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**THE
SKY LINE
OF
SPRUCE**
By Edison Marshall
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PART I—"THE AWAKENING." CHAPTER I. GROPING IN THE DARK.

The convict gang had a pleasant place to work to-day. Their road building had taken them some miles from the scattered outskirts of Walla Walla, among fields green with growing barley.

The convicts themselves were in a genial mood, easily moved to wide grins; and with a single exception they looked much like any other road gang. Curiously enough, whenever the warden's thought dwelt upon the inmates of his prison, there was always one wind-tanned vivid face, one brawny, towering form that seemed to demand individual consideration. The man who was listed on the records as Ben Kinney was distinctly an individual.

"That's the queerest case we ever had here at Walla Walla," Sprigley told his fellow guard, as they watched the man's pick swing in the air. "Sometimes I wonder whether he ought to be here or not. Look at that face—he hasn't any more of a criminal face than I have."

The other guard, Howard, scanned his companion's face with mock care.

"Now let me tell you how they happened to catch him. Maybe you heard—he and Dago Frank were in the act of breaking into the Western-Danish Bank. They were in the alley, in the act of jimmying a window, and all at once Kinney straightened up as if something had hit him and let the jimmy fall with a thump to the pavement. He put his hands to his head, like a man with a headache. And the next instant a cop came running from the mouth of the alley.

"Kinney was heeled, but he didn't even pull his gun. Now let me tell you another queer thing. You know, the chief has started a system here to keep track of all the prisoners. He has them all fill out a card. Well, when this man Kinney turned in his card, he had written 'Ben' on it, but the rest was absolutely blank.

"Mr. Mitchell thought at first that the man couldn't write. It turned out, though, that he can write—an intelligent hand, and spell good too. Then Mitchell decided he was just sulking, but I'm confident I know the answer. The reason he didn't fill out that card was because he couldn't remember.

"He couldn't remember where or when he was born, or who were his folks, or where he had come from, or how he had spent his life. Amnesia—

That's what the doctors call it—amnesia following some sort of a mental trouble. In the end you'll see that I'm right."

There had been quite a northern migration lately, these late spring days. The last of the waterfowl had passed by now, but the northern migration was not yet done.

Ben thought about them as birds of passage, and the thought amused him. And at the sight of a small, stooped figure advancing toward him up the railroad right-of-way he paused, leaning on his pick.

Because Ben had paused, for the first time in an hour, his two guards looked up to see what had attracted his attention. They saw what seemed to them a white-haired old wanderer of sixty years or more; but at first they were wholly at a loss to explain Ben's fascinated look of growing interest.

As he paused to scrutinize the convict gang neither insolence nor fear, one of which was certainly to be expected, became manifest in his face.

Both guards were held and amazed by the apparent fact that at the first sight of the man's outline, his carriage and his droll, wrinkled face, the prisoner Kinney was moved and stirred as if confronted by the risen dead. The old man himself halted, returning Kinney's stare. Kinney's mind seemed to be reaching, groping for something astonishing truth that eluded him.

The old man ran, in great strides, toward him. "My God, aren't you Ben Darby," he demanded.

The convict answered him as from a great distance, his voice cool and calm and with an infinite certainty. "Of course," he said. "Of course I'm Darby."

For the moment that chance meeting thrilled all the spectators with the sense of monumental drama. The convicts stared; Howard, the second guard, started absurdly, rather guiltily, when the old man whirled toward him.

"What are you doing with Ben Darby in a convict gang?" the old wanderer demanded.

"What am I doing?" Howard's astonishment gave way to righteous indignation. "I'm guardin' convicts, that's what I'm a-doin'."

The old man had turned his eyes again to the tall, trembling figure of Ben.

"Ben, Ben!" he said, evidently Forest asked him quietly, indicating Ezra Melville.

Again Ben's eyes studied the droll, gray face. "With the vaguest kind of memory. I know I've seen him before—often. I can't tell anything else."

"He's a good friend of your family. I should say he was a very good friend, to take the trouble and time he has in your behalf."

Ben nodded. The explanation was beyond him.

Forest leaned forward. "You remember the Saskatchewan River?"

Ben straightened, but the dim images in his mind were not clear enough for him to answer in the affirmative. "I'm afraid not."

Melville leaned forward in his chair. "Ask him if he remembers winning the canoe race at Lodge Pole—or the time he shot the Athabaska Rapids."

Ben turned brightly to him, but slowly shook his head. "I can't remember ever hearing of them before."

"I think you would, in time," Forest remarked. "They must have been interesting experiences. Now what do these mean to you?—Thunder Lake—Abner Darby—Edith Darby—MacLean's College—"

Abner Darby! It was curious what a flood of tenderness swept through Ben as, whispering, he repeated the name. Since his own was Darby, Abner Darby was, in all probability, his father; but his reasoning intelligence, rather than his memory, told him so.

The name of Edith Darby conjured up in his mind a childhood playmate—a girl with towzled yellow curls and chubby, confiding little hands. . . . But these dim memory-pictures went no further—there were no later visions of Edith as a young woman, blossoming with virgin beauty. The third name of the three, MacLean's College, called up no memories whatever.

"They'll strengthen in time, I'm sure," Forest told him. "Put them out of your mind, for now. Let it be blank." The alienist again leaned toward him, his eyes searching. There ensued an instant's pause, possessing a certain quality of suspense. Then Forest spoke quickly, sharply. "Wolf Darby!"

In response a curious tremor passed over Ben's frame, giving in some degree the effect of a violent start. "Wolf Darby," he repeated hesitantly. "Why do you call me that?"

"The very fact that you know the name refers to you, not someone else, shows that that blunted memory of yours has begun to function in some degree. Now think. What do you know about 'Wolf Darby'?"

Ben tried in vain to find an answer.

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Fifty-Eighth Annual Meeting of The Royal Bank of Canada

The fifty-eighth annual general meeting of The Royal Bank of Canada, held at the head office, marked the close of a very successful year and was attended by a large gathering of shareholders.

Several announcements of special interest were made both by Sir Herbert Holt, president, and C. E. Neill, general manager. In his address, Sir Herbert Holt gave a complete review of the outstanding features of the growth in Canada's trade and industry and took the view that during the past year there had been steady and substantial improvement in almost every department of Canada's business life.

Discussing the necessity of the reducing of all taxes, Sir Herbert said: "What Canada needs is to follow the example set by the United States in the reduction of all taxes and in the cost of government, so that by economies due to the efficiency of administration we may secure a substantial reduction in the total burden of taxation rather than a change of incidence. Canada has frequently shown that she is not without courage in facing her economic problems, and there are indications that a bold co-operative policy of administrative economy on the part of all governments would meet with strong public approval and support."

C. E. Neill, general manager, gave a number of interesting particulars of the bank's growth and expansion during the year. Of special interest was the increase of \$2,244,557 in commercial loans in Canada. This reflected business activity arising from the country's growing prosperity.

Referring to the constructive co-operation the bank had been in a position to give towards the development of Canada's foreign trade, Mr. Neill said in part:

"Since this bank first commenced to establish branches abroad over twenty-five years ago, we have acquired an intimate knowledge of many foreign markets. We have done our utmost to use this knowledge for the benefit of Canadian trade by placing foreign buyers in touch with our exporters and locating advantageous sources of supply for Canadian importers. The Managers of our foreign branches are familiar with Canadian products, and it goes without saying that our opportunities to be of service have been numerous, more particularly since the majority of our foreign branches are located in countries which are not competitors of Canada, but rather buyers of our products and suppliers of our necessities. I know that during this past quarter of a century we have been able to facilitate the movement of Canadian goods to the extent of many millions of dollars."

"The Victoria Cross, of course," he said slowly, brokenly. "I won it, didn't I—the day—that day at Ypres—the day my men were trapped."

His words faltered then. The wheels of his memory, starting into motion, were again stilled once more. Again the great darkness dropped over him. Yet to Forest the experiment was an unqualified success.

"There's no doubt of it!" he exclaimed. He turned to McNamara, the Governor. "His brain is just as sound as yours or mine. With the right environment, the right treatment, he'd be on the straight road to recovery."

(To be continued.)

Athletes use Minard's Liniment.

A whole world of meaning lingered just beyond the reach of his groping mind; but always it eluded him. Forest suddenly spoke to old Ezra Melville; and the latter put a small, cardboard box into his hands.

"I want you to see what I have here," Forest told Ben. "They were your own possessions once—you sent them yourself to Abner Darby, your late father—and I want you to see if you remember them."

Evidently this was the climax in the examination. Forest opened the box, taking therefrom a roll of white cotton. This he slowly unrolled, revealing two small, ribboned ornaments of gold or bronze.

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The old man ran in great strides toward him.



1523



1523



1523

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Knows His Brother. Teacher—"If I gave you an apple and you gave your brother seven-eighths of it, what would you have?" Willie—"The core."

At the Dinner. "Oh, John," she was saying, "you are a most inattentive host. I do wish you'd keep an eye on poor Mr. Smith. He's helping himself to everything."

For Colds—Minard's Liniment.

How Dimples Come.

Have you a dimple? If so, do you know what it really is?

A dimple is actually nothing more than a dent or depression in a part of the body where the flesh is very soft. Dimples are not confined to the cheek alone, and babies frequently have dimpled elbows and knees. Plump children usually have several dimples on their backs and shoulders. Dimples usually accompany a smile, and when they appear on other people's cheeks we seldom think of their cause. Underneath the outside skin on the face are fibres of varying length, which run in all directions. Occasionally these fibres are too short in a certain spot, and so pull the skin which forms the dimple.

Who Disagrees? "What is a detour?" "The roughest distance between two points."

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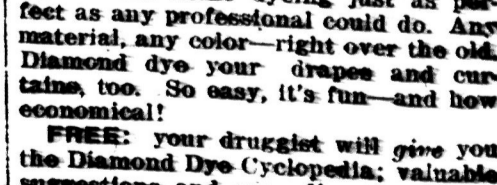
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Shoulder to Shoulder with the Progress of the Canadian Confederation Marches the Record of Confederation Life

Sound, conservative, avoiding the spectacular, but building a structure of enduring strength, Confederation Life Association records another year of progressive achievement in 1926.

1867 Confederation of Canadian Provinces	1871 Confederation Life Incorporated by Act of Parliament	1927 60th Anniversary Confederation of Canada
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