REX BEACH ADVENTURE STORIES

The Test

By REX BEACH

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"LERRE "FEROCE" showed disapproval in his every attitude as plainly as disgust peered from the seams in his dark cace. It lurked in his scowl and in the curl of his long rawhide that bit among the sled dogs. So at least thought Willard as he clung to the winging sledge.

They were skirting the coast, keep ing to the giare ice, wind swept and clean, that lay outside the jumbled shore pack. The team ran silently in the free gait of the gray wolf, romping in harness from pure joy of motion and the intoxication of perfect life, making the sled runners whine like the song of a cutiass.

This route is dangerous, of course, from hidden cracks in the floes, and who rides with Pierre "Feroce" takes chances. It was this that had won him the name of "Wild" Pierre, the most reckless, tireless man of the trails, a scoffer at peril, bolting through danger with rush and frenzy, evercoming sheerly by vigor those obstacles which destroy strong men in the north.

The power that pulsed within him gleamed from his eyes, rang in his song, showed in the aggressive thrust of his sensual face.

This particular morning, however, Pierre's distemper had crystallized into a great contempt for his companion. Of all trials the most detestable in to hit the trail with half a man, a pale, ansemic weaking like this stran-

Though modest in the extent of his Bearning, Pierre gloated in a freedom of speech the which no man dared deny him. He turned to eye his companion cynically for a second time and contempt was patent in his gaze Willard appeared slender and pallid in his furs, though his clear cut fea tures spoke a certain strength and much refinement.

"Bah! I t'ink you dam poor feller!" he said finally. "'Ow you going stan' thees trip, ch? She's need beeg mans, not leetle runt like you."

Amusement at this frankness gilmmered in Willard's eyes

"You're like all ignorant people. You think imporder to stand hardship a man should be able to toss a sack of four in his teeth or juggle a cask of anit borse "

"Sure t'ing," grinned Pierre, "That's gight. Look at me. Mebbe you hear "bout Pierre 'Feroce' some time, eh?"

"Oh, yes; everybody knows you. knows you're a big buily. I've seen you drink a quart of this wood alchohot they call whisky up here and then jump the bar from a stand, but you're all animal-you haven't refinement and the culture that makes real strength It's the mind that makes us stand punishment

"Ha, ba, ba?" laughed the Canadian "W'at a fonny talk! She'll take the heducate man for stan' the col', eh? He roared again till the aled dogs turned fearful glances back ward and bushy talls drooped under the weight of their fright. Great came oftenest with great rage from Pierre, and they had too frequently felt them both to forget,

"Yes: you haven't the mentality Some time you'll use up your physical resources and go to pieces like a

Pierre was greatly amused. His yellow teeth shope, and he gave vent to mirth as, following the thought, he pictured a naked mind wandering over the hills with the quicksilver at 60 degrees.

"Did you ever see a six day race? Of course not. You barbarians haven't level of our dissolute where we joy in Roman spec-But if you had you'd see it's will that wins: it's the man that eats by inches. The educated soldier stands the campaign best. You run too much to muscle. You're not balanced."

"I t'ink mebbe you'll 'ave chance for show 'im, thees stout will of yours. She's going be long 'mush' troo the mountains, plentee snow, plentee cold." Although Pierre's ridicule was galiing. Willard felt the charm of the morning too strongly to admit of an-

ger or to argue his pet theory. The sun, brilliant and cold, lent a paradoxical cheerfulness to the descation, and, though never a sign of Me broke the stillness around them, the beauty of the scintiliant, gleaming mountains, distinct as cameos, that guarded the hay, appealed to him with he strange attraction of the arcticsat attraction that calls and calls in entir till men forsake God's coup-

ed the biting air cleaned of lifeless barrens and crackling frost till be ached authineation of a perfect

on the Circle. a him undulated the grand dogs the coast had known were, tall and gray, with

Pleare could lay hand upon, flerce and fearless as their master . He drove with the killing cruelty of a stampeder, and they loved him

"You say you have grub cached at the old Indian but on the Good Hope?" questioned Williard "Sure Five poun bacon, leetle

flour and rice I cache one gon best, too, ba: Good thing for make fire "You bet. An old rubber boot comes

handy when it's too cold to make shavings "

Leaving the coast, they ascended a deep and tortuous river where the surve lay thick and soft. One man on snowshoes broke trail for the dogs til: they reached the footbills. It was hard work, but infintely preferable to that which followed, for now they came into a dangerous stretch of over flows. The stream, frozen to its bed clogged the passage of the spring water beneath, forcing it up through cracks till it spread over the solid ice. forming pools and sheets covered with treacherous ice skins. Wet feet are fatal to man and beast, and they made laborious detours, wallowing trails through tangled willows waist deep in the snow smother or clinging precariously to the overhanging bluffs. As they reached the river's source the sky blackened suddenly and great clouds of snow rushed over the bleak hills, boiling down into the valley with a furious draft. They flung up their flimsy tent only to have it flattened by the force of the gale, that cut like well boned steel. Frozen spots leaped out white on their faces, while their hands stiffened ere they could fasten the guy

Finally, having lashed the tent botgrace of heavy lifting they strained | they sank in track, licking their lacertheir flapping shelter up sufficiently to ated paws, rising only at the cost

"By gar! She's blow hup ver queeck." yelled Pierre as he set the starved, they reached the hut. Digten pound sheet iron stove. Its pipe | ging away the drifts, they crawled inswaying drunkenly with the heaving | side to find it half full of snow-snow

"Good t'ing she hit us in the brush." He spoke as calmly as though danger was distant, and a moment later the little box was roaring with its oil soak ed kindlings,

tops?" cried Willard.

"Sure! She's good stove. She'll burn hicicles eef you get 'im start one times. See 'im get red?"

They rubbed the stiff spots from their cheeks; then, seizing the ax, Willard crawled forth into the storm and dug at the base of the gnarled bushes Occasionally a shrub assumed the proportions of a man's wrist, but rarely. Gathering an armful, he bore them in side, and, twisting the tips into withes, he fed the fire. The frozen twigs sizgled and snapped, threatening to full utterly, but with much blowing he sustained a biaze sufficient to melt a put of snow Boiling was out of the question, but the rea leaves became soaked and the bacon cauterized.

Plerre freed and fed the dogs. Each guiped its dried salmon and, curling in the lee of the tent, was quickly drifted over. Next he cut blocks from the solid bottom snow and built a barricade to windward. Then he accumulated a mow of willow tops without the tent fly. All the time the wind blew down the valley like the breath of a giant bellows.

"Supper!" shouted Willard, and as Pierre crawled into the candlelight be found him squatted, fur bundled, over the stove, which settled steadily into the snow, melting its way downward toward a firmer foundation.

The heat was insufficient to thaw can't let them run hungry, even if we the frozen awest in his clothes; his



"Somebody going ketch 'ell."

eyes were bleary and wet from smoke. and his nose needed continuous blow ing, but he spoke pleasantly, a fact which Pierre noted with approval. "We'll need a habeas corpus for this

stove if you don't get something to hold her up, and I might state, if it's worthy of mention, that your nose is

Pierre brought an armful of stones from the creek edge, distributing them beneath the stove on a bed of twisted willows; then, swallowing their scanty, half cooked food, they crawled, shivering, into the deerskin sleeping bags that animal heat might dry their

clammy garments Four days the wind roared and th

ice filings poured over their shelter

while they huddled beneath. When one travels on rations delay is dangerous. Each morning, drugging themselves out into the maeistrom, they took sticks and poked into the drifts for dogs. Each animal as found was exhumed, given a fish and became straightway reducted in the whirting white that seethed down from the mountaius,

On the fifth, without warning, the storm died and the air stilled to a perfect shence

"These dog bad froze," sald Pierre. swearing carnestly as be harnessed "I don' like eet much. They going play hout, I'm 'fraid" He shelt and chewed from between their toes the ice pellets that had accumulated. malamoot is pard pressed to let his feet mass, and this added to the men's

As they mounted the great divide mountains rolled away on every hand. barren, desonate, marble white, always the whiteness, always the distening silence that oppressed like a weight Myriads of creek valleys radiated below in a bewildering maze of twist-

"Those are the Ass' Ears, I suppose," said Willard, gazing at two great fangs that bit deep into the sky line "Is it true that no man has ever reached them?"

"Yes; the Hinjun say that's w'ere hall the storm come from, biccause, w'en the win' blow troo the ass ear, look out: Somebody going ketch 'ell'

Dogs' feet wear quickly after freezing, for crusted snow cuts like a knife. Spots of blood showed in their tracks. growing more plentiful till every print was a crimson stain. They timped pitifully on their raw pads, and octom to the protruding willow tops, by casionally one whined At every stop of much whipping.

> On the second night, faint and which had sifted through the crevices Pierre groped among the shadows and swore excitedly.

"What's up?" said Willard. Vocal effort of the simplest is exhausting when spent with hunger, and "Will this stove burn green willow these were the first words he had spoken for bours. "By gar, she's gone! Somebody

> stole my grub!" Willard felt a terrible sinking, and his stomach cried for food.

> "How far is it to the Crooked River Roadhouse ?"

> "One long day drive-forty mile." "We must make it tomorrow or go hungry, eh? Well, this isn't the first dogiish I ever ate." Both men gnawed a moldy dried salmon from their precious store.

As Willard removed his footgear be

"Wat's the mattaire?"

"I frome my foot two days agosnowshoe strap too tight." He exhibited a beel, from which, in removing his inner sock, the flesh and skin had come away.

"That's all right," grinned Pierre. "You got the beeg will lef" yet. It take the beducate man for stan' the col', you know."

Willard gritted his teeth.

They awoke to the whine of a gray windstorm that swept the cutting snow in swirling clouds and made travel a madness. The next day was worse,

Two days of hunger weigh heavy when the cold weakens, and they grew gaunt and fell away in their features. "I'm giad we've got another feed for the dogs," remarked Willard "We

"I t'ink she's be ball right tomor'. ventured Pierre. "Thees ain't snowins' win': bimeby all blow hout. Sacre! I'll can eat 'nuff fore 'ole barmy."

For days both men had been cold. and the sensation of complete warmth had come to seem strange and unreal. while their faces cracked where the spots had been,

Willard feit himself on the verge of collapse. He recalled his words about strong men, gazing the while at Pierre. The Canadian evinced suffering only in the haggard droop of eye and mouth; otherwise he looked strong and dogged.

Willard felt his own features had shrunk to a mask of loose jawed suffering, and be set his mental sinewa, muttering to himself.

He was diszy and faint as he stretch ed himself in the still morning air upon waking and hobbled painfully. but as his companion emerged from the darkened shelter into the crystalline brightness he forgot his own misery at sight of him. The big man reeted as though struck when the dazzle from the hills reached him, and he moaned, shielding his sight. Snow blindness had found him in a night.

Slowly they plodded out of the valley, for hunger gnawed acutely, and they left a trail of blood tracks from the dogs. It took the combined efforts of both men to lash them to foot after each pause. Thus progress was slow and fraught with agony.

As they rose near the pass miles of arctic wastes bared themselves. about towered baid domes, while everywhere stretched the monotonous white, the endless snow unbroken by tree or shrub, pailld and menacing, maddening to the eye.

"Thank God, the worst's over sighed Willard, flinging himself on to the sied. "We'll make it to the summit next time; then she's downhill all the way to the roadhouse."

Pierre said nothing.

Away to the northward glimmered the Ass' Ears, and as the speaker ayed them carelessly he noted gauzy shreds and streamers veiling their tops. The phenomena interested him for he knew that here must be windwind, the terror of the bleak tundr the hopeless, merciless master of the harrens! However, the distant range

beneath the twin peaks showed clear cut and distinct against the sky, and he did not mention the occurrence to the guide although be recalled the words of the indians, "Beware of the wind through the Ass' Ears."

Again they labored up the steep slope, wallowing in the sliding snow, straining silently at the load; again they threw themselves exhausted upon it. Now, as he eved the panorama below, it seemed to have suffered a subtle change, indefinable and odd. Although but a few minutes had he had followed a sted trait which was elapsed, the coast mountains no longer | blown clear and distinct by the wind loomed clear against the horizon, and that had now almost died away. his visual range appeared foreshorthad thickened as though congest pess to the landscape

of the hills "

postrils quivering

Dien! She's goin blow!"

A volatile pennant floated out from a nearby peak, hanging about its crest like faint smoke. Then along the brow of the pass writhed a wisp of drifting. twisting flakelets, idling bither and you, ecstatic and aimless, settling in a bollow. They sensed a thrill and rustle to the air, though never a breath had touched them; then, as they mounted higher, a draft fanued them. icy as interstellar space. The view from the summit was grotesquely distorted, and, glancing upward, they found the guardian peaks had gone a-smoke with clouds of show that whirled confusedly, while an increasing breath sucked over the summit. stronger each second. Dry snow began to rustle slothfully about their feet. So swiftly were the changes wrought that before the mind had grasped their import the storm was on them, roar ing down from every side, swooping out of the boiling sky, a raging blast from the voids of sunless space.

Pierre's shouts as he slashed at the sled tashings were snatched from his lips in scattered scraps. He dragged forth the whipping tent and threw himself upon it with the sleeping bags Having cut toose the dogs, Willard crawled within his sack, and they drew the flapping canvas over them The air was twilight and beavy with efflor escent granules that burtled past in a

They removed their outer garments that the fur might fold closer against them and lay exposed to the full hate of the gate. They boped to be drifted over, but no snow rould lodge in this burricane, and it sifted past, dry and sharp, eddying out a bare place wherein they lay. Thus the wind drove the chill to their bones bitterly.

An unnourished buman body responds but weakly, so, vitlated by their fast and labors, their suffering smote them with tenfold cruelty.

and, as the next day waned with its looked at the bare member dully, and violence undiminished, the frost crept in upon them till they rolled and tossed eased till the bitterness was nearly out shivering. Twice they essayed to of the air. He labored with the fitful crawl out, but were driven back to spurts of a machine run down. cower for endless, hopeless hours.

It is in such black, aimless times that thought becomes distorted. Willard feit his mind wandering through bleak dreams and tortured fancies, atways to find himself barping on his early argument with Pierre, "It's the mind that counts" Later be roused to the fact that his knees, where they pressed against the bag, were frozen; also his feet were numb and senseless. In his acquired consciousness he knew that along the course of his previous mental vagary lay madness, and the need of action bore upon him impera

He shouted to his mate, but "Wild" Pierre seemed strangely apathetic. "We've got to run for it at daylight. We're freezing. Here; bold on! What are you doing? Wait for daylight!" Pierre had scrambled stiffly out of his cover, and his gabblings reached Willard. He raised a clinched fist into the darkness of the streaming night. cursing borribly with words that ap-

palled the other. "Man, man! Don't curse your God! This is bad enough as it is. Cover up. Quick!" Although apparently unmindful or

his presence, the other crawled back muttering. As the dim morning grayed the mother they rose and fought their way downward toward the valley Long since they had lost their griping hunger and now held only an apathetic indifference to food, with a

born sense of their extreme necessity They fell many times, but gradually drew themselves more under control. the exercise suscitating them as they staggered downward, blinded and buffeted, their only hope the roadhouse.

cringing dread of the cold and a stub-

Willard marveled dully at the change in Pierre. His face had shrivveled to blackened freezes stretched apon a bony substructure and lighted by feverish, glittering, black, black eyes. It seemed to him that his own lagging body had long since failed and that his aching, naked soul wandered stiffly through the endless day As night approached Pierre stopped frequently, propping himself with legs far apart; sometimes be laughed. In of a small shrub which grows in the wanderings increased with the darkfar. At last the big man fell.

help he spoke sleeplly, but with the sanity of a man under great stress.

"Dat no good. I'm going freeze right 'ere-freeze stiff as 'ell. Au re-

"Get up!" Willard kk-ked him weakly, then sat upon the prostrate man as his own faculties went wandering

Eventually be roused and, digging into the snow, buried the other, tirst covering his face with the ample parka hood. Then he struck down the valley in one sucid spett be found

Occasionally his mind grew clean ened, as though the utter distances had and his pains beat in upon him till be lengthened, bringing closer the edge of grew furious at the life in him which things. The twin peaks seemed end- refused to end, which forced him ever lessi, distant and hazy while the air through this gantlet of misery. More often he was conscious only of a vague with possibilities lending a remote- and terrible extremity outside of hims self that goaded thin forever torward "If it blows up on us here, we're Anon he strained to recollect his desse gone." he thought, "for it's miles to thation. His features had se' in an letin. shelter, and we're right in the saddle implacable grimace of physical torture like a runner in the fury of a unish Pierre, half blinded as he was, arose till the frost hardened them so uneasily and cast the air like a wild times he fell heavily, face downward. beast, his great head thrown back, his and at length upon the trail, lying 60 till that omnipresent coercion that had "I smell the win'." he cried "Mon frozen in his brain drove him forwards fowls and the remedies which have



"I'm going freeze right 'ere."

He beard his own voice maundering through lifeless lips like that of stranger, "The man that can eat his soul will win, Plerre,"

Sometimes he cried like a child and slaver ran from his open mouth, freezing at his breast. One of his hands was going dead. He stripped the left mitten off and drew it laboriously over the right. One he would save at least, All night the north wind shouted, even though he lost the other. He he could not tell that the cold had

> Ten men and many dogs lay together in the Crooked River Roadhouse through the storm. At late bedtime of the last night came a scratching on the door

> "Somebody's left a dog outside," said a teamster and rose to let him in. He opened the door only to retreat affrightedly

"My God!" he said, "My God!" And the minera crowded forward.

A figure tottered over the portal, swaying drunkenly. They shuddered at the sight of its face as it crossed toward the fire. It did not walk; it shuffled haltingly, with flexed knees and hanging shoulders, the strides Show Up Better Than Those Piled in measuring inches only, a gristy burlesque upon senility.

Pausing in the circle, it mumbled thickly, with great effort, as though gleaning words from infinite distance: "Wild Pierre - frozen - buried-insnow-burry!" Then he straightened and spoke strongly, his voice flooding

the room: "It's the mind, Pierre-ha, ha, ha!the mind?

He cackled hideously and plunged forward into a miner's arms.

It was many days before his delirium broke. Gradually he felt the pressure of many bandages upon him and the hunger of convalencence. As he lay in his bunk the past came to him hazy and horrible, then the hum of voices. one loud, insistent and familiar.

He turned weakly to behold Plerry propped in a chair by the stove, frost scarred and pale, but aggressive even in recuperation. He gesticulated fiercely with a bandaged hand, bot in controversy with some big limbed, bearded strangers.

"Bah! You fellers no good—too beeg in the ches', too leetle in the forehead She'll tak' the beducate mans for stan the 'ardsheep, lak' me an' Meestaire Weelard."

Waterproof Paper Coats. There is probably no more impervious, serviceable waterproof than the raincoats and cloaks of Mitsumata pa per made from the leaves and stems

variably this horrible sound shocked mountains of Japan. Until one of the Willard into a keener sense of the experts of the department of agricul surroundings, and it grew to irritate ture discovered it a few years ago its him, for the Frenchman's mental existence was unknown to the outside world. Even now but little is known ness. What made him rouse one with of it except that the plant has thrived his awful laughter? These spells of in some mountainous portions of the walking insensibility were pleasanter United States and, further, that the method of manufacturing the paper is

ADVICE TO THE POULTRYMEN

Agricultural Department Issues Comprehensive Statement on Difficulties and Remedies.

The two farmers' bulletins relating to the poultry industry recently issued by the United States department of agriculture entitled "Hints to Poultry Raisers" and "Important Diseases," present to poultrymen a very concise, and, at the same time, comprehensive statement as to the difficulties encountered and the best

methods of overcoming them. The selection of a breed suited to the requirements of the owner, the artificial and natural incubation and brooding, the construction of houses and fixtures, methods of feeding, egg production and marketing are all covered in short, terse, convincing statements in the first mentioned bul-

The second supplements this information and the other advice as to the prevention of lice and mites and the treatment of common diseases, with a full and detailed description of the important diseases affecting been found effective.

Contagious diseases and the larger parasites are the most important obstacles which the poultryman has to overcome to keep his birds in a healthy condition. Preventive measures are the best, and also the cheapest, because, no matter how large the first cost, the great loss inflicted by an epidemic in which a number of birds may die, is saved, and also the indirect but even greater loss, which the weakened condition and loss of product cause, is eliminated.

There are, of course, cases in which medicines may be advantageously given or applied to sick fowls, but generally speaking, it is better to kill all sick birds, and thus avoid the spread of disease to many other birds in the flock. Then, a sick bird is an indication that it is more susceptible to disease than the other birds of the flock, which, to be strong and healthy, must be relieved of the menace of delicate and susceptible members.

Even with flocks practically free from disease germs and parasites, it requires the utmost watchfulness and care to maintain them in that condition. There are a number of reasons given for this, and mature and experience-bought advice is given as to the preparation and maintenance of poultry houses and yards free from the germs and parasites which so often turn a prosperous business into another of the many failures at "Poultry raising for a profit."

COVER FOR POULTRY TROUGH

Old Peach Basket May Be Arranged by Cutting Out Hoops-Fowls Cannot Get Into Water.

Take a peach basket. Cut out the hoops except at top and bottom, sharpen the ends and place over the vessel containing water for the fowls. The birds cannot get into the water



Cover for Poultry Trough.

and it may be kept clean. Always use a vessel that can be taken out and cleaned every time before refil-

FARMER SHOULD GRADE EGGS

Promiscuously and Also Command Better Prices.

Even buyers at the little country store will appreciate your efforts if you will sort your eggs according to size and color. Graded eggs show up a great deal better than those that are piled in promiscuously, and should-and will-command a better price if the dealer's attention is called to the fact, and he is assured that your eggs will be furnished that way all the time.

There are few, even of country stores, who would not be able to command a higher price for uniform, clean, fresh eggs, attractively packed, and one who produces that kind the year round can secure an advance in the market price. Large shippers will jump at the chance to secure eggs of this class, and are always ready to pay a higher price.

One firm made the statement recently that strictly first-class eggs were worth 8 cents a dozen more to their trade than eggs that they could not guarantee. It is the cheapest possible way to increase the poultry income. Try it.

Cleanfiness in Nest.

Clean nests are very essential in producing clean eggs. Change the nest material occasionally, and as a precaution against insects burn the discarded material that is taken from the nests. Too much care cannot be given to cleanliness in the poultry

Material for Egg Shella

Hens demand some mineral mat ter to form the shell of their errs. Do not forget the oyster shell and the hard, sharp grit. These will furnish material for the formation of the egg's shell and at the same time will keep the fowls in a healthy condition.