## THE SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE SECTION



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CREAM

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Cantwell spoke harshly, leaning upon the handle bars, \*\*Well1 What's the idea?'' It was

the longest sentence of the day, ''I 've -- hurt myself,'' Mort mumbled,

His voice was thin and strange; he raised himself to a sitting posture, and reached beneath his parka, then lay back weakly. He writhed, his face was twisted. with pain. He continued to he there, doubled into a knot of suffering. A groan was wrenched from between his teeth.

"Hurt? How?" Johnny inquired Ny. It seemed very ridiculous to see dully. that strong man kicking around in the BDOW.

"'I 've ripped something loose — here.'' Mort's palms were pressed in upon his groin, his fingers were clutching something. ''Ruptured — I guess.'' He tried again to rise, but sank back. His cap had fallen off and his forehead glistened with sweat.

Cantwell went forward and lifted him. It was the first time in many days that their hands had touched and the sensation affected him strangely. He struggled to repress a devilish mirth at the thought that Grant had played out - it amounted to that and nothing less; the trail had delivered him into his enemy's hands; his hour had struck. Johnny determined to square the debt now, once for all, and wipe his own mind clean of that poison which corroded it. His muscles were strong, his brain clear, he had never felt his strength so irresistible as at this moment, while Mort, for all his boasted su-periority, was nothing but a nerveless thing hanging limp against his breast.

He deposited his foe upon the sled and stared at the face he had not met for many He saw how white it was, how wet days. and cold, how weak and dazed; then, as he looked he cursed inwardly, for the triumph of his moment was spoiled.

The axe was there, its polished bit showed like a piece of ice, its helve pro-truded handily, but there was no need of it now; his fingers were all the weapons Johnny needed; they were more than suf-ficient, in fact, for Mort was like a child.

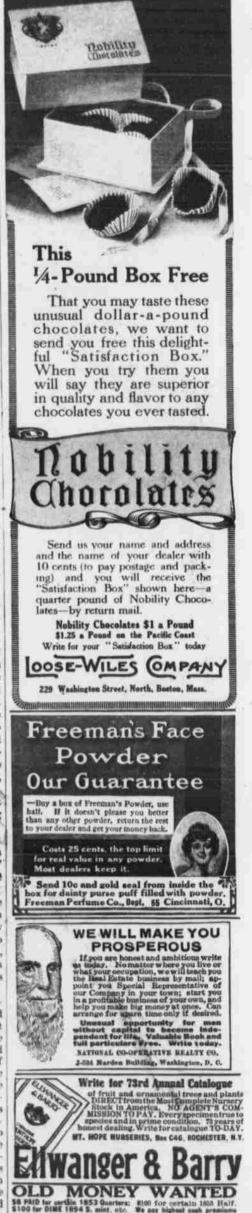
Cantwell was a strong man, and al-though the North had coarsened him, yet underneath the surface was a chivalrous regard for all things weak, and this the trail madness had not affected. He had longed for this instant, but now that it had come he felt no enjoyment, since he could not harm a sick man and waged no war on cripples. Perhaps, when Mort had rested, they could settle their quarrel this was as good a place as any. The storm hid them, they would leave no traces,

there could be no interruption. But Mort did not rest. He could not walk; movement brought excruciating pain.

Finally Cantwell heard himself saying: "Better wrap up and lie still for a while. I 'll get the dogs under way." His words amazed him dully. They were not at all what he had intended to say.

The injured man demurred, but the other insisted gruffly, then brought him his mittens and cap, slapping the snow out of them before rousing the team to motion. The load was very heavy now, the dogs had no footprints to guide them and it required all of Contrall's efforts and it required all of Cantwell's efforts to prevent capsizing.

The journey soon became a terrible or deal, a slow, halting progress, that led nowhere and was accomplished at the cost of tremendous exertion. Time after time Johnny broke trail, then returned and urged the huskies forward to the end of his tracks. When he lost the path he sought it out, laboriously hoisted the sledge back into place and coaxed his four-footed helpers to renewed effort. He was drenched with perspiration, his inner gar-ments steaming, his outer ones frozen into a coat of armor; when he paused, he chilled rapidly. His vision was untrustworthy also, and he felt snow-blindness coming on. Grant begged him more than coning on. Grant begged him more than once to unroll the bedding and prepare to sleep out the storm; he even urged Johnny to leave him and make a dash for his own safety, but at this the younger



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