

PINE CREEK RANCH

HAROLD BINDLOSS

CHAPTER XXVII The Breaking Strain

The hard day was nearly over and a blue haze crept across the plain. The sun was down behind a bluff and all would soon be dark, but the thrasher clanked and rattled and a long black plume of smoke floated above the tossing dust. Wheels crashed in the stubble and Lawrence pulled out his watch. He could hardly see the dial and his cramped shook.

"Can you put through another load?" he shouted. A man on the noisy separator waved his hand, and his voice faintly pierced the din.

"Sure we will! Bring the stuff along. You can't crowd this bunch."

The engine's throb got louder and Lawrence jumped on his wagon. For a minute or two he would not be wanted, and he looked about. The wheat was gone, and the stooked sheaves, glimmering in the blue dusk, dotted the wide field. The outside rows were broken, and beyond them an empty belt of stubble streaked the fading plain.

In western Canada wheat is not stacked. One thrashes in the field and as soon as possible the grain goes to the elevators. The haul to the railroad however, was long, since his teams could not yet carry all, Lawrence used the prairie.

A long spout like a crane jib went up from the separating mill and from its top short, beaten straw poured down on a yellow mound. In the mound was a central cavern where sweating men stowed the wheat bags; and when the hole was full the stream from the elevator would build a yellow pyramid above the grain.

Chaff and dust and cinders blew about the machine, and at one spot a noisy jet of steam pierced the tossing cloud. The thrashers were paid by the bushel and drove their engine savagely. On the plains winter is long and when one loafs about a boarding house one's money melts.

Lawrence himself had labored for 12 hours. His back hurt, his arms were stiff, and his skin was blanched by sweat and soot and dust. For all that, when the thrasher's foreman signalled he began to throw the sheaves in his wagon across to the separator. Dusk was falling and all got indistinct, but when he stopped another load must be in the bin.

After a few minutes he turned his head. In the dust, two men lifted a bag of grain across a short stick. One staggered and let go his end; the bag fell and burst. The man reeled against the wheat bin and sat down in the straw. Lawrence jumped from the wagon and ran to the spot. A four-bushel bag of wheat is a heavy load.

George, resting limply against the bin, gave him an apologetic glance, but his mouth was crooked and his face was lined.

"My leg!" he gasped. "A sciatic wrench; I think that's all. My back has bothered me since morning, but I meant to hold on."

"You ought to have stopped," said Lawrence. "Let me help you to the house. If you can wait until we're through, you can go in the wagon."

"Send Pete. You must see the load put up and I expect I can make it," George replied, and seizing Lawrence's hand, got up awkwardly.

Lawrence called a man, and when George limped off, mechanically resumed his labor. He was disturbed; for some time George had been slack and tired, although he refused to rest. Lawrence, however, dared not

stop. Two or three men and teams were at the railroad, all at the farm were needed, and somebody must superintend.

At length the engine stopped, the dust rolled away, and in the cool dark the tired men crossed the cracking stubble. Lawrence got a bath and put on fresh clothes. To do so was something of an effort, but he must not begin to be negligent.

When he had inquired about George he joined his men in the kitchen. He had engaged a Chinese cook for harvest and supper was a Homeric feast. The men ate like giants and the big room rang with the clash of knives on thick plates and the rattle of heavy cups. Muscular hands seized the dishes the hurrying cook brought, brown faces flushed after hot drink and food. For about 10 minutes all were sternly quiet, and then the plates were thrown back and the hoarse jokes began. In the morning two teamsters and their wagons would be back and the field gang undertook to crowd the thrashers and choke the mill.

Lawrence went to the other room. Millicent was checking some grocery bills and George was on the couch. Now Lawrence thought about it, his brother had used the couch in the evenings for the last two months.

"Are you easier?" he asked. "So long as I keep my leg straight, I don't feel much pain. Lifting the last bag made the trouble. The stick slipped and the weight was thrown on the sore spot in my back and hip. I expect the wrench stirred up the big nerve. However, if I lay off for a day or two, I ought to get about again, and I'm sorry I was forced to quit."

"You ought to have gone easy two or three weeks ago," Lawrence rejoined. "Anyhow, I'd like you to take a holiday. I'd try a week at Winnipeg and then go on to Canora. You might camp by the lake and get some fishing, and perhaps some shooting, from a canoe."

George smiled and Millicent put up her bills. Lawrence knew they had been talking and he lighted a cigaret. Since he took control he had borne some strain and after the binders rolled into the wheat he had used all the effort flesh and blood could make. At length, however, the load he had carried was getting light. The crop would pay all debts but Orthwaite's and then leave a larger sum than he needed when he sowed again in spring.

To some extent, he admitted he ought to be content. All for which he had planned and labored would soon be his, but so far he had concentrated on the struggle. In fact, he dared not look in front. Now, however, he might be forced to do so. The wheat would soon be sold, and his brother and sister had rather obviously been pondering.

"Unless my leg is worse than I think, I hope to see you through harvest," said George, and glanced at Millicent as if for support. "When the last bag of grain is shipped off I may quit for good."

Lawrence gave him a disturbed glance, and George resumed:

"We won't bother about politeness, Larry; let's try to weigh facts. I can drive a straight furrow and handle a team, but an up-to-date farmer needs qualities I do not think are mine. Then at Fairholm you are boss, and although I'm the older brother, you ought to have got the farm. I know you'd willingly carry me along, but I'd hate to load you up, and after all I'd, so to speak, sooner use my own feet. There's another thing. Western

farming's strenuous, and it's evident I cannot stand for much muscular fatigue. In fact, I must look for a softer job."

Lawrence turned to Millicent. "I don't know if the plan is yours, but I imagine you agree." "I am forced to agree. George's weak leg is an awkward handicap. Besides, you are a first class farmer, and he acknowledges he is not."

"Not long since I was a cotton manufacturer," Lawrence remarked dryly. "The important thing is, I was luckier than George, and when all goes as you calculate, to farm is not hard. The bad years broke him; a large crop helped me."

George smiled. "Your object's good and we know your modesty, but you must be logical—"

"Very well. I am the junior partner. You inherited Fairholm; it's properly yours."

"The drawback was, I could not hold the farm," George replied in a sober voice. "Let's face things. I have had enough and I want to quit. Besides, Lamond wants me to join him. Although he's a stranger, his business goes ahead; I can use the machines he sells and the boys know me. Anyhow, he's rather keen about it and implies that he'd take me for partner on favorable terms. In the circumstances, to raise the sum I'll needs might not embarrass you, but nothing will be fixed until the wheat is sold. When I know all particulars, we'll talk about it again."

Lawrence pondered. George had borne the strain of the bad years and it had cost him much. Now the tide had turned, to let him go was shabby. Yet Lawrence saw he was resolved, and Millicent remarked his knitted brows.

"You mustn't worry about George. I feel he takes the proper line," she said. "When he goes, I go with him. We have got an option on Marvin's house."

"Marvin's house fronts the dusty street and has not even a garden lot. The sidewalk's up against the front, and the elevators are but 50 yards off. After the quiet and space at Fairholm, you will not like it, and anyhow the settlement is a dreary spot."

"Ah," said Millicent, "you are like father—you must have space and freedom! In a way, you know, he was something of an aristocrat. He hated the traffic; he hated pushing, greedy crowds. I think he was feudal, but perhaps he dated farther back and his type was the old Greek shepherd's type. Me must rule by strength rather than cunning, he was willing to labor, so long as he was in the frost and sun, and when he looked about he liked to feel all he saw was his."

"On the whole, the portrait's accurate, but it's not my portrait, and I don't see that it has much to do with your going to the settlement."

"Where you would be happy, I might not," Millicent rejoined. "A woman's point of view is different; as a rule, she likes a crowd, and sometimes in winter Fairholm is deadly quiet. Perhaps the settlement is not attractive, but the men it satisfied are vanishing. The new lot are keen and ambitious; they want a wider life, and the railroads and machinery will make it possible. Then the harvest has given the farmers freedom, and when they prosper the prairie towns leap ahead. We are going to plant shade trees and lay out a park. The men are planning nobler buildings; the women talk about musical societies and social guilds. In a few years you'll see an opera house and a stone post-office. Where all is moving I expect to find my occupation."

"It's possible," said Lawrence. "You are the sort they want to give the rest a lead. Well, perhaps I'm selfish. But what about me?"

"You mean to be nice; but when George is gone, the woman who rules at Fairholm ought to be your wife. I think you know the proper girl."

"The drawback is, I know her father," Lawrence remarked moodily.

"Ah," said Millicent, "Ogilvie is old, but Margaret and you are modern. You have done with all that's gone; your business is to look in front and push forward. If Margaret agrees to help, I expect you'll make some progress."

Lawrence knitted his brows. "I don't know if she will agree; so far, I dare not urge her. A dry summer and autumn frost might have forced me to take a hired man's post and at one time I thought I must go broke. The wheat is not yet on the cars, and when the last load's hauled away I'll know I've won. Then I'll ask Margaret."

"If you persuade her, I'll be happy," Millicent replied.

CHAPTER XXVIII Ogilvie Cuts His Loss

The night was dark and a cold wind shook the window shades in Lawrence's room. He was tired, but all his bodily fatigue his active brain disturbed his sleep. In his dreams he heard the engine throb and wagon wheels crush the stubble. Somebody shouted that the gang was waiting and Lawrence whipped his team. The mill must not stop. The wheat was not yet thrashed and the days got short.

He jerked his head from the pillow and knew his skin was wet by sweat. Recently the strain he must bear since day-break did not slacken much when he went to bed, and in his sleep he stubbornly faced some fresh obstacle. Now he was awake he frowned. If he wanted to hold on until the wheat was thrashed, he must banish dreams like that.

The strange thing was, he did hear wheels and rattling harness. In the dark a wagon plunged noisily along the homestead trail, and after a few moments somebody shouted. Lawrence jumped for the window. The wagon was at the porch and two or three indistinct figures were on board.

"Come down, Larry. You're wanted," one called.

The voice was Spiers' voice, and Lawrence pulled on his clothes. When he reached the porch he saw Helen, Geoffrey, and Heath. George, on the floor above, pushed up his window and inquired why they disturbed tired folks.

"Ogilvie's in trouble," Spiers replied. "Looks as if his homestead burned and Helen thought we ought to start—" He saw Lawrence and resumed: "She imagined you would like to know."

"The crossing gang is pretty numerous," George remarked.

"I doubt if all are eager to help. My lot were not."

"It's possible," George agreed. "Well, to get out of bed bothered me, and since I cannot go I must be philosophical. I admit it's not very hard."

He shut the window and Spiers laughed.

"I expect George is justified, and anyway he's sick. Heath stands for my gang and I believed he joined us mainly to include my wife. But we mustn't loiter. Are you going, Larry?"

Lawrence ordered him to wait, and jumping down the steps, shouted for his harvesters.

"I want one or two good hands to fight a fire at Ogilvie's he said. That's all we can carry, but if some more would like to come along, you can harness up a team."

It did not look as if anybody was remarkably willing. The men were tired, and they knew Ogilvie had cut his harvesters' pay. For all that, one or two stepped forward, and Lawrence sent them to the wagon. When the party was on board Spiers started his horses.

"Sometimes economy is extravagant," he remarked. "Where Ogilvie imagined himself prudent he was very rash. I wonder how the old fellow likes to meet the bill."

"After all, he is our neighbor, and you ought not to joke about his misfortune," said Helen. "Not long since we needed help."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

worked with 10 per cent. greater efficiency at night than early in the morning after eight hours of sound sleep.

The deduction reached from these investigations is that fatigue poisons the system and acts much as certain narcotics do, first exciting the brain for a period and then causing drowsiness and sleep. It is true that on first awakening the mind may be alert and able to function satisfactorily for a short time, but it is uneasy and not capable of concentration until it has been stimulated by fatigue, strange as that may seem. That is why vigorous setting-up exercises or other energetic action on arising

helps to prepare the mind for its morning tasks. As the day advances, the mind responds more and more to the stimulation of these fatigue poisons. Dr. Johnson claims that from 2 o'clock on to midnight or later the brain is at its highest point of efficiency for sustained mental effort.

Q. Are warships, other than British, allowed to use the Suez Canal? J. F.

A. By convention of October 29, 1868, "the vessels of all nations whether armed or not are to be allowed to pass through the Suez canal in peace or war."

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Criteria

Prue—Do you think this dress is cut too low?
Sue—How much was it?

All Serene

"And you saw Jean's wedding, dear? Who gave the bride away?"
"Oh, nobody said a word!"

Doctor Found What is Best for Thin, Constipated People

As a family doctor at Monticello, Illinois, the whole human body, not any small part of it, was Dr. Caldwell's practice. More than half his "calls" were on women, children and babies. They are the ones most often sick. But their illnesses were usually of a minor nature—colds, fevers, headaches, biliousness—and all of them required first a thorough evacuation. They were constipated.

In the course of his 47 years' practice (he was graduated from Rush Medical College back in 1875), he found a good deal of success in such cases with a prescription of his own containing simple laxative herbs with pepsin. In 1892 he decided to use this formula in the manufacture of a medicine to be known as Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, and in that year his prescription was first placed on the market.

The preparation immediately had as great a success in the drug stores as it previously had in his private practice. Now, the third generation is using it. Mothers are giving it to their children who were given it by their mothers. Every second of the working day someone somewhere is going into a drug store to buy it. Millions of bottles of Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin are being used a year.

Its great success is based on merit, on repeated buying, on one satisfied user telling another. There are thousands of homes in this country that



J. B. Caldwell M.D. AT AGE 83

are never without a bottle of Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, and we have gotten many hundreds of letters from grateful people telling us that it helped them when everything else failed.

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"Tired business man" didn't feel that he was entitled to any compassion until that phrase appeared.

In a 300-year-old village always praise anybody you mention. Everybody is related to everybody else.

Queens do not necessarily feel old-fashioned because monarchy has nearly gone out of fashion.

Discretion and cowardice are apparently near allied, but they're not kin.

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When Mind Works Best.

From the Boston Transcript.

"When is your mind at its best? Do you choose the early morning hours to prepare for your quiz or to compose your masterpiece? Or do you choose the late afternoon or night? In all probability your answer will be 'early morning after a good night's sleep.' That is 'that we have been brought up to believe but are we right?"

We must admit that all minds do not function alike and that no hard and fast rule will fit all cases. Be that as it may, a rather startling discovery was made not long ago which

may upset the notions of a lifetime and revise our daily programs.

Dr. Johnson of Union Institute, Pittsburg, has recently been engaged in making some remarkable tests as to the effect of sleep on the human brain. This has been done by measuring the soundness of sleep with an instrument which somewhat resembles an earthquake registering seismograph. Twenty-one students of Pittsburg university were the subjects upon whom Dr. Johnson experimented. After having their sleep measured, they were given tests at different times of day to determine the variation of their mental alertness, and it was discovered that their minds