woman when you've worn out your youth and beauty," he cried. "But you won't marry him. I won't let you!"

Miss Weir rose. "I think I shall go home."

"You shall do nothing of the sort! There is no sense in your running away from me and giving rise to gossip—which will hurt yourself only."

"I am not running away, but I can't stay here and listen to such things from you. It's impossible, under the circumstances, for me to continue working here, so I may as well go now."

Bush stepped past her and snapped the latch on the office door. "I shan't permit it," he said passionately. "Girl, you don't seem to realize what this means to me. I want you—and I'm going to have you!"

"Please don't be melodramatic, Mr. Bush."

"Melodramatic! If it is melodrama for a man to show a little genuine feeling, I'm guilty. But I was never more in earnest in my life. I want a chance to win you. I value you above any woman I have ever met. Most women that—"

"Most women would jump at the chance," Hazel interrupted. "Well, I'm not most women. I simply don't care for you as you would want me to—and I'm very sure I never will. And, seeing that you do feel that way, it's better that we shouldn't be thrown together as we are here. That's why I'm going."

"That is to say, you'll resign because I've told you I care for you and proposed marriage?" he remarked.

"Exactly. It's the only thing to do under the circumstances."

"Give me a chance to show you that I can make you happy," he pleaded. "Don't leave. Stay here where I can at least see you and speak to you. I won't annoy you. And you can't tell. After you get over this surprise you might find yourself liking me better."

"That's just the trouble," Hazel pointed out. "If I were here you would be bringing this subject up in spite of yourself. And that can only cause pain. I can't stay."

"I think you had better reconsider that," he said; and a peculiar—almost ugly—light crept into his eyes, "unless you desire to lay yourself open to be—"

"Take Your Hands Off Me, Please."

ing the most-talked-of young woman in this town, where you were born, where all your friends live."

"That sounds like a threat, Mr. Bush. What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. I will admit that mine is, perhaps, a selfish passion. If you insist on making me suffer, I shall do as much for you. There are two characteristics of mine which may not have come to your attention: I never stop struggling for what I want. And I never forgive or forget an injury or an insult. If you force me to let you, you will find yourself drawing the finger of gossip. Also, you will find yourself unable to secure a position in Granville. Also, you may find yourself losing the—or—regard of

this—ah—fortunate individual upon whom you have bestowed your affections; but you'll never lose mine," he burst out wildly. "When you get done butting your head against the wall that will mysteriously rise in your way, I'll be waiting for you. That's how I love. I've never failed in anything I ever undertook, and I don't care how I fight, fair or foul, so that I win."

"This isn't the fifteenth century," Hazel let her indignation flare, "and I'm not at all afraid of any of the things you mention. Even if I weren't engaged, I'd never think of marrying a man old enough to be my father—a man whose years haven't given him a sense of either dignity or decency. Wealth and social position don't modify gray hairs and advancing age. Your threats are an insult. This isn't the stone age. Even if it were," she concluded cuttingly, "you'd stand a poor chance of winning a woman against a man like—well—" she shrugged her shoulders, but she was thinking of Jack Barrow's broad shoulders, and the easy way he went up a flight of stairs, three steps at a time. "Well, any young man."

With that thrust, Miss Hazel Weir turned to the rack where hung her hat and coat.

Bush caught her by the shoulders before she took a second step.

"Gray hairs and advancing age?" he said. "So I strike you as approaching senility, do I? I'll show you whether I'm the worn-out specimen you seem to think I am. Do you think I'll give you up just because I've made you angry? Why, I love you the more for it; it only makes me the more determined to win you."

"You can't. I dislike you more every second. Take your hands off me, please. Be a gentleman—if you can."

For answer he caught her up close to him, and there was no sign of decadent force in the grip of his arms. He kissed her; and Hazel, in blind rage, freed one arm, and struck at him in fashion, her hand doubled into a small fist. By the grace of chance, the blow landed on his nose. There was force enough behind it to draw blood. He stood back and fumbled for his handkerchief. Something that sounded like an oath escaped him.

That the threats made by Bush were not idle was shown when on his sudden death his will was found to contain a provision which brought disaster to Hazel. The next installment tells how this was brought about.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

ANCIENT VESSELS OF JAPAN

Earliest Known Specimen of Japanese Craft Called "Morota-Bune" or "Many-Oared Ship of Kumano."

A historical study of ancient ships used by a seafaring people such as were the prehistoric dwellers along the shores of what is now the sea of Japan has been made by Shinji Nishimura of the Society of Naval Architecture and the Tokyo Anthropological society. East and West News states. He has devoted many years to the work, and although the printed volume is small, it is profoundly exhaustive. He starts with the earliest known specimen of Japanese called the "Morota-Bune" or "Many-Oared Ship of Kumano," remnants of which were dug up at an old village of that name to the south of Lake Nakun-umi in Izumo province. It was "a place to which the Izumo people had migrated from their native land. Where was that native land? Mr. Nishimura traces direct descent from the "Many-Oared Ship of Kumano" and the triangular craft of Korea, still used at Songyu. He says: "It may be asserted that the Morota-Bune in Izumo and the triangular craft in Korea have diverged from the same stock, viz., the fishing boat of the Ainu. In my opinion, the Morota-Bune, the fishing boat of the Ainu, and the triangular craft in Korea resemble one another in form; but the boat of the Ainu belongs to the northern group, while the rest belong to the western group. The triangular craft of the Koreans was modeled after the fashion of the ancient Manchurian type, while the Morota-Bune was fashioned after the Korean type. Even supposing they came from the same source, that source is prehistoric; it must belong to a time when the ancestors of the Ainu were related with those of the Koreans, before they came to Japan, from some place situated at the eastern extremity of Asia; let us say, for example, in a volcanic region like the Amur. If this be so, the time antedates the history of the shipbuilding of our country."

Royal Priestesses.

The most aristocratic religious institution in the world is that located at Prague, Austria. Only a princess of the imperial family can be appointed as its abess. In a few cases, when ladies of less aristocratic birth have been chosen for the position, they have always been of noble birth and have enjoyed the right to the title of royal highness. The abess is installed in office by a solemn ceremony, which is attended by all the high dignitaries of the church and state and an archduke to represent the emperor at the service.

Lumping Them Off.

A tiny girl had made it her custom to enumerate by name all the members of the family and the close friends, in her evening prayers, but at the close of a strenuous day of play she was tired and after the opening petition she yawned, then added sleepily: "And please just bless the whole bunch."

Elopement Plans Ended by Stern Policewoman

CHICAGO.—A crap game and a policewoman ended what had been planned as a happy elopement for "Yak" Williams and his erstwhile "future" Margaret Corbith. It all happened in a West side theater. "Yak," a veteran newsboy at Madison and Halsted streets, had talked things over with Margaret, and the stage was set for the elopement. "Yak" counted his day's earnings—\$2.50—but still not enough to get married on.



An alley crap game profited him to the tune of \$37.50. With the money tucked away in a secret pocket, he rushed to break the glad tidings to Margaret.

Margaret agreed to pack up at once, but said if they left before nightfall her mother would become suspicious. So they agreed to take the night train for Milwaukee. In the meantime "Yak's" luck took another turn, and this time the bones failed him to the extent of the entire forty. "Yak" came back to Margaret crestfallen.

Margaret was determined not to let their future happiness be halted a mere few dollars, and from a girl friend she borrowed all—\$3.00.

The happy couple decided to take in a "movie" before the train left. Margaret was restless and "Yak" was nervous. Their actions, coupled with their possession of the two overpacked suitcases, aroused the suspicions of a policewoman in the theater.

Despite protests, they were marched to the Desplaines street station. Mrs. O'Brien, Margaret's mother, was sent for. With a daggerlike glance at her "almost" son-in-law she rushed to her daughter's side. She persuaded Margaret to return home.

"Yak" is still selling papers on the corner, and is confident that he'll win his bride yet.

Youth Merely Victim of Overvaulting Ambition

WHAUWAKEE.—Anton Tuczyński is employed as an attendant at Milwaukee. He took a trip to Windolken and Hines avenues. A call was received by the police to send the patrol wagon to that section.

"When we got there this fellow told me that a man had tried to kidnap a girl, but that he got away," said Patrolman Zarek.

The patrol wagon was sent back with a much-disgusted crew.

"About ten o'clock I came across the defendant after he had told a small boy that he was Probation Officer Kelley, and that he was in that neighborhood to break up the gang known as the 'Bloody Sixty-Four,'" said Zarek.

"What was the matter with you?" asked Judge Page, when the accused was arraigned in his court.

"Well, your honor, I have an application in to be appointed a probation officer, and I thought that if I went down in that section and cleaned up a good case it would help my future," said Tuczyński.

"Then you thought that a little practice would make you perfect for the position which you desired," said Judge Page.

"I think he is a little gone in the upper story," interposed Patrolman Zarek.

By order of Judge Page, Doctor Rupp examined the defendant, and his decision was as follows:

"The boy is sane, but he has a bug on being appointed probation officer and I advised him that unless he mended his ways he would not be an employee of the county but a patient of Doctor Young."

He was fined \$5.

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