



SYNOPSIS

Ben Elliott — from "Yonder" — makes his entry into the lumbering town of Tincup, bringing along an old man, Don Stuart, who had been eager to reach Tincup. Nicholas Brandon, the town's leading citizen, resents Stuart's presence, trying to force him to leave town and Elliott, resenting the act, knocks him down. Elliott is arrested, but finds a friend in Judge Able Armitage. The judge hires him to run the one lumber camp, the Hoot Owl, that Brandon has not been able to grab. This belongs to Dawn McManus, daughter of Brandon's old partner, who has disappeared with a murder charge hanging over his head. Brandon sends his bully, Duval, to beat up Ben, and Ben worships him in a fist fight and throws him out of camp. Old Don Stuart dies, leaving a letter for Elliott, "to be used when the going becomes too tough." Ben refuses to open the letter at this time, believing he can win the fight by his own efforts. Fire breaks out in the mill.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Getting her!" Ben panted as Able tried to say something to him. "Getting her!" He coughed and his words had come in a half strangle but, even so, the exultation in his tone was unmistakable. Living flame no longer leaped and roared through the hole in the floor. Thick smoke swept upward but that was all and as Ben ran up the icy slide for the first time and saw this he cried out: "Good work, Buller! Over there, though; look!"

Fire had taken fresh hold in a greasy timber: and was working its way up beneath the trimmer saw. Buller dashed a half dozen pails of water on the spot and it went black. "Keep going, Buller!" Ben cried. "I'll take half your men." He went slipping down the slide and at the bottom called men from the bucket line. "Stretch out, the rest of you!" he called. "Now, this way, you lads; in here and mop her up, and make it fast!"

Stubborn flames ate into the litter on the ground floor. Again and again they broke out, but the driving heat was gone, roaring gases no longer gave impetus to the spread of destruction as the first need for speed became less imperative. Not until the final curl of smoke had been subdued completely did Ben Elliott relax. Then, with lantern lighted, he entered the saw floor, completely ice glazed, charred in places, and surveyed the damage. As he swung his lantern and looked about, peering at timbers eaten half away, at burned belting, at other vital damage, he moved slowly, said little, as a man will who is thinking severely.

He stopped beside Able Armitage finally. "Well, the insurance'll cover it," the old justice said, as if trying to make the best of things. Ben laughed shortly. "But she's two weeks idle at the inside. And belting gone and a good many other things. If— " "Say, chum!" It was the night watchman, sheathed in flakes of ice from his waist down, whom Ben hailed. "Where were you?" "Eating, when it broke out," Ben only nodded. The watchman, by long custom, went to the boarding house kitchen for his midnight meal where food was kept warm for him. "I went through the yard and the mill, just like you told me to do. I looked in at the boiler the last thing. I hadn't been out of here ten minutes before I just happened to glance through the window and see it."

"Yeah. Gasoline starts in a hurry." "Gasoline!" the watchman croaked. "Sure," Ben laughed drily. "The ground floor was drenched with it. They'd scraped rubbish into piles and soaked them, too. They almost did a good job. Almost five minutes' start, or if I hadn't happened to see a garage fire put out with salt once where nothing else was handy to smother it, and it'd have been all day with us." He rubbed his chin, thoughtfully. "Didn't see anybody? Or hear anybody?" "Not a soul or a sound." Elliott looked up. No snow was falling. "Buller!" he called. The foreman, face blackened, eyebrows gone, came up at his hail. "Herd this crew in case. It snowed early in the evening. Maybe I'll want to do a job of tralling and I don't want tracks all over the country." He did his job of tralling. The fresh tracks of a single man led away from the trampled snow about the mill toward decks of logs. The tracks went out along the sliding toward town but Ben did not follow far. He stopped when he found a

three-gallon demijohn badly concealed beneath the end of a log. He sniffed its neck and nodded grimly. The fuel of an incendiary had been carried to the mill in that container. "And now," Able said, after he also had sniffed the bottle in Buller's house, "what's to be done?" He tried to smile but deep trouble was in his old eyes.

For the first time since he had come to Hoot Owl Ben Elliott shook his head dubiously as he dropped into a chair. He was both grave and troubled. "They're getting the least bit rough," he observed. "Rather rough. I'd say!" Able's face flared suddenly in righteous wrath. "D—n Nick Brandon! I'd give a good deal to hang this night's work on him!"

"It'll take no less than a miracle now to pull us through. Two weeks to get the mill running? Benny, in that time we'll be busted wide open! They'll have a case against me, I'll be walked as administrator and the timber will be at Brandon's mercy." "Yeah. . . . Wide open . . . and at his mercy." Able rose and paced the small room, hands in his hip pockets. He came to a halt before Elliott and eyed him narrowly. He stood so a moment as if in debate with himself. "We had a fire," he said. "Not the kind you fight with fire, exactly. . . . But old Don told Bird-Eye that you'd have to use fire to fight another kind with, didn't he?" Ben smiled slowly. "You're thinking of the old timer's letter, eh? . . . Well, maybe . . . But we're not licked yet. Something may turn up. No, I guess I won't use whatever it was Stuart gave me just yet!"

The old man shook his head and resumed his pacing. "What can turn up to give us a fighting chance, now?" he muttered.

CHAPTER V

STILL, something did turn up. Just at breakfast time, while Ben was prowling the mill, admitting to himself that perhaps it was time to look at his hole card—the letter that the old cruiser had sent to him with its intriguing inscription—a stranger behind a light driving team swung into the mill-yard, stopped and tied his horses. "Well, you had a fire!" he said as Ben approached. "See you've still got a mill standing, though?" "Standing, yes. But that's all you can say for it."

"That's tough!" The man eyed him in genuine concern. "Are you by any chance Ben Elliott?" "I am." "Elliott, my name's Blackmore. Glad to see you! I was in here and talked with Harrington week before last and he was saving out some veneer logs for me. I'm with the Veneer Exporting corporation and we're in the market for quite a few cars of stuff. Wonder if I could interest you in a deal. Market's right good and we're in need of some more stuff to fill out a shipment. Maybe with your mill shut down you might be interested."

"That's a close guess. Shoot!" "I'll pay you a hundred and twenty dollars a thousand for bird's-eye maple and ninety dollars for veneer birch; standard specifications and delivery inside of two weeks on, say, thirty thousand. I know you're busy, so I name the top and pass any dickering."

A hundred and twenty. . . . And ninety for birch! Ben's heart leaped but he gave no outward indication of the great relief that surged through him. "Two weeks?" he asked. "Yes, and less. Let's see. . . . I'll have to have thirty thousand delivered in just eleven days to be safe in getting 'em to Montreal on time. I'll take fifty thousand at the price but the thirty will have to be loaded on track first." "That'll be fast production." "All of that! But if I can't get the stuff from you I can from Brandon by going up a few dollars a thousand. My cards are on the table, Elliott. Can we deal?" Ben considered, rubbing his chin with a knuckle. He looked up the road which led toward camp to see a man approaching with that quick, space devouring stride of the woodsman. "Had breakfast?" he asked. "No." "Blanket your team and go eat. I'll have an answer for you by the time you're through." As the veneer buyer entered the boarding house Bird-Eye Blaine—the traveler from camp—had reached the mill-yard. "For the love av—" he began, turning his amazed stare from the mill to Elliott. "Yes, a fire, Bird-Eye. Never mind

that now. Where'd you get your name? I mean 'Bird-Eye.' Why do they call you that?" "Oh, that! Why, I looked veneer stuff from Brandon for years until I got sick with disgust for th' mon." "I see. And you've been on the Hoot Owl for three years, haven't you? Know the timber pretty well?"

"I know livery quarter stake by its first name!" "How much bird's-eye and veneer birch is there within draying distance of the steel? Let's get down to cases. Do you think there's ten thousand? Or fifty?" "Fifty? Naw! Tin?"—twisting his head. "Twice that, anyhow. 'Nd on twenty-three the's another bunch av ut. Scattered all through, too, but bunched. Mister Elliott, loike ye don't see ut frequent. That makes ut easy to git out."

"What I'm getting at is this: With the crew I've got could we get thirty thousand out in ten days?" Bird-Eye shrugged. "Doin', b'y, but that's a chore! With this crew av hay tossers?" He shook his head. "Meby you couid . . . you 'nd Paul Bunyan. Most men couidn't even so much as start."

"Walt here. I'll see you in a few minutes." He entered Buller's house where Able Armitage sipped coffee gloomily, neglecting the food on his plate. "This is the nineteenth," Ben said. "With what bank balance we have, how much must we get together to meet the payroll, that one note that you think can't be renewed and interest on others that'll be due? My figures are all up at camp."

Able considered at length. "Three thousand might let us out. Why?" He put that question dryly. "I just wondered," Ben turned to Buller. "How many men will you need to get the mill in shape? I mean, how many can you use and not have them falling over each other?"

"Oh, four or five besides myself." Ben nodded. "That'll give me fifteen of the mill crew to throw into the woods." His eyes snapped as he looked back at Able. "A half hour ago I was feeling about half licked. I'll make the three thousand by the first or break my neck!" "What are you getting at, Benny?" Able demanded. "This," Ben hitched his chair close to the table and with a relish



which indicated the love of battle, sketched his plan.

By noon that plan was in partial operation. Bird-Eye Blaine, his duties as barn boss temporarily delegated to another, and Ben Elliott cruised through the timber north of camp, belt axes in their hands. And in the morning the camp crew, augmented by fifteen men from the mill, left off the work of felling timber in strips, scattered through the woods and dropped marked trees. Swampers were with them, clearing the way for teams that followed close on the sawyers' heels and drayed these high quality logs out to the railroad.

"But it's a man's sized job to keep your eye on such an operation!" Ben declared to Able. "I've got to watch Buller and the mill, too. I've got to think about markets so we'll be all set when we commence to saw again. And the devil of it is I'm only one hand and there are only twenty-four hours in a day!" He grinned. "Where's this good man you told me about? Jeffers? Is that his name?" "Tim Jeffers? Over in the next town! But I doubt he'll even listen. He hasn't wanted a job in three years."

"Doubting isn't knowing," Ben said grimly and the next afternoon drove hard for Jeffers' little farm clearing. The old logger met Elliott with an eye that seemed at first to be hostile but which on closer observation proved to be only one of severe appraisal. "So you're after a camp foreman," he said. "No, I've quit the timber for good, Elliott. I'm through. A man has trouble enough without hunting it. I'm not a young man, son. I've no years nor strength any more to put into another man's losing fight." "We won't lose. Brandon's tried everything up to and including fire and he hasn't got me licked yet. Come along with me, Tim Jeffers, and we'll run him into his hole!" But the man was obdurate and

Ben left him, chagrined and a bit angered at his failure. "Brandon's got a crimp in the whole country," he muttered as he drove toward camp. "And here I am, trying to do four men's work. Tough nut? I'll tell the world!"

In Tincup he drove to the express office to inquire for the new piston head for the locomotive which was due. He wanted to start loading his veneer logs and getting them out to the siding as rapidly as they came from the woods. He had signed a contract with the time for delivery specified and wanted to run no chance of delay.

But the repair part was not there. "Got the bill of it," the station agent said. "But it hasn't shown up. Ought to be along tomorrow." However, the next day did not bring the repairs and the driver of Ben's supply team reported the fact to him.

"And the agent, he wants to see you," the man added emphatically. "Didn't that piston head come yet?" Ben demanded angrily of the supply teamster after the man's next trip to town. "I told you the agent wanted to see you."

The other's manner was doggedly mysterious and Elliott, without further questioning, harnessed and drove to Tincup.

The agent shook hands cordially and drew him inside the tiny ticket office. He spoke in a cautious tone, although they were alone. "The messenger on the train says he put that engine part off for me the night the bill came through. It ain't here and I'm takin' a chance of losing my job just telling you even that much."

Ben frowned. "What are you driving it? It's not here and you'll lose—You mean, the express company'll hold you responsible for an article lost out of the depot?" "That don't worry me. The shipment came in and I never saw it and if I was to tell you that the only thing that could've happened was that it was taken off the truck while I was handling baggage it wouldn't be a bad guess. But if certain parties knew I told you that much the railroad would get such a complaint about me that I'd be out of a job between days and don't you forget it!"

"Oh, I see," Ben looked at a calendar. "It took them five days to get it back to me. Can't wait that long. Give me a telegraph blank. I'll have 'em notify me by wire when they ship and if I have to meet trains myself . . . why, I can do that, too."

The other nodded and gave Ben a worried look. "I sort of liked the way you did up Duval in that log rollin'; and I heard about the trimmin' you gave him at camp. And I'm . . . Well, I've seen enough raw stuff go on around this man's town to feed me up. I'll help you all I can but I've got kids to think about."

Ben made a wry face. "Even children don't seem safe," he said. "Some of us have got only our dander invested in the particular fracas I'm mixing in, but everything the little McManus girl has got is at stake." "Yup, you're— Little girl?" "Yes. The McManus girl. She owns the Hoot Owl."

"Oh," the agent said with a queer look. The following morning, a half hour after the men had gone to the woods, a sawyer came running toward the camp office just in time to catch Ben before he left for the mill. "Hi, Elliott!" he called. "Hold on a minute!" He came breathlessly up to the sleigh.

"Somebody cut three inches off the measures last night. Thought you ought to know. Logs three inches short might be thrown out." "Somebody cut— How'd you find that out?" "Well, we left the measuring stick layin' on a tree we'd dropped last night. I'd marked it myself, figurin' on making one more log before we quit and then we decided not to. It snowed just a mite durin' the night. I laid the measure down again this morning and made another mark, forgetting about the first which was covered up with snow, you see. When I marked, it knocked the snow off the log, showing up my first one three inches off. I thought that was funny so I measured again. Somethin' was wrong, sure. We looked her over and found where a piece had been cut off the stick and then we saw where tracks—"

"Be with you pronto," Ben muttered as he turned his team back toward the barn. He found five of the saw gangs with shortened measures. Fortunately, the discovery was made early in the day and only a few under-length logs had been made. However, it proved to Ben that menacing influences struck in unexpected ways and from all quarters. An unexplained snowshoe trail was found which led in from the north and none knew who had made it. The visitor evidently had come out by road in the dead of night.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Santa Fe Has No Railroads Although Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico, no railroad enters there. A citizenry in love with its quiet city has consistently refused to permit the railroads to build through Santa Fe. It largely because of this that the charm of the ancient town has been preserved.

Darwin's Theory Given Rap by English Author

Probably no biologist doubts the validity of evolution. On the other hand, natural selection and the survival of the fittest, the very core of Darwin's theory, are no longer accepted as the sole agencies at work in the creation of new species and varieties. Since the days of Mendel it has become apparent that the mechanism of heredity is both delicate and complex. Moreover, there are the endocrine glands, with their tremendous potentialities for modifying the organism. Lastly, the relation of that organism to its environment is not nearly so direct and simple as Darwin assumed. How the more imaginative biologists think about evolution and especially the problem of man's descent is well exemplified by "The Coming of Man," a recently published book in which Dr. R. Broom, an English authority on amphibians, sets forth his own hypothesis.

It is generally agreed that life first developed in the sea. How, then, did the first amphibian evolve? What was the bold animal that first ventured on land and adapted itself wholly or partially to life under entirely new circumstances? When we ask such questions it is apparent

that natural selection and the survival of the fittest do not meet the case.

Doctor Broom holds that physical structure, courage, pugnacity, efficiency were not solely responsible for the transition. There was something unstable about the first adventurer that came out of the sea. He was like an unstable chemical compound that changes into something else—something out of which a reptile could evolve, something that was the result of a crisis.

Examine all the other animals, and the transition from an old to a newer form seems always to be the result of critical instability. Despite the convincing array of fossils that shows plainly enough how the one-toed horse of today evolved from an ancient, five-toed equine animal not much bigger than a St. Bernard dog, the jumps are marked. Between five toes and four toes there is no gradual transition, nothing like a digital diminuendo.

Crisis, everywhere crisis, whether it be fish or amphibian, reptile or mammal. With man it is the same—one of the most unstable creatures ever evolved. In a state of something like fermentation, he has al-

ways been in a critical turmoil. Unlike the ant or the bee, he is not highly specialized. If he ever does settle down, his history will be like that of most social creatures—a repetition over hundreds of millions of years of the same biological events and facts. He will cease to evolve. —New York Times.

A Friend Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor to measure words, but pour them all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.—John Oliver Hobbes.

Along came Ruth