



## 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 an old friend.

Ezra Melville. Together they start on a trip to the Yuga River, where Ezra 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 Hemingway. Neilson, leader of the notorious gang, has a beautiful daughter, Beatrice, with whom Brent is in love. When Ezra and Ben arrive at the north woods Ben's memory returns. They meet a frontiersman and learn that Neilson and his gang have started toward Hiram's claim. Ezra suggests that Darby go on to Snowy Gulch, and he will travel toward their destination. At Snowy Gulch Ben finds that Fenris, the late Ezra Melville's pet wolf, has broken loose and is about to spring upon a girl standing in his path. Ben seems to possess some secret power over the wolf and succeeded in quieting him instantly. Beatrice Neilson, the rescued girl, travels with Ben to join her father. On his arrival at the Yuga River, Ben can find no trace of Ezra, so he calls upon Fenris to aid him in the search.

**GO ON WITH THE STORY.**

"He's my buddy, old boy, and I want you to find him for me," Ben went on, more patiently. He searched his pockets, drawing out at last a copy of the letter Ezra had given him that morning, and, because the old man had carried it for many days, it could still convey a message to the keen nose of the wolf. He put it to the animal's nostrils, then pointed away into the darkness.

Fenris followed the motion with his eyes; and presently his long body stiffened. Ben watched him, fascinated. Then the wolf sniffed at the paper again and trotted away into the night.

In one leap Ben was on his feet following him. The wolf turned once, saw that his master was at his heels and sped on. They turned up a slight draw, toward the hillsides.

Fenris halted at the edge of a distant thicket. The cold sweat sprang out on Ben's forehead, and he broke into a headlong run.

"Ezra!" he called, a curious throbbing quality in his voice. "Are you there, Ez? It's me—Ben."

Together, the man and the wolf, they crept on into the thicket. They halted at last before a curious shadow in the silvered covert. Ben knew at once he had found his ancient friend.

He and Ezra had their last laugh together. He lay very still, the moonlight ensilvering his droll, kindly face—sleeping so deeply that no human voice could ever waken him. An ugly rifle would yawnd darkly at his temple.

For a long time Ben sat beside the dead body of his old counselor and friend as a child might sit among flowers.

His mind began to work clear again; he began to understand.

## Examining Board Formed Canada Essay Contest Professor Wallace Chairman

Many Boys and Girls in Town and Country Districts Out to Win Honor and Cash.

Professor Malcolm W. Wallace, B.A., Ph.D., Professor of English and head of the Department of English at the University of Toronto, will act as Chairman of the Examining Board which will select the winners of the various prizes. Essays should be sent in to the editor of this paper as explained in the large announcement, and not to Professor Wallace direct. The editor will see that all essays sent in safely reach the Examining Board. Any boy or girl who has not yet commenced the preparation of an essay should do so at once so as to take advantage of the full time before the contest expires in order that the essay will represent the very best effort of the contestant.

Parents and teachers are urged to encourage the boys and girls to enter this contest so that this community will be well and worthily represented by the essays sent in to the editor. The winning of a place in this Province-wide contest is no mean honour to which to aspire and the prizes are well worth earning.

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Ezra had been shot, murdered by the men who had jumped his claim. His mind naturally fell to Ezra's parting advice to him. "I've only got one decent place to keep things safe, and that ain't so all-fired decent," the old man had told him. "I always put 'em down my bootleg, between the sock and the leather. If I ever get shuffled off, all of a sudden, I want you to look there careful."

Still with the same deathly pallor he crept over the dead leaves to Ezra's feet. His hands were perfectly steady as he unlooped the lace, one after another, and quietly pulled off the right boot. In the boot leg, just as Ezra had promised, Ben found a scrap of white paper.

He spread it on his knee, and unfolded it with care. He felt in his pocket for a match.

The match cracked, inordinately loud in the silence, and his eyes followed the script. Ezra had been faithful to the last:

To Whom It May Concern:

In case of my death I leave all I die possessed of including my Brother Hiram's claim near Yuga River to my pard and buddy, Ben Darby.

Ezra Melville.

The document was as formal as Ezra could make it, with a carefully drawn seal, and for all its quaint wording, it was a will to stand in any court. But Ezra had not been able to hold his dignity for long. He had added a postscript:

Son, old Hiram made a will, and I guess I can make one too. I just found out about them devils that jumped our claim. I left you back there at the river because I didn't want you taking any dam fool risks till I found out how things lay. I just got one thing to ask. If them devils get me—get them. My life ain't worth much but I want you to make them pay for the little it is worth. Never stop till you've done it.

"Fenris, Fenris!" he breathed.

"We've got to make them pay. And we must not stop till we're done."

It was more than a command. It had the quality of a vow. And now, as they knelt, eyes looking into eyes, it was like a pagan rite in the ancient world.



Ezra had been shot, murdered by the men who had jumped his claim.

put his pick and shovel on his shoulder, and leisurely walked up the creek past Ray's cabin.

The vivid morning light only revealed the crime in more dreadful detail.

Slowly, laboriously, with little outward sign of the emotion that rent his heart, he dug a shallow grave.

He threw the last clod and stood looking down at the upturned earth. "Sleep good, old Ez," he murmured in simple mass for the dead. "I'll do what you said."

Ben worked his way down through the thickets toward Jeffery Neilson's cabin. The river flowed quietly here, a long, still stretch that afforded safe boating.

He suddenly drew up short at the sight of a light, staunch canoe on the open water. It was a curious fact that he noticed the craft itself before ever he glanced at its occupant. He realized that this boat afforded him means of traversing this great waterbody, certainly should be a factor in the forthcoming conflict. The boat had evidently been the property of Hiram Melville.

Then he noticed, with a strange, inexplicable leap of his heart, that its lone occupant was Beatrice Neilson. His eye kindled at the recognition, and the beginning of a smile flashed to his lips. But at once remembrance came to him, crushing his joy as the heel crushes a tender flower. The girl was of the enemy camp; the daughter of the leader of the triumvirate of murderers. While she herself could have had no part in the crime, perhaps she already had guilty knowledge of it, and at least she was of her father's hated blood.

He must simulate friendship. He lifted his hat in answer to her gay signal.

With sure, steady strokes she pushed the craft close to the little board landing where Ben stood. She reached up to him, and in an instant was laughing—at nothing in particular but the fun of life—at his side.

The man glanced once at Fenris, spoke in command, then turned to the girl. "All rested from the ride, I see," he began easily.

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"I never get tired," she responded. She glanced at the tools in his arms. "I suppose you've found a damn rich hole already this morning."

"Only one." He smiled significantly, into her eyes. Because she was a sweet girl, unused to flattery, the warm color grew in her brown cheeks. "And how was padding?" The water looks still enough from here."

"It's not as still as it looks, but it is easy going for a half-mile each way. If you aren't an expert boatman, however—I hardly think—I'd try it."

"Why not? I'm fair enough with a canoe, of course—but it looks safe as a lake."

"But it ain't." She paused. "Listen with those keen ears of yours, Mr. Darby. Don't you hear anything?"

Ben did not need particularly keen ears to hear: the far-off sound of surging waters reached him with entire clearness. He nodded.

"That's the reason," the girl went on. "If something should happen—and you'd get carried around the bend—a little farther than you meant to go, you'd understand. And we wouldn't see any more of Mr. Darby around these parts."

His eyes glowed, and he fought off with difficulty a great preoccupation that seemed to be settling over him. (To be continued.)

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First Mate—"Nice, aren't they?"

—Mabel Hill.

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**The Guessers.**

Insistent chickadees are crying  
From the spruce-tree hedge,  
And blue jays forage from  
The maple branch to branch.  
Across the snowswept field  
The gay-decked pheasants  
Pick their way,  
Proud of their royal feathers.

The frozen brooks,  
The cold white meadow-lands,  
The hill-sides swept with winter's  
Whitened frost,  
Are girt in winter's grasp.

But shadows shorten  
As the sun  
Mounts high  
Behind the hill,  
And secretly at work  
The miracle takes place;  
With the Spring!  
The sweetness of the  
Coming April Shower  
And Maytime sunshine  
Creeps into the frosty wind  
And permeates the sentient world.  
A secret now  
But guessed by  
Chickadee and blue-jay.

—Mabel Hill.

**Helpless.**

"My husband is so incapable of taking care of himself."  
"So is mine. Why, when he is mending his socks or sewing buttons on his shirts, he insists that I thread the needle for him."

**The Reason.**

"I wish I had lived three hundred years ago."  
"Why?"  
"I shouldn't have had so much history to learn."

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Every boy and girl who reads this paper has a chance to win one of these prizes. Read all you can about Canada, her early history, both French and British; study her progress from a Crown colony to her present position of political equality with the Motherland; visualize her future. Then decide from what angle you will deal with your subject and write your essay in 1,000 words or less.

(Contest Closes April 16, 1927).

**RULES OF CONTEST**

All scholars not over seventeen (17) years of age whose parents or guardians subscribe to this paper may enter the contest.

Essays may deal with the subject from any point of view, but must not exceed 1,000 words in length.

Paper of foolscap size must be used, and writing appear on one side only. Neatness will be considered in making awards.

All manuscripts submitted become the property of the publishers. Send essays to Canada Essay Editor, in care of this paper.

The following information must accompany each entry:—Name of contestant, Age, Address, Name of School, Name of Teacher, and each essay must bear the following certificate signed by parent, guardian, or school teacher:—

"I hereby certify that this essay is the sole work of (name of scholar) and that (he or she) is not over seventeen (17) years of age."

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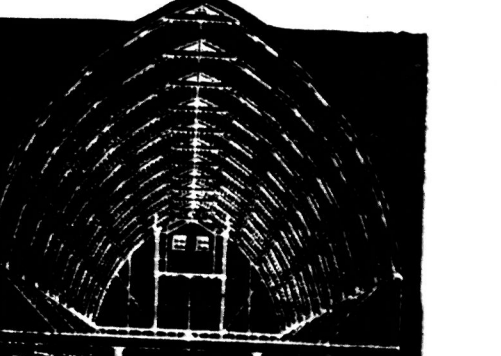
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