



## THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edison Marshall  
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**BEGIN HERE TO-DAY.**

Ben Darby, a prisoner, is declared to be a victim of amnesia by a noted alienist, and is paroled to a noted friend.

Esra Melville. Together they start on a trip to the Yuga River, where Esra goes to take possession of a rich claim left by his brother.

Hiram Melville, who recently had died. Ben is to have a partnership and a new lease of life. At Snowy Gulch lives

Jeffery Neilson and his two partners, Ray Brent and Chan Hominway. Neilson, leader of the notorious gang, has a beautiful daughter, Beatrice, with whom Brent is in love. She detests him. Brent complains to Neilson and her father promises to aid him in his suit.

Neilson hears of Hiram Melville and plans with his confederates to steal the claim before Esra can arrive. When Ben and Esra reach the north woods Ben suddenly regains his memory. Knowledge of his past life returns. They meet a friendly stranger who directs them.

"But you'd get a ride, if you would."

"I hate a horse, anyway."

"You've surely changed a lot since the war."

"I was thrown off not long ago—and have been leery of the dum things ever since."

Esram was wholly deliberate. He knew what waited him on arrival at his brother's claim. Jeffery Neilson and his gang had assembled there, had already jumped the claim just as his brother had warned him that they would do; and coolly and quietly he had resolved to face them alone.

He made his pack—a few simple provisions wrapped in his blanket—and a knife and camp axe swung on his belt. He took his trusted pipe because he knew well that he could never acquit himself creditably in a fight without a few lungfuls of tobacco smoke first—and he also took his rifle. "You keep this copy of the letter. He handed Ben the copy he had made of Hiram's will. "I'm the worst hand for loam" things you ever seen."

They said their simple good-byes, shaking hands over a pile of stores. "I've only got one decent place to keep things safe," Esra confided, "and that ain't so all-fired decent, either. When I get any papers that are extra-precious, I always stick 'em down the leg of these high old boots, between the sock and the leather. But it's too much work to take the boot off now, so you keep the letter."

"I suppose you've got a million-dollar bank note hidden down there now," Ben remarked.

"No, not a cent. Just the same, if

**GO ON WITH THE STORY.**

"Yes. Goin' to Snowy Gulch."

"It's only five miles, up this road," the stranger ventured. "I'm goin' up to Saltville way myself, but I won't have no river to tow me. I've got to do my own paddlin'. Thank the lord I'm only goin' a small part of the way."

"You ain't goin' to swim, are you? Where's your boat?"

"My pard's got an old craft, and he and I are goin' to pack it out next trip." The stranger paused, blinking his eyes. Say, partners—you don't want to sell your boat, do you?"

Esram stated his figure, and Ben was prone to believe that he had adopted a highwayman for a buddy. The amount named was nearly twice that which they had paid. And to his vast amazement the stranger accepted the offer in his next breath.

"So you don't know any folks in Snowy Gulch, then?" the stranger had asked politely. "But you'll get acquainted soon enough—"

"I've got a letter to a feller named Morris," Esram replied. "And I've heard of one or two more men, too—Jeffery Neilson, was one of 'em—"

"You'll find Morris in town all right," the stranger ventured to assure him. "He lives right next to Neilson's. And say—what do you know about this man Neilson?"

"Oh, nothin' at all. Why?"

"If you fellows is prospectin', Jeffery Neilson is a first-class man to stay away from—and his understrappers, too—Ray Brent and Chan Hominway. But they're out of town right now. They skinned out all in a bunch a few weeks ago—and I can't tell you what kind of a scent they got."

Esram felt cold to the marrow of his bones. He glanced covertly at Ben; fortunately his partner was busy among the supplies and was not listening to this conversation.

"You don't know where they went, do you?" he asked.

"Not exactly. They took up this creek here a ways, through Spruce Pass, and over to Yuga River—the country that kind of a crazy old chap named Hiram Melville, who died here a few weeks ago, he always prospected."

The stranger marveled that his old listener should have suddenly gone quite pale.

Esram had only a moment's further conversation with his new friend. He put two or three questions—in a rather curious, hushed voice—and got his answer.

"What have you and your poor victim been talking about, all this time?" Ben asked.

"Oh, just a gab-feet—a bat-l-tat as you'd call it. But you know, Ben, I've got an idea all a sudden." Ben straightened, lighted his pipe, and prepared to listen. "This old boy tell me that we'd save just twelve miles by striking off from here, instead of goin' into town. Snowy Gulch is six miles, and we have to come back to this very place. What's the use of goin' into town at all?"

"Good heavens, Es! Have you forgotten we've got to get supplies? And your brother's gun—and his dog?"

"Yes, I know—one of us has. But, Ben, it seems to me that one of us ought to strike off now and figure out the way and sort of get located."

"Oh, it would be all right," Ben began rather doubtfully. "I don't see that much is to be gained by it. But I'll strike off on foot, if you want me to."

Esram's mind was flashing with thoughts like lightning, and his answer was ready. "Ben, if you don't mind, I'll do that," he said.



They said their simple good-bye, shaking hands over a pile of stores.

ever I get shuffled off all of a sudden I want you to look there mighty careful. There may be a document or two of importance."

"I won't forget," Ben promised.

**CHAPTER V.**  
**TAMING THE WOLF.**

On arriving in Snowy Gulch, Ben's first efforts were to inquire in regard to horses. Both pack and saddle animals, he learned, were to be hired of Sandy McClurg, owner of the general store and leading citizen; and at once he made his way to confer with him.

"Most of my mustangs are rented out," the merchant informed him, "but if you can get along with three, I guess I can fix you up. You can pack two of 'em and ride the third."

"Good enough," Ben agreed. "And after I once get in, I'd like to turn back two of them, and maybe all three to save the hire and the bother of taking care of them."

"Just a little faster than a dog. Horses don't much care to grub their food out of their spruce forests. Where are you heading, if the question's fair?"

"Through Spruce Pass and down into the Yuga River."

"Prospectin', eh? There's been quite a movement down that way lately. By starting early you can make it

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through in a day. And you said your name was—

"Darby. Ben Darby."

The merchant opened his eyes. "Not the Ben Darby that took all the prizes at the meet at Lodge Pole—"

Ben's rugged face lit with the brilliancy of his smile. "The same Darby," he admitted.

"And when did you say you was going?"

"First thing to-morrow."

"Well, you're pretty likely to have companionship on the road, too."

"I'm glad of it, if he isn't a tender-foot. That must be a pretty thickly settled region—where I'm heading."

"On the contrary, there's only three human beings in the whole district. These three are some men who went up that way prospecting some time ago, and this other party will make four."

"All right—I'll be here before dawn to-morrow and get the horses. And now will you tell me where Steve Morris lives?"

"Right up the street—clear to the end of the row." McClurg's humor had quite engulfed him by now, and he chuckled again. "And if I was you, I'd stop in the door just this side—and get acquainted with your fellow traveler."

"What's his name?" Ben asked.

"The party is named Neilson."

"All right. Maybe I'll look him up."

A few moments later he was standing in the Morris home, facing the one friend that Hiram Melville had possessed on earth.

"Hiram didn't leave anything, far as I know, except his old gun and his pet. Lord knows, I'd let anybody take that pet of his that's fool enough to say he's got any claim to him, and you can be sure I ain't going to dispute his claim."

He turned, with the intention of securing the gun from an inner room. He did not even reach the door. It was as if both of them were struck motionless, frozen in odd, fixed attitudes, by a shrill scream for help that penetrated like a bullet the thin walls of the house.

The sound was in the range between a growl and a bay, instantly identifying itself as the utterance of an animal, rather than a human being. Ben's first thought was of some enormous, vicious dog, and yet his wood's sense told him that the utterance was not that of a dog.

He heard it even as he leaped through the door in answer to the scream for aid. His muscles gathered with that mysterious power that had always sustained him in his moments of crisis. He took the steps in one leap. Morris immediately behind him. "Fennis is loose," he heard the man say. "He'll kill some one!"

He raced about the house; and at once the scene, in every vivid detail, was revealed to him. Pressed back against the wall of a little woodshed that stood behind her house a girl stood at bay—a dark-eyed girl whose beautiful face was drawn and stark-white with horror. She was screaming for aid, her fascinated gaze held by a gray-black, houndlike creature that crouched, snarling, twenty yards distant.

(To be continued.)

Italy, which holds the stage in Europe. And the supreme aim of each one of them has been the quickening of the spirit, the shift and penetration of the mind.

Italy is a European country in the sense of carrying on a modern war. Italy, she has neither the coal, steel, or chemical industries necessary, and equally is she incapable of developing a modern industrialism without external resources. Her population increases unchecked; no birth-control propaganda may exist within her boundaries. So beneath all the noise and bluster of this apparently rampant Italy there accumulates a congestion of under-educated and what some will be underfed millions. British and other foreign capital may for a time bring in fuel and raw material to sweet the virtues of this accumulation of cheap low-grade labor. We may hear for a time quite a lot about the industrial expansion of Italy. We may be invited to invest in Italian "industries." But one may doubt whether the more intelligent workers of Western and Central Europe will consent to have the standards of European life lowered by Italian cheap labor without a considerable and probably an effective protest.

Italy's Horoscope.

So it seems to me that the horo-



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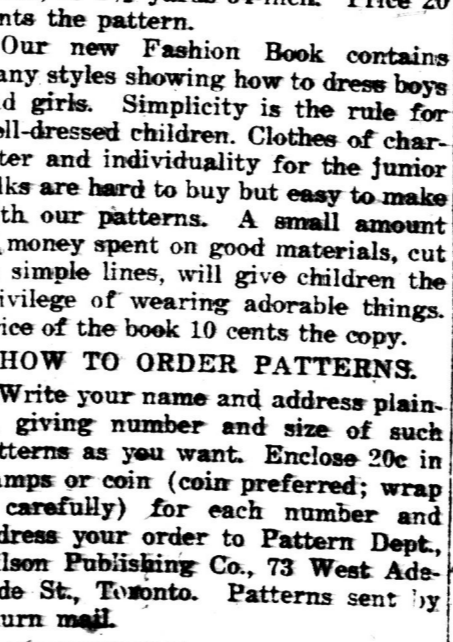
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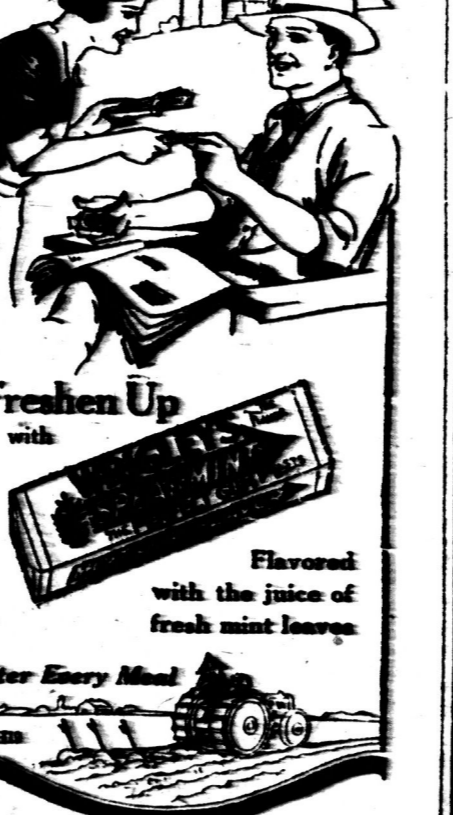
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scope of Italy made something after this fashion: This romantic, magnificent, patriotic Fascist Party, so exalted and devoted in its professions, will continue to grip the land, but of necessity it must become more and more the servant of foreign and domestic capital, and more and more must it set itself to reduce its dear and beloved Italy to a congested country of sweated workers and terrorized peasants, until at last it will be seen plainly as the industrial elum of Europe. I do not see any force in Italy capable of arresting the drive to degradation and catastrophe that the Fascist movement, for all its swagger, has set going.

Italy is now the Sick Land of Europe, a fever-patient, flushed with a hectic resemblance to health and still capable of convulsive but not of sustained violence. She declines. She has fallen out of the general circle of European development; she is no longer a factor in progressive civilization. In the attempts to consolidate European affairs that will be going on in the next decade Italy will be watched rather than consulted. She has murdered or exiled all her Europeans.

Many things may happen ultimately to this sick and sweated Italy, so deeply injured and weakened by its own misguided youth. Her present flushed cheeks and bright eyes and high temperature will presently cease to deceive even herself. She may blunder into a disastrous war or she may develop sufficient social misery to produce a chaotic social revolution. Or one of these things may follow the other. And either war or revolution may spread its effects wide and far. In that way, Italy becomes a danger to all humanity. But as a conscious participant she ceases to be great and significant in the world drama. She is now, for other countries, merely Mussolini. She may presently be his distracted relic.

But Italy is something more than

a huge river valley and a mountainous peninsula under a Fascist tyrant. Italian intelligence and energy are now scattered throughout the earth. Who can measure the science and stimulation, we in the rest of the world may not owe presently to the fine minds, the liberal spirits, who have been driven out of Italy by the Fascists' loaded cane? How many men must there be to-day, once proud sons of Italy, who are now learning to be servants of mankind!

**A Saturday Night.**

Poster (looking up from his newspaper)—"I say, Jim, what is the Order of the Bath?"

Nestor (embracing the opportunity)—"Well, as I have experienced it, it's first the water's too hot, then it's too cold; then you're short a towel, then you step on the soap, and, finally, the telephone bell rings."

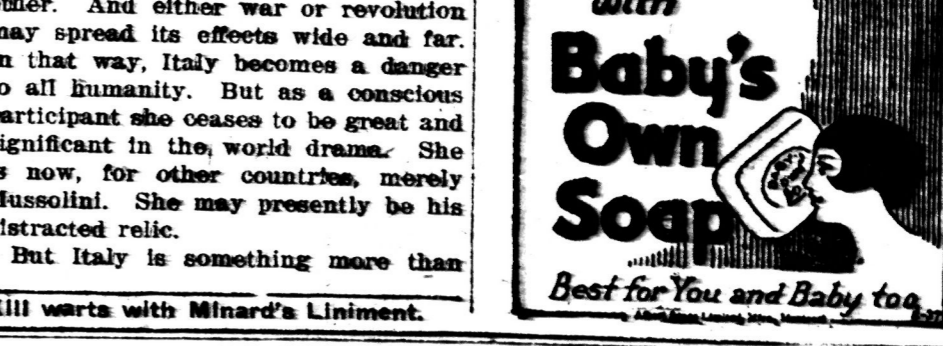
**Station W-A-S-H.**

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## H. G. WELLS STRAFFS ITALY'S NAPOLEON

MUSSOLINI NOT ALL HE SEEMS.

Europe Should Watch but Need Not Fear Italian Aggression.

The situation as reported from time to time in Italy causes us in Canada to pause and wonder just what is going on. The New York Times recently published an original article from the pen of England's most prolific writer, H. G. Wells, a few paragraphs from which give an illuminating and original viewpoint of Italy's "Strong Man" and the economic and military condition of that country.

Mussolini, the Man.

Of Mussolini Wells says: "One need only study a few of the innumerable photographs of Mussolini with which

the world is now bespattered to realize that he is a resultant and no original. That round forcible-febble face is the popular actor's face in perfection. It staves, usually out of some pseudo heroic costume, under a helmet for choice, with eyes devoid of thought or intelligence and an expression of vacuous challenge. "Well, what have you got against me? I deny it."

It is the face of a man monstrously vain and at the mere first rustle of a hiss—afraid. Not physically afraid, not afraid of the assassin who lurks in the shadows, but afraid, in deadly fear, of that truth which walks by day. The murders and outrages against opponents and critics that lie like a trail of blood upon his record are the natural concomitants of leadership by a man too afraid of self-realization to endure the face of an antagonist.

Roll Call of Critics.

Away with them! Nitti, Amendola, Forni, Misuri, Matteotti, Salvemini, Starzo, Turati! Away with all these men who watch and criticize and wait! What are they waiting for? Not one of these names of men beaten, outlived or foully done to death which is not the name of a better man than this one.

After Every Meal  
Flavored with the juice of fresh mint leaves.

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