

The Snowshoe Trail

By EDISON MARSHALL

BEGIN HERE TODAY

Bill Bronson undertakes to lead Virginia Tremont to her fiancé, Harold Lounsbury, who vanished in the Clearwater of northern Canada six years previously. Disaster parts them from her fiancé's uncle, Kenly Lounsbury, and the cook Vosper, who complete the party. Bill and Virginia are snowed in in one of his trapping cabins. Bill presses a double quart for the lost mine of his murdered father and for Harold. He finds the latter, who has turned "squaw man."

GO ON WITH THE STORY

Bill realized at once that this new development did not in the least affect his own duty. His job had been to find Harold and return him to Virginia. This smirch in Harold's life was a question for the two to settle between them.

It did, however, complicate the work of regeneration. Bill had known squaw men before, and few of them had ever regenerated.

Harold shrugged once more. "And is it anybody's business but my own?" he asked.

"It hadn't ought to be, but it is," was the answer. "It's my business, and somebody else's, too." He turned to the woman. "You're Joe Robinson's sister, Sindie, aren't you?"

The Indian looked up, nodded, then went to her work.

"Then you left Burkshot Dan—to come here and live with this white man?"

Harold turned to her with a snarl. "Don't answer him, Sindie. It's none of his business." Then his smoldering eyes met Bill's. "Now we've talked enough. You can go."

"I've got one question, Lounsbury—do you think, by any chance—you've got any manhood left? Do you think you're rotten clear through?"

Harold leaped then, savage as a wolf, and instantly his rifle swung in his arms. Bill's form, impassive before, seemed simply to wake a wild life. Seemingly with one motion he wrenched the gun from the man's hand and sent him spinning against the wall.

"Before you start anything more, hear what I've got to offer you." His voice lowered, and the words came rather painfully. "It's your one chance, Lounsbury—to come back, Virginia Tremont has come into the North, looking for you. She's at my camp. She wants to take you back with her."

Lounsbury's breath caught with a strange, sobbing sound. "Virginia—up here?" he cried. "Does she know about this?" He indicated the cabin interior, and all it meant, with one sweep of his arm.

"Of course not. How could she? Whether you tell her or not is a matter for you and she to decide. She's come to find you—and bring you back."

"My God! To the States?"

"Of course."

For the instant the black wrath had left his face, and his thought swung backward to his own youth—to the days he had known Virginia in a far-off city. He was more than a little cowed at this manifestation of her love.

But quickly the expression of his face changed, and Bill couldn't have explained the wave of revulsion that surged through him. He only knew a blind desire to tear with his strong fingers those leering lips before him. Harold was lost, in insidious speculations. He remembered the girl's beauty, the grace and liveness of her form, the holy miracle of her kisses. Opposite him sat his squaw—swartly, unclean, shapeless. Perhaps it wasn't too late yet.

"You won't tell her—about Sindie?"

"Not as long as you're decent. That's for you to settle for yourself—whether she finds out about her."

CHAPTER X.

"Build a fire and put on some water to heat—fill up every pan you have," Bill instructed Sindie.



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ISSUE No. 24--30

"What's that for?" Harold asked.

"You didn't think I was going to take you looking like you do, do you—into Virginia's presence? The first thing on the program is—a bath." He turned once more to Sindie. "And see what you can do about this gentleman's clothes, too; if he's got any clean underwear or any other togs, load 'em out."

"Anything else?" Harold asked sarcastically.

"Yes, shave! And when you bathe, bathe all over—don't spare your face or your hair. Water may seem strange at first, but you'll get used to it."

An hour wrought a profound and amazing change in the man's appearance. He had conscientiously gone to work to cleanse himself, and he had succeeded. His hair, dull before, was a glossy dark brown now, he had shaved off the matted growth about his lips, leaving only a small, neat mustache; his hair was trimmed and carefully parted. The man's skin had also resumed its natural shade.

For the first time Bill realized that Harold was really a rather handsome man.

"There's one thing, before we start," Bill said. "I want you to tell these understrappers of yours to take that squaw and clear out of Clearwater."

The half-breeds, understanding perfectly, looked to Harold for confirmation.

"Go, as he says," Harold directed, he asked a question in the Indian vernacular.

Harold glanced once at Bill's face, saw by his expression that he was baffled, and answered in the same language.

Once more the Indian questioned, and Harold hesitated an instant, as if seeking an answer. It seemed to the other white man that his eye fell to the rifle that Bill carried. Then he spoke again, gesturing. The gesture that he made was four fingers held before the Indian's eyes. Then he announced that he was ready to go.

During the long trudge through the snow, from Harold's camp to Bill's cabin, the two men spoke not a word. Harold's mind was busy with dark and devious thoughts, crafty schemes and desires more kindred to lust than to love. Bill's thoughts were more for Virginia than for himself; would his loss be equalized by her gain?

As they neared the cabin they saw the candlelight, like a pale ghost, in the window. Virginia was still up, reading, perhaps, before the fire.

"Wait," Bill commanded. "There's one thing more. I've brought you here. I've given you your chance—for redemption. God knows if I had my choice I'd have killed you first. She's not going to know about the squaw unless you tell her. Nor about the filth you lived in. Those matters are all for you to decide. I won't interfere."

He paused, and Harold waited.

"But don't forget I'm here," he went on. "I work for her—until she gets out of my charge I'm her guide, her protector, the guardian of her happiness. That's all I care about—her happiness. I don't know whether or not I did wrong to bring a squaw man to her—but if you're man enough to hold her love and make her happy, it doesn't matter. But I give—one warning."

His voice changed. It took on a quality of infinite and immutable prophecy. In the darkness and the silence the voice might have come from some higher realm, speaking the irrevocable law of the forest gods.

"She'll be more or less in your power at times, up here. I won't be with you every minute. But if you take one jot of advantage of that fact—either in word or deed—I'll break you and smash you and kill you in my hands!"

He waited an instant for the words to go home. Harold shivered as if with cold.

"Go on in," he said. "She's waiting for you."

CHAPTER XI.

"Who's there?" Virginia called. "Is it you, Bill?"

"It's not Bill," the answer came. "But he's here."

"Who is it?" she asked again, steadily as she could.

"It's I—Harold Lounsbury. Bill told me to come."

Virginia for the moment stood still, trying to quiet her leaping heart and her fluttering nerves. Her hands clasped at her breast, then she walked to the threshold and opened the door. Harold Lounsbury stepped through, blinking in the candlelight.

"Harold," she murmured unsteadily. She tried to smile. "Is it really you, Harold?"

"It's I," he answered. "We've come together—at last." The words seemed to rally her scattered faculties. Instinctively her eyes swept his face and form. All doubt was past: this man was unquestionably Harold. Yet she was secretly and vaguely shocked. He seized her hands in both of his. "Virginia," he cried. "My God, I can't believe it's you!"

She remained singularly cool in the ardor of this cry. "Why didn't you

write?" she asked. "Why didn't you come home?"

The questions, instead of embarrassing him further, put Harold at his ease. He had prepared for just those queries.

"I did write," he cried. "Why didn't you answer?"

She stared at him in amazement. "You did—you say you wrote me?"

"Wrote! I wrote a dozen times. And never received a word—except from Jules Nathan."

"But Jules Nathan—Jules Nathan is dead!"

"He is?" But Harold's surprise was feigned. This was one piece of news that had trickled through the wastes to him—the death of Jules Nathan, a man known to them both. It was safe to have heard from him. The contents of the letter could never be verified. "He told me—after I'd written many times, and never got an answer—that you were engaged to be married—to a Chicago man. I thought you'd forgotten me."

She hadn't forgotten, but—six years of separation had wrought their changes. She felt that she needed time to become adjusted to him.

"Where's Bill?" she asked. She turned to the door and called. "Bill, where are you?"

His voice seemed quite his own when he answered from the stillness of the night. "I'll be in a moment. I was just getting a load of wood." (To be continued.)

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MOWERS

Cow and Snail Join Celebrity Roster

Cow Travels by Plane at 135 Miles an Hour—Another Starts Fire

It was recently revealed that there was a hen in this country—at Carlton, near Skipton—that was seventeen years old and was still laying.

On the basis of the average life of a hen, that bird is just as remarkable as a man 300 years old would be; yet she will probably be forgotten very quickly. There are very few famous hens.

Fame among animals is, indeed, fickle and capricious. There are famous horses, famous dogs, and famous cats—and a number of captive wild animals have obtained a considerable celebrity. But how many people are there who could mention, for instance, a famous cow?

One now living deserves to be famous. She is Elm Farm Olive, a Guernsey, who can claim to be the first flying cow that the world has known. She recently took a trip in an aeroplane, and was milked while the plane was travelling at a rate of 135 miles an hour, 5,000 feet above St. Louis, in the United States.

Another cow is still remembered in the States—and will be for many years to come. This animal, fifty-eight years ago, kicked over the milking stool, and so upset a paraffin lamp. This simple accident started the great fire of Chicago, one of the most destructive conflagrations on record.

Snail That Won a Castle America claims both these bovine history-makers. But there is one animal celebrity which Britain produced, and which other countries would find it hard to beat. This was the snail through which Hornby Castle, Bedale, and a large estate came into the possession of the then Duke of Leeds.

The affair happened in the days when gambling for high stakes was a commonplace. Many queer wagers of that time are recorded, but none are stranger than that in which the owner of Hornby Castle bet the castle and 15,000 acres of land that a snail he owned could outpace any brought forward by the duke.

When the curious "race" was held it looked as if the challenger's confidence was justified, because his snail soon gained the lead. However, he was impatient, and pricked the snail with a pin to make it go still faster.

Unfortunately for him, this had precisely the opposite effect to what he had intended. His snail retired into its shell, and the duke's passed it and went on to win the castle and estate for its owner.

From that day until the beginning of this year, when it was sold with the Duke of Leeds' Yorkshire estates, Hornby Castle was the property of the Dukes of Leeds.—Answers

Minard's for Insect Bites.

The First Fifteen Minutes "The first quarter of an hour after birth is the most dangerous period of life," stated an expert recently, adding that the mortality figure for this fifteen minutes was as great as that of any subsequent month.

Mummy—"I hope you were a good boy at the party, and didn't ask for a second piece of cake?" Tommy—"No, mummy. I took two pieces the first time."

Minard's for Insect Bites.

The First Fifteen Minutes

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Minard's for Insect Bites.

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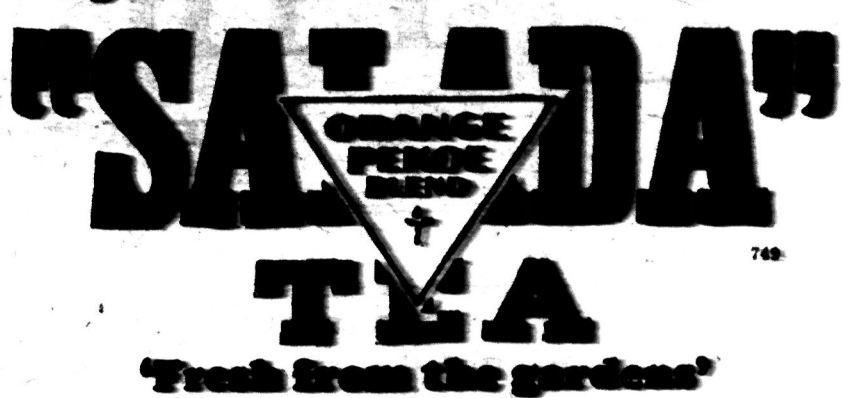
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Soap Bubbles Used to Measure Stresses on Parts of Airplanes

Milwaukee—Engineers are blowing bubbles in their studies to test the strength of airplane construction. G.W. Trayer, a research engineer, speaking before the faculty conference of the University of Wisconsin's engineering college here recently, explained how the use of this soap film over specially designed holes enabled scientists to compute stresses in airplane parts.

One of the principal difficulties in using the soap film method for investigating torsional stresses, as described by Mr. Trayer, was that the ordinary soap bubble is a fragile thing totally unsuited to standing the wear and tear of a hard day's work. Persistent effort resulted in the production of a soap film that will last for adays under continuous measurements.

A hole of the size and shape of the cross-section of the airplane part which is to be studied is cut in a metal plate. Over this hole is swept a film of soap by a sweep of the type that was used in pre-Volstead days to remove the excess suds from a glass

of brew. Then the film is blown up slightly by a current of pure air. Ordinary human breath would destroy the film within too short a period of time.

The next step is to measure the slopes and contours of the bubble. This is a delicate and tedious process similar to the work which is done by a land surveyor in gathering field data and mapping topography.

When the step is completed the investigator has data from which he can compute the stresses that will be produced in the airplane part by the loads and twisting it will suffer in service. The soap film is not loaded or twisted; it so happens that there is a curious analogy between the contours of the bubble and the stresses in the airplane part whose cross-section it represents.

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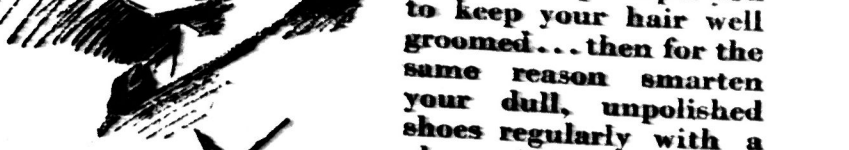
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