"BELA"

She hastened to prepare a simple meal. Self-consciousness did not trouble her if she might be busy. Sam loved to follow her graceful movements by the fire. What harm? he asked the watch-dog within. This dog had grown drowsy, anyhow.

Bela's curiosity in turn began to have way.

"Where you live before you come here, Sam?" she asked.

"In a city. New York. It isn't real living."

"I know a city!" she exclaimed. "Musq'oosis tell me. They got houses high as jack-pines. Windows wide as a river. At night a thousand thousand moons hang down to give the people light."

"Right!" said Sam. "What would you say to a sky-scraper, I wonder,"

"What is a sky-scraper?"

"Like fifty houses piled up one on top of the other, and reaching to the sky."

Bela pouted. "You mak' fun I think because I know not'ing."

"Honest to goodness!" he swore.

"What good to be so high?" she asked. "High roof no good."

"There are different floors inside. Fifty of them."

"How do people get to the top?"

"In an elevator. Kind of box you get into. Whiz, up she goes like that!"

Bela's face showed strong incredulity. She let the subject drop.

"You got fat'er, mot'er out there, Sam? She asked.

He shook his head. "Both dead."

"You got no people 'tall?" she asked, quick with sympathy.

"Brothers," he said grimly. "Three of them. They don't think much of me."

One question followed another, and the time flew by. They were making famous progress now. They ate. Afterward Sam stretched out in the grass with his hands under his head, and told his story freely.

"Gad, what a relief to talk!" he said. "I haven't really opened up since we left Prince George. Those fellows, they're all right in their way, but pretty coarse. We don't hit it off much. I keep mum to avoid trouble."

"I lak hear you talk," murmured Bela softly.

"My brothers are all a lot older than I," Sam went on. "I was the baby of the family. It's considerable of a handicap to a kid. The baby you along until after you've grown up, then all of a sudden they expect you to stand alone.

"I was always a kind o fmisfit somehow. never knew why then. I lack an instinct all other fellows seem to have to hang together and boost each other along. School seemed like such a silly affair to me; I wouldn't learn. In business afterward it was worse.

"My brothers took me up one after another. They are all well-to-do. One is president of an electric-light plant, one is a corporation lawyer, the other runs a big store. Keen on business, all of them. I tried to make good with each one, honest I did. But I sickened in offices. My brain seemed to turn to mush. Impossible for me to get up any interest in business.

"So I got passed along from one to another. Naturally, they thought I was no good. I thought so, too. A dog's life! Their wives, that was worse. All regular rich men's wives, crazy about society and all that, and having things better than the neighbors. Do you understand what I mean?"

"No," Bela confessed. "Some day I will. Don' stop. I lak hear it all."

"Well, me with my untidy clothes, I was a thorn in the side of those ladies. Visibly turned up their noses when I came around. One day after a big row with my eldest brother I just walked off. I've been regularly up against it ever since. Just a year ago. Seems more like ten. I've lived a thousand lives.

"You take a big baby like I was and throw him on the world—well, he won't have to go to hell to find out what's it like! I've learned in one year what most fellows take twenty to soak in. Now I'm beginning to see light, to get solid ground under my feet. Of course I haven't got anything yet"—Sam smiled here—"but I know what I want."

"What you want?" asked Bela, quickly.

"To live a natural life. I've found out that is what I was made for. Anything all laid out and regular like school or business simply floors me. I want a little piece of land of my own, all my own. I'll build my own house on it and raise my own grub. I want to do what I want without anybody else's say- so. That way I feel I can make good. The idea is to build up something that you can see grow."

"All alone?" asked Bela with a casual air.

Sam's heart missed a beat, then overtook it.

"I like to be alone," he said quickly. "That's what I came up here for. I have made up my mind to it. I don't get along well with people."

Bela was silent.

From time to time Bela glanced narrowly at Sam through her lashes. He presented a terrific problem to one of her experience. She found this friendly interchange delightful, but was it all?

She had no feeling of being a woman to him. She began to feel a great dissatisfaction. An imperious instinct urged her to sting him out of his comfortable disregard of her sex. Her opportunity came when Sam said:

"You have never told me what it was you wanted to talk to me about."

"All those men want marry me," she said offhand.

It was instantly effective. Sam sat up abruptly and stared at her in astonishment. Was she, after all, the evil woman he had first thought? Had he been deceitfully lulled into security? She repeated her statement. His face hardened.

"So I gathered," he replied sarcastically.

Bela was secretly pleased by the effect. "What you think 'bout it?" she asked.

"I don't think anything about it," he answered with an angry flash.

"I not know what to tell them," said Bela. It had a faint theatrical ring, which might have suggested to a discriminating ear that she was not being altogether candid.

Sam obstinately closed his mouth.

"Which you lak best?" she asked, presently, "the big one, the black one, the red one, yo'ng one?"

A great discomposure seized upon Sam. Anger pounded at his temples, and insane words pressed to his tongue. He put on the clamps. "What I think is neither here nor there," he said, stiffly. "It's up to you to make your own choice. Why drag me into it?"

"You say you want be friend," explained Bela. "So I think you help me."

"Nobody can help you in a matter of this kind," said Sam. "Lord, you talk like a wooden man!" something whispered to him while he said it.

"Why?" she asked with one of her sidelong looks.

Again his eyes flashed on her in angry pain. God! Was the woman trying to madden him?

"A girl must make her own choice," his tongue said primly.

"But you could tell me about them, which is the best man. How do I know?"

This on the face of it seemed like a reasonable request, but his breast still passionately rebelled.

"Well, I won't!" he snapped. "If that's all you want to talk about I'd better go."

"Is Big Jack a good man?" she persisted.

Sam got up.

"No, don't go!" she cried quickly. "I'll be good. I don't know why you always mad at me."

Neither did Sam himself know. He looked at her dumbly with eyes full of pain and confusion. He sat down again.

For awhile she made light conversation about muskrats and beavers, but when she thought he was safely settled down, womanlike, she was obliged to return to the forbidden subject.

There was a pain in her breast as well as his. What was the matter with him that he treated her so despitefully? How else could she find out what was in his heart but by making him lose his temper?

"Maybe I tak' Big Jack," she remarked casually.

"All right," returned Sam, bitterly. "He's the richest."

"A regular woman's reason. I wish you joy."

Would nothing move him? Bela felt as if she were beating with her hands on a rock. "What do you care?" she asked insolently. Both voices rang with bitterness now.

"I don't care."

She sneered.

"What you get mad for?"

Sam's endurance gave way. He sprang up.

"It's rotten!" he cried. "The whole business! That's what makes me mad! Have you no shame, setting a whole camp of men against each other like that? And coolly talking over which one you'll take! I tell you it'll likely end in murder. Maybe you'd like that. Give you quite a send-off, eh? Well, you can't drag me into it. I like a different kind of woman."

Bela was no tame spirit. Anger answered anger. She faced him pale and blazing-eyed.

"No woman want you, anyhow!" she cried. "You cook! You only half man! You too scare to fight for a woman! You only talk! Go away from me! I tak' a man for my 'osban'!"

Sam, beside himself with rage, stepped forward and raised his clenched fist over her head. Bela laughed in his face. Suddenly he seemed to see himself from the outside, and was filled with blank horror.

Turning, he snatched up his coat and shirt, and crashed blindly away through the willows.

"Go and do your cookin'!" Bela cried after him.

Bela's cache was on the opposite side of the creek from the men's cabin. The only place where Sam could cross without getting another wetting was by the stepping-stones near the lake. He headed for the pines where the going was better and encircled the edge of the meadow.

A great turmoil was going on within him. He was aghast at the gust of passion that had drowned all his senses for a moment. He had not known he contained such possibilities. To come so near to striking a woman! Horrible!

Naturally, he did not fail to blame her. A devil—to provoke men to such a pitch of madness! Well, he was done with her. Anyhow, he had seen her now in her true colors. She was no good! There could be no further argument about that. If he had ever had anything further to do with her let him be called a soft headed fool!

Forcing his way blindly through the underbush, stumbling over roots, and plunging into holes, he completed his detour around the meadow. As he come out beside the ford he heard his name called urgently:

"Sam! Sam!"

Notwithstanding his anger, and in the very act of the brave vows he was taking, the voice found his heart like a bullet. He stopped dead with hanging arms and looked strickenly in the direction whence it came.

Presently the dugout came flying around a bend in the creek above. She landed at the head of the little rapids, and ran toward him. He waited with somber eyes.

She stopped at three paces distance afraid to come closer. The savage had disappeared. Her face was all softened with emotion.

"Sam, I sorry I call names," she said very low. "That was my madness speaking out of my mouth. I not think those things in my heart. Please forget it."

His eyes bored her through and through. "Another trick to get you going?" the voice inside him asked.

"Don' look at me lak that," she faltered.

"How do I know what to believe?" Sam said harshly. "You say so many things."

"I jus' foolin' 'bout those ot'er men," she said. "I not marry one of them. I sooner jomp in tho 'ak'."

A secret spring o. gladness spurted up in Sam's breast. "Do you mean that?" he demanded.

"I mean it," she replied.

He gazed at her strongly, desiring to believe, but suspicious still. His slower nature could not credit such a rapid change of front.

"Don' look at me lak that," she said again. "W'at you want me do?"

"Go away," he said.

She looked at him, startled.

"If you're in earnest about not wanting to make trouble," he said, harshly, "you've got to go without seeing any of them again."

Her eyes were full of trouble. "You tell me go away?" she whispered.

Sam winced. "I haven't got anything to do with it," he said. "It's up to you."

He was more than ever inexplicable to her.

"What you goin' to do?" she asked.

"I?" he replied, nettled. "I'm going up to the head of the lake with the bunch, of course."

There was a painful silence, while Bela sought vainly in her mind for the explanation of his strange attitude. An instinct told her he loved her, but she could not make him say it.

"You think I bad girl, Sam," she murmured.

"How do I know what you are?" he asked, harshly. "Here's your chance to prove to me that you're on the square."

"I got go 'way to mak' you think I all right?"

"Yes," he answered, eagerly.

"You fonny man, I think," she murmured, sadly.

"Can't you see it?" he cried.

"No," she said. "But I goin' do what you tell me. I go to-night."

"Ah, that's right!" he said with a curious look of gratitude in his pain-haunted eyes.

Bela waited for him to say more—but waited in vain. For herself she would quickly have told him she loved him, had not her tongue been tied by Musq'oosis' positive instructions. And so the unhappy silence continued between them.

"Maybe somebody come this way," said Bela at last. "Mak' trouble. Come up by my boat."

Sam shook his head. "I've got to go back to camp now."

"You not see me again. You got not'ing say to me?" asked Bela, despairingly. Her hands sought his.

Sam's instincts sprang up in alarm. "What could I say?" he cried. "What good would it do? Good-bye!" Snatching his hand out of hers, he retreated over the stones, refusing to look back.

When Sam entered the shack Joe faced him, scowling. "Where you been?" he demanded.

Sam, in no humor to be meek, made the time-honored rejoinder.

"I'll soon make it my business," retorted Joe. "With that, see?" showing a clenched fist "Have you been with Bela?"

Sam, because of the threat, disdained to lie. "Yes," he said, coolly.

Joe whirled about to the others. "Didn't I tell you?" he cried, excitedly. "I heard her calling him. There's underhand work here. He's hid the guns on us."

"Do you know where she's hid?" demanded Big Jack.

Sam did not feel any necessity of returning a truthful answer to this. "No," he said. "She came on me when I was visiting my muskrat-traps."

"You're lying!" cried Joe. "I'll smash you, anyhow, ou the chance of it."

Big Jack stepped between them.

"I'm running this show," he said, grimly. To Sam he said: "I strike no man without warning. I warn you now. This is a man's affair. We won't stand no interference from cooks. You keep out. If you don't, God help you, that's all!"

"And if he leaves you," added Joe, "I'll croak you myself with as little thought as I'd pinch a flea!"

"Get the supper!" said Jack

Sam clenched his teeth and did not speak again.

In the middle of the night Sam awoke in the shack with a weight on his breast, and, sitting up in his blankets, looked about him. The dying embers of the fire cast a faint light on the figures of his three companions lying on the floor beside him. Husky still had the sole use of the bed.

The cabin roof rang with a grotesque chorus of snores. Sam's gorge rose. The air was tainted. He looked at the recumbent figures with a curling lip. Was it hate that had wakened him? He had put up in silence with so much at their hands!

An oblique ray of moonlight struck through the window over his head, luring him like a song. He softly got up, and, gathering up his bed, went outside.

The pines were like a regiment of gigantic soldiers standing at ease under the sky and whispering together while they waited the word of command. Their fragrance was like a benediction on the air. The moon, low down in the southeast, peeped between the trunks. At the mouth of the creek where the little rapids poured into a quiet pool there was a bank of sand. This was the general washing-place of the camp.

Sam, thinking of the sand as a promising bed, made his way in that direction by the path they had worn. As he passed around the house a shadow moved from behind a great pine and followed him, flitting noiselessly from tree to tree.

Sam sat down in the sand, nursing his knees. The mouth of the creek was the only spot along shore as yet wholly free of ice. He looked out over the lake through the opening. Under the light of the low moon the water was the color of freshly cast iron.

Somewhere out upon it Bela was paddling, if she had not already reached home. His breast relaxed its guard against her a little. He believed she was a pretty fine sort, after all. Had he done the right thing to send her away? She was beautiful enough to make a man's arm ache for her now she had gone.

But on the whole he was glad she was gone. He did not realize it, but his hour had not quite struck. It was a wholesome instinct that made him fight against the overmastering emotions that attacked his heart.

He told himself he couldn't afford to look in that direction He had work to do first. He had to get a toehold in this land. Some day, maybe——

Drowsiness overcame him again. With a sigh he stretched out on the sand and rolled himself in his blankets. His breathing became deep and slow. By and by the coquettish moon peeped between the tree-trunks across the creek and touched his face in his fair hair with a silvery wand. Whereupon it was no longer a mere man; it was young Hermes sleeping beside the water. The shadow stole from among the trees above the sand-bank and crept down to his side. It knelt there with clasped hands. In showed a white face in the moonlight, on which glistened two diamonds.

By and by it rose with energetic action, and still moving noiselessly as a ghost, turned toward the lake, and clambered around the barrier of ice, dropped on the edge of the water, on the other side.

(To be continued.)

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BARBED WIRE IN WAR.

Putting Up and Cutting Down Barriers is Perilous Work.

The erection of war entanglements, even when the trenches are some distance apart, is at all times dangerous.

The men slip over the parapet and in the first place pound in the supports with mallets, the heads of which are carefully wrapped in cloth in order to deaden the sound. Two other men carry the wire drum—a wooden cylinder round which the wire is rolled—by means of a long pole through the centre, and a comrade attaches the wires to the supports.

The work is slow and nerve straining, says a writer in the London Gaphic, for star shells burst often and compel the men to crouch low and remain motionless until the flare burns out.

To each solder who takes part in modern warfare thick gloves for gripping wire and strong pliers for cutting it are as essential as the rifle and bayonet.

Before an assault by his own regiment the soldier cuts his own wire, and he must then endeavor as best he may to cut and hack his way through the enemy's, pulling down a support here, cutting the wires while the machine gun batteries rap out their message of death toward him.

Thus barbed wire, so simple in itself, so deadly when used in the ways described, enters into every phase of operation in the firing zone.

Nell—Maude's engagement ring is a pearl. Belle—But pearls are emblematic of tears. Nell—Yes, and the poor girl is crying her eyes out. She expected a diamond.

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Vegetables For Winter

The Conservation of the Products of the Garden

1. Corn—The surplus (many find difficult to keep when canned) may be canned with tomatoes, as the acid of the tomato helps to preserve the corn and is good for soup in this way.

2. Corn—Cooked on the cob, cut off with knife and dried in a slow oven. In the winter soak over night before using and then cook slowly. Use as vegetable and make into soup.

3. Corn (recommended by the Toronto Garden Committee of the Women's War Time Thrift Committee)—Cut from cob, spread on platters and give a good covering of salt. Let stand over night. In the morning pack into glass jars or in a covered crock, putting a weight on top. When required for use take out what is required, soak over night in water, then cook as fresh vegetables.

1. Tomatoes, canned—Scald, peel, cut in half, remove the hard core, pack in jars as solid as possible without any extra fluid added; add a teaspoonful of salt to each jar, adjust the rubbers (better new ones to be certain, and perfectly clean jars carefully sterilized), and put on the covers. Place the filled jars in the wash boiler, on a rack of some kind to prevent breaking the glass, and in cold water. Have enough water to come at least two or three inches above the rack, taking care to have enough to prevent it boiling dry, and give the tomatoes five minutes after the boiling point is reached.

2. Tomatoes. If cut from the vines in good sound condition, with an inch of the stem left on, cleaned, and put in a brine in a crock (one cup of salt to two gallons of water), will keep and be useful for a considerable time.

3. Tomato plants pulled up by the roots just before the frost injures them, the roots wrapped in coarse cloth, and the plants hung up by the roots in a cool, frost-proof place, will provide slicing tomatoes until Christmas, as the green fruits will ripen nicely.

4. Or wrap large, smooth, well-formed green tomatoes in tissue paper, place on shelves in a cool closet, taking care to avoid touching each other, and these will ripen, and can be sliced for the table until Christmas.

5. Green tomatoes can not only be pickled, but a fig-like preserve can be made from them—especially the small ones. The ripe ones cannot only be used for sauces and catsups, but a marmalade (used in England in the place of orange marmalade) can be made. The strained juice can be sealed hot and used for soup (cream of tomato soup) in the winter.

1. Cucumbers (recommended by the Toronto Committee)—Peel and slice thin; put in a layer of sliced cucumbers and a layer of salt in a glass jar. Repeat until the jar is full and press down as tightly as possible. Seal tightly, and when required take out the quantity required for use and soak over night. Pour a little vinegar over them and sprinkle with pepper. They will be just as like freshly-sliced cucumbers, not having changed color at all.

2. Cucumbers, if large, need not be discarded as useless, as they can be cooked as vegetable marrow, and also the largest and ripest can be used in this way.

Cucumbers can be preserved like citron, and combined with lemon, ginger, or raisins, will give variety.

Swiss Chard—The green part of the leaf can be canned for green for winter and the white midrib also canned and used as asparagus is on toast.

1. The root vegetable, besides being good canned—especially if pulled young; when thinning is in order, or soon after—can be stored in damp sand in the cellar.

2. Some use sifted coal ashes preferring these as being non-conductors of heat the drying and shrivelling is prevented.

3. In England a marmalade is made from carrots and oranges, as well as rhubarb and oranges.

4. Parsnips and salsify can remain in the ground all winter.

1. Beans—From a few vines of Kentucky Wonder bean 5 or 6 pounds of beans may be harvested from these grown on fence or trellis. When using the dried scarlet runner beans, soak over night and remove the tough dark coat and the kernel will be found to make excellent soup.

2. Beans (as per the Toronto committee's recommendation)—Cut string beans as if preparing for the table, have them perfectly dry (never pick on a wet day) spread out on platters and give a good coating of salt. Let stand over night. In the morning pack in glass jars or in a covered crock putting a weight on top of the beans. When required for use take out the amount required, soak over night in water and then boil as fresh beans. They will require a little longer cooking than the fresh beans.

String Bean (see below 3)—Parsley can be dipped in hot water, dried and put away and found excellent for many uses in the winter or can be carefully cleaned and packed in glass jars layer for layer with salt and when required soaked and used and found quite as good as the freshly purchased article, if one can not winter it over by covering with a box in the garden.

The cold water process for canning means the careful selection of the fruit or vegetable, avoiding the least suspicion of decay, washing (sometimes scalding or blanching as required by the vegetable to be canned) then fill thoroughly sterilized jars (by scalding or placing in the oven for half an hour at least) and pack firmly, fill up the jar with cold water, and stir with a fork if there are any air bubbles, screw the lids on loosely, stand the jars in the wash boiler on a rack, add sufficient water and heat gently to the boiling point, cook as long as the vegetable being treated requires to make tender, allow the jars to cool slightly, then remove them, lift the tops and fill with boiling water and seal tight.

If fruit is done in this way when required for use add sugar several hours before serving. By using this method the natural flavor is preserved and the fruit tastes more like fresh fruit.

Rubarb for winter use (Toronto Committee's recipe) Have the jars perfectly air-tight with new rubber rings. Wash them thoroughly and sterilize by boiling or baking for half an hour. Cut the rhubarb up as if for stewing and fill the jars as full as possible, then fill to overflowing with cold water, which has been previously boiled for half an hour and cooled. Run a fork or spoon down to break up any air spaces. After being sure no air is left in the jar, while the jar is overflowing seal down tightly and put away in a cool dark place to keep. Handle or move the jars as little as possible.

The committee adds —"We have been told that gooseberries, red currents and very fresh blueberries will keep if prepared in the same way," and "The success of these fruits depends on having the fruit very fresh and the jars airtight and properly sterilized."

To can half grown beets, wash and cook in boiling water only long enough to loosen the skin, slip these off, and pack the beets (whole or divided), into jars and fill up with a mixture of vinegar and water (4 of water to 1 of vinegar), put on the covers, and give three-quarters of an hour in the boiler after the boiling point is reached. Vinegar in this case preserves the coloring of the beet.

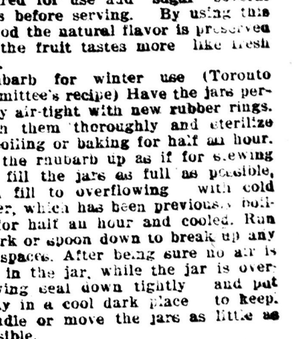
To can young turnips or carrots, peel and boil in water for 15 minutes, pack in jars. Give the carrots at least an hour and the turnips half an hour after the boiling point is reached. Cool a little and treat as before instructed for the other vegetables.

String beans, cut in pieces packed in jars, fill jars with cold water (previously boiled and cooled), add a little salt and treat like other vegetables, giving half an hour after the boiling point is reached.

Many fruits can be dried, as for example cherries and apples and the process is quite easy.

Three Days at Once.

Three days can exist in the same time! It sounds impossible, but it is nevertheless a fact that when it is very late Sunday night at Attu Island, Alaska, it is Monday noon in London, and Tuesday morning at Cape Deshnef, Siberia!



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