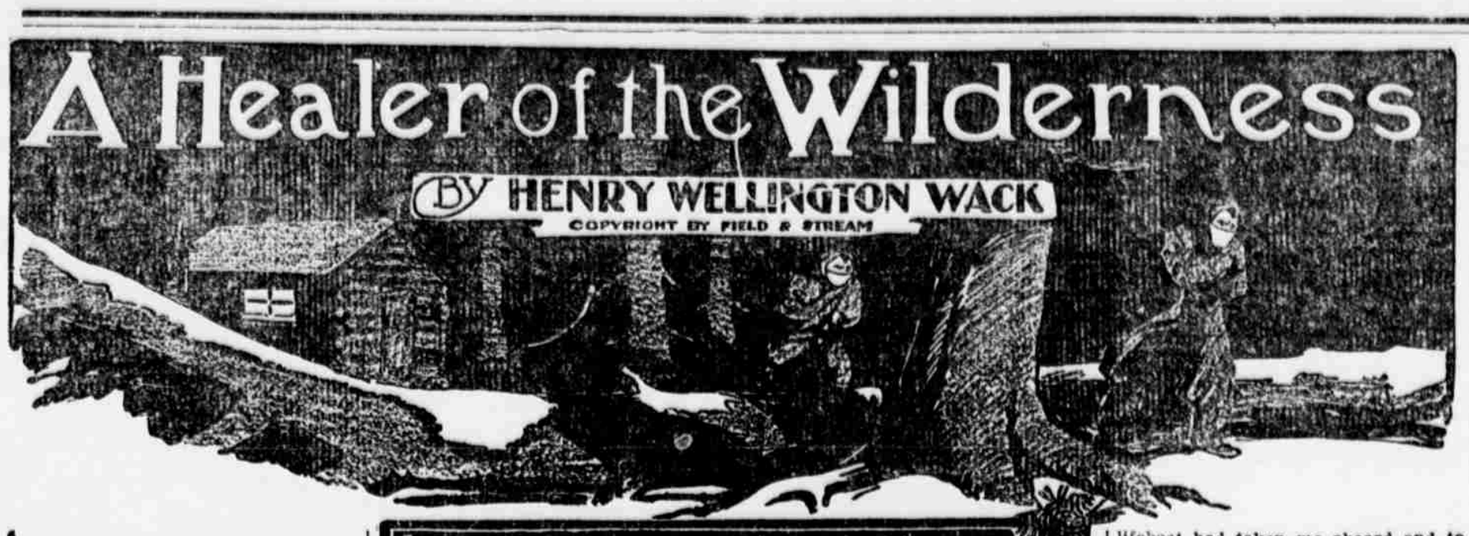
A Healer of the Wilderness

BY HENRY WELLINGTON WACK



MIGHT I have a word with you, sir, without the cabin?"

Immediately leaving my associates, I followed the short, muscular, athletic figure of the camp doctor out to the edge of the forest. "What's up, Doc?" I asked expectantly.

"I want the 'elp of a man as 'as the nerve to do an ugly job before daylight," he whispered sententiously.

"Murder?" I tried to smile.

"Mayhap!" he quietly replied, to my amazement.

"That lets me out, Doc. I'm off for my bunk."

"No it doesn't" he hissed, following my hesitant retreat. "What brings me 'ere late at night in a storm is more important to the company and its hundred and sixty-two hands in camp, than to you and me. This job's goin' for-ard tonight, come what may. And you who are handy with a gun and I who have no talent for talk afterward—wels, it's we two for the perfawmence. I'm dead serious, I am, and you'll stand by—I'm certain of that. Come, the tide's just a-turnin'. We'll have to be movin' with it. Every moment we're nearer a stampede and a panic in camp. Get your gun and sneak to my hut right away. Not a peep to them gents from Boston, nor to any one else. We're going for bear, understan', plain brown bear—tomorrow."

That Alaskan night was of the foulest! A fretful kamook bayed dismally on the opposite shore where Haida Indians sometimes dwell on their canoe voyages among the Prince of Wales Islands. The Coplan Copper company's smelter cast fitful patterns of light and shadow upon the freezing bay. The wild voice of the hills smote the sea beyond with a hiss and roar. January was in angry mood in the wilderness as I kicked the snow from my boots before the doctor's cabin, and his hound uttered a long, low growl within. It seemed but a moment when our pipes were loaded, the "whuskey" on the rude table beside us, and the fire roaring in the doctor's little rusty stove.

Turning suddenly and bringing his fist to the level of my face, the little man unpacked himself brusquely:

"Am I correctly informed that you're leaving camp for the east on the next boat?"

"That's my intention unless this storm detains me."

"Well, sir," continued the doctor, as he placed a foot on the hound's thick neck and recharged his glass, "I hope nothing will interfere with your leavin'; but I can't see the horizon of a little mess down near the Indian quarters behind the mill. You see, I can't say anything to those timid city directors about it, fearin' of their indiscretion and a tangle with the health officer at the port o' entry. Them directors hate me! Now you've appealed to me as a man of the woods. You've been about some where a man's got to be several times a man. This d——d Indian must be handled mightily rough tonight. At least we can't weep over him. He sneaked in night before last without permission, and it'll explode any minute."

When the doctor rummaged for two black shroud-like gowns and carelessly threw them across the bed, I suspected that we were either to lynch somebody, commit a corpse to the sea or participate in some ghoulish ceremony of pagan belief amongst the Siwash across the bay. Finally I blurted: "Doc, what are these black kimonas for? Looks like a hanging."

"It might better be a hangin'," he retorted, pawing amongst his apothecary stores, from which he occasionally set aside a package. "It's smallpox! That's what it is—in a camp of panicky miners ready to bolt on the first whiff. Smallpox—fourteen-day-stage, and a pest house harboring the d——d case. Do you understand? Smallpox!"

Then with a toss of the head and one of those sudden turns upon his auditor which characterized all his intense utterances, he growled: "Come along now, we've got to move that case out of camp before dawn or, well, you'll see the company's boat in the hands of mutinous miners, and its creditors dividin' its assets in bankruptcy, and me a-goin' to the coop for violatin' the law."

We skulked along the beach as far as possible from the glare of the smelter. Black buzzards, sheltering in a wood pile, chattered raucously.

The doctor whispered: "Our plan, remember. If the buck shows fight, do your part; I'll do mine. We'll avoid a rough-and-tumble as long as possible. Hear that sea racing past the inlet! Gad! what a night for women and children! This bread and bacon won't be needed. I'm believin'.

"POINTED HER NOSE TOWARD AN UNKNOWN AND DOUBTFUL FATE"

Poor brown devils—and yet—Stand by now, and if you feel yourself cavin', bite that cigar like a mink trap and work away. Musn't bungle this!"

We remained for a moment in the shadow of the silent mill to rehearse the "job" about to be perpetrated. The Indian's rudely-curtained hut window gleamed faintly red—a bleared eye in the dark void. We knocked. A menacing grunt and a shifting of moccasined feet within—nothing more hospitable.

"The doctor, with food and medicine. Let me in." We let ourselves into the hut before the Indian had arisen from the floor.

The hut reeked with the foul stench peculiar to the domestic conditions of nomad Indians in this region.

We lured the Indian outside. Our return from pestilence to the cold, sweet air of the Alaskan forest, intoxicated me.

The doctor began menacingly: "Why didn't you ride out on the morning tide? You said you would last night. You lied and, damn you, endangered the health of the whole camp. You've got twenty minutes to paddle off with your family or get shot."

The Indian replied sullenly as he moved toward the canoe upon the beach. "Squaw too sick. Hunt for meat all day. I go when the water sleeps—mebbe soonly." He turned defiantly with clenched fists.

"See here, Thlinkit, you've come into this camp with what miners would shoot you for. I've given you two days to clear out at the risk of infecting our men and wrecking the mine for three months. I've got twenty men in the shadow of that mill ready to pound you into pulp when my gun barks. You understan'? Now, we'll do this quietly or we'll do it fighting'." Saying which the doctor drew his pistol while I entered the hut and seized the Indian's rifle.

A long dory-like canoe was torn from the thin ice into which it lay bedded. The brutal duty was under way.

The squaw, whose disease had advanced to the stage of dessication, opened her terrible eyes—eyes sunken and deliquescent.

Go six miles down the coast; you'll find fresh water and game a-plenty. Set your traps, and wait for the company's launch to pass on her way out. Paddle out to meet her when you hear her whistle—four days hence. If you attempt to land within this inlet, I'll sink your boat with a shot. Now, then, heave off."

Having given his commands, the doctor joined in some mighty shoving and cussing to get the boat away; the Indian's reluctant paddle caught the water lazily, and the deeply laden craft of disease and death, and hatred of the white man, finally pointed her angular nose toward an unknown and a doubtful fate. I looked around for Doc, before setting the hut afire and burning the last vestige of the case that had worried him. He was not ashore. He had vanished like a ghoul from the Indian's dying fire. I helloed softly, and, gazing toward the disappearing boat—descried his squat figure with a paddle in the bow!

Was it possible? Yes, there he was and from there he called to me this weird adieu: "Good night, old chap. We've done a d—n fine job; but I'm going to finish it alone. Send a canoe after me day after tomorrow, or pick me up when the Mary Ann puts out to sea. If I'm infected, I'll hang my pink shirt high in a fir tree near the beach, and don't you come within a hundred feet of me. If I'm all right, I'll get aboard and see you off for the states. I say—burn the Indian's hut, sneak to my shack and lay low. Don't explain anything. Those miners wouldn't stay in camp a minute, and the health officer'd hang me for not reportin'. Thanks, old chap, thanks. It was a dirty job for you."

I heard no more except the woollies gathering aloft and hitting the distant sea with a roar. The sturdy little Doc would "finish the job alone!"

Firing the hut from the inside, I sneaked through the camp toward the doctor's shack.

It so happened (as it always happens) that on the day after my gruesome job with Dr. Dickson, one of the visiting eastern directors had a "tremenjus case of cramps," as the superintendent impressively announced.

"Now, where was that good-for-nothing, lying, scheming little Doc? Why, drunk abed, of course."

So, with this verdict, a collection of exasperated directors visited Dickson's shack to rout him out. The door unlocked, but the doctor was nowhere in camp. A meeting of the directors was called which resolved that it was dangerous to the camp to continue the employment of a man who was this, that and the other bad, incompetent, unfaithful thing. So Doc was discharged on the spot, the while an invitation was prepared to another physician at Juneau to come and fill the exalted position.

It was an innate sense of responsibility which impelled me to steal away on the third night after Dickson had gone to sea with his sick wards. Packing my light kit I bundled up what remained and left it labeled to follow me in the Mary Ann when the visiting directors returned to Ketchikan. My note to them did not create a favorable impression of my attentiveness to their distressed business.

"Gentlemen: As I may serve you more by finding Dr. Dickson than by remaining in camp, I have left some of my duffle to accompany you on your voyage to Ketchikan. I am cruising down the bay to hunt for him and for—bears. While sailing, please look for my fire and a freshly-blazed spruce on your port side. Kindly blow the launch whistle every two miles down. I ought to be from six to eight miles south on the west coast of Prince of Wales Island."

From the doctor's shack I appropriated his rifle, a supply of ammunition and such medicines as I thought he might need; also I took some Scotch whisky, and brandy, pies and tobacco, a cot, tent and bedding, a stove, shotgun and shells, field glass, disinfectants, and all the provisions I could induce the cook to hand out.

One of the squaw's babies had died on the day following their rough voyage from the mine. "And the other little varmint," said Dickson softly, "will pass in his checks presently. The squaw'll pull through if the buck don't lay down this week. I'm goin' to stand by the case a while longer if you say the boss isn't cussin' of me."

Early the next day we heard the siren of the Mary Ann. The launch was sailing down the bay. What I said to the rubicund and pudgy Doc, and just what he said to me as he stood off twenty yards or so with eyes of greater eloquence than his quaint tongue had ever known, doesn't matter here and now. Suffice it that I made my short but tangled way to the shore alone, stood under Doc's pink shirt and near the fat new blaze and waited for the Mary Ann. Her pirate captain, seeing me waving a small birch signal-fashion, stopped his engine and drifted as close as he deemed prudent. In a few moments the launch lifeboat had taken me aboard and to a cabin load of sleepy directors. They suddenly perked up with a chorus of questions concerning "the irresponsible little scamp."

Yes, I had found him in the interior of the island. He had fallen in with some Indians, and, well, to be quite frank, he had asked me if the management and directors missed him, and if I would convey to them his apologies for leaving camp without the usual polite exchange of a good-bye and so forth.

This twaddle exasperated them as I had intended. Their language of and concerning little Dickson shall have to be fumigated before public use can be made of it.

My violent and obsequious friend, Captain Furioso, and I were alone in the wheel house where he kept his eyes on the company's mail bag. As I espied the bag a villainous idea seized upon me.

"Have a smoke, Cap'n?" I offered the bandit this bit of eastern hospitality in my most persuasive pianissimo.

"Cap'n," I began, leaning over his smelly, little black and tan figure in a confidential, warm-hearted manner, "Cap'n, I wrote Dr. Bumpus of Juneau a letter at the mine which I think I ought not to send him until I have seen some one in Seattle. Just let me open that bag a minute and I'll withdraw it before I forget it in the rush at Ketchikan."

"Cert," piped the captain, like the good, brave soul that he is, "here's the key." Then looking around fiercely at nothing, he half whispered: "Just turn the key in the wheelhouse door. Them gents from Massychewsitt might butt in afore 'you' done it."

So, having "done it" in a jiffy, I felt assured that the temporary custody of Dr. Bumpus' letter gave me control of the situation created by my all-too-precipitate friends, the directors.

Just before we sailed from Ketchikan I enclosed the Bumpus letter in one of my own and addressed it back to the company's manager at the mine. These letters, therefore, went to the mine on the Mary Ann's return trip and were in the manager's hands on the fourth day following our departure from Ketchikan for Vancouver.

This is what I wrote the manager, a man preposterously jealous of his official prerogative:

"I beg to enclose the letter you addressed to Dr. Bumpus, pursuant to the direction of your board while I was in camp. In a fortnight Dd. Dickson will return and explain the important service he has been rendering your company.

"Inasmuch as my counsel and advice concerning your company has been the object of my examination of its properties and affairs, I suggest that nothing be said to apprise Dr. Dickson of the action of your board, nor of its injustice to him. I should regard the doctor's resignation from your staff, at this time, as a serious calamity.

"Meantime, I am explaining the doctor's absence to the directors while they are on their way to Vancouver."

"Great little runt, that camp doctor at the mine," I soliloquized, as we finally debarked from the steamer and settled into a Pullman bound for Seattle.

"What's that?" came a screeching and derisive chorus. "He's a little beast, and if—"

"Now, see here, gentlemen, I've determined to raise you to the lofty level of that little cut, between here and Seattle, or wreck this train in the attempt."

So I told them of the heroism of this runt of the wilderness, and heard their snivels and saw their tears, their hedging and squirming and justifying and all that men do whose conduct should bring regret and remorse.

A month thereafter I received this assuring report:

"Ketchikan, SS. Alaska.

"Dear Mr. Bobs:

"I'm well againfl btu badly pocked. Got away from the Cape as soon as I dared, and came here. The squaw pulled through, but her kiddies died. I envy them! The buck was almost decent while I was down. Still, I've a mind to lick him aplenty when I get strong again.

"Two of the boys went to the mine, sneaked my things aboard the Mary Ann, and left my written respects for that manager. I shall have him also to beat up when he comes my way. There's a rumor here that he has been discharged.

"I've heard something of what you did for me with them entomological gents from the East. Much obliged. I'm going to hammer the binacle off the one with the blue whiskers when he comes to Alaska again. Keep this quiet, so I'll have him to look forward to.

"Much obliged for the port wine and other good things from New York. I'm going on the staff of the Nellie Mine next month. A big bunch of the boys at the Coplan Mine want to go with me, but I won't do that sort of thing.

"Yours in Iodoform,

"Doc."

Eleven days later I received the following telegram from the jubilant Dickson:

"Met and mangled the manager today. He's in hospital. I'm in jail. All the boys satisfied.

"DOC."

HEZEKIAH'S GREAT PASSOVER

Sunday School Lesson for June 11, 1911

Specially Arranged for This Paper

LESSON TEXT—2 Chronicles 30.

MEMORY VERSES—18-20.

GOLDEN TEXT—"Man Looketh on the Outward Appearance, but the Lord Looketh on the Heart.—1 Sam. 16:7.

TIME—Beecher's Dates for the Accession of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah are B. C. 754, 738 and 723, Hoshea becoming king of Israel in B. C. 724. Hastings gives the dates as B. C. 749, 741, 727 and (Hoshea) 730.

PLACE—The temple in Jerusalem.

PROPHETS—Hosea, Micah and Isaiah.

Hezekiah was the good son of a bad father, Ahaz; and Ahaz was the bad son of a good father, Jotham; and after the good Hezekiah came his bad son, Manasseh. But there must have been reasons back of these seeming contradictions. In Hezekiah's case one may have been his mother, Abijah the daughter (or granddaughter) of Zechariah. Twenty-nine Zechariahs are mentioned in the Bible. This was not the author of the book of prophecy, but may have been the prophet who had so much influence over King Uzziah.

Hezekiah did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. God's approval is the only wise goal for a king, a president or the humblest citizen. It is the fatal defect in most forms of government that this over-rule of God is ignored.

Hezekiah began his reign by doing the thing that plainly needed most to be done first. He found the Temple, the sacred meeting place of God and man, with its doors closed by Ahaz, its lamps out, its altars cold, its floors and hangings covered with dust and dirt. Therefore the young king summoned the priests and Levites to the court on the east of the Temple opposite the closed porch or entrance, and in a frank and noble address declared his conviction that all the national woes had their origin in a neglect of the worship of Jehovah, and his determination to make a new covenant with the Lord. Then he bade them, as their first task, to cleanse the Temple thoroughly.

The Second Step the Worship and Praise.—Thus far the priests and Levites alone had been purified. Now the royal house and the people were to be formally reconciled to Jehovah. How was this done? Hezekiah gathered the chief men of Jerusalem, who brought bullocks, lambs, rams, and he-goats for a sin offering, seven of each. The city rulers laid their hands upon the animals, thus identifying themselves with them. Then the priests killed the animals and sprinkled their blood before the veil in the Holy Place and upon the altar of incense, pouring out the remainder at the base of the altar of burnt offerings in the court before the Temple. The fat of the offerings was burned on the altar of burnt offerings, and the flesh was afterwards eaten by the priests. It was a mark of the new national feeling that arose during Hezekiah's reign that this offering and those that followed were not made for Judah alone, but for the Northern Kingdom as well.

The Third Step, the Wide Invitation.—What was the next step in the great reform? The holding of the national feast of remembrance of God's goodness, the passover. This should have been celebrated in the first month of the year, Nisan, corresponding to our April; but because not enough of the priests had been purified and because of the time required to gather the people, it was decided that the exigency warranted the postponement to the next month, Iyar or May. As the reform had widened from Hezekiah to the priests and Levites, then to the chief men of Jerusalem, then to the whole congregation of citizens, the next step was to extend it to the entire nation, from Beer-sheba, even to Dan.

The Fourth Step is the Great Passover.—What further purification was needed before the passover could be celebrated? Jerusalem was full of heathen altars "in every corner," and these were torn down and the fragments cast into the Kidron.

The Fifth Step is the Generous Giving.—What other illustration of their zeal did the people give when the passover was completed? Their new ardor for Jehovah blazed out in a burning indignation against the foul idols which they had been worshiping. It was as when "Peter the Hermit aroused whole multitudes to the wildest enthusiasm for the rescue of the Holy Sepulcher, or even the dour Scotch Lowlander blazed up like an excitable Celt at the initiative of Jenny Geddes. How much more these fiery Orientals? Jerusalem had been freed from idols; why should the country districts still be polluted?" Thus the people swept like a flood over Judah and Benjamin and the neighboring Ephriam and Manasseh. They broke the heathen "images" or pillars, cut down the "groves" or poles set up as symbols of the licentious Asherah, and overthrew the idolatrous hill sanctuaries and their altars.

Reforms must be thorough, if they are to be permanent.

What was the last step in Hezekiah's reform? The step which every reform must take before it is complete, that of permanent organization.

The secret of Hezekiah's power over men and success in the service of God? It is expressed in the noble words with which the chronicler closes his account of the great reformation: "In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

A TRAIN LOAD OF TOBACCO.

Twenty-four Carloads Purchased for Lewis' Single Binder Cigar Factory.

What is probably the biggest lot of all fancy grade tobacco held by any factory in the United States has just been purchased by Frank P. Lewis, of Peoria, for the manufacture of Lewis' Single Binder Cigars. The lot will make twenty-four carloads, and is selected from what is considered by experts to be the finest crop raised in many years. The purchase of tobacco is sufficient to last the factory more than two years. An extra price was paid for the selection. Smokers of Lewis' Single Binder Cigars will appreciate this tobacco.

—*Peoria Star, January 16, 1909.*

Like the Other Chicks.

Charles T. Rose, equally well known in Masonic work and banking circles of Cleveland, is a great chicken fancier, Rhode Island Reds being his favorite breed. Walking through his incubator house he discovered that Helen, the three-year-old daughter, had followed him.

"Come here, little chickabiddy," he called to her. And when she ran up to him to be tossed up and down, she asked: "Papa, which was my incubator?"

The Tragic Difference.

William was lying on his bed, face downward, sobbing desolately. His mother took him in her arms, the whole eight years of him. In a few minutes she learned all. It was a girl, and she had sent him a note.

It read:

"Dere Willyum:

"I luv yu the best But Henery givs me the most kandy.—Isabel."—Success Magazine.

Unless he is home where he can rage before the family about it, a bald-headed man will pretend he doesn't know there are such things as flies.

It sometimes happens that a woman marries a man because she is sorry for him. But is not that a poor way to show her sympathy?