A SON OF COURAGE

BY ARCHIE P. McKISHNIE

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CHAPTER I.—(Cont'd.)

"Look!" he whispered. "Look! There's a light in the ha'nted house."

His companions crept forward and peered through the trees. Sure enough from the one unglazed window of the old building came the twinkle of a light, which bobbed about in weird, uncertain fashion.

"Old Scroggie's ghost huntin' fer the lost money," whispered Walter, "Oh, gosh! let's leg it!"

"Leg nuthin'!" Billy removed his hand from his trousers-pocket and waved something before two pairs of fear-widened eyes.

" 'No ghost can harm where lies this charm,' " he recited solemnly. "Now if you fellers feel like beatin' it, why beat it; but so long as I'm grabbin' onto this left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit I don't run away from no ghost—not even old man Scroggie's."

"That's all right fer you, Bill," returned Walter, "but what's goin' t' happen t' Maurice an' me, supposin' that ghost takes a notion to gallop this way? That's what I want'a know!"

Billy turned upon him. "Say, Fatty, haven't I told you that this here charm protects everybody with me?" he asked cuttingly.

"There's never been a ghost that ever roamed nights been able to get near it. You kin ask Tom Dodge er any of the other Injuns if there has."

"Oh, it might lay an Injun ghost," said the unreasonable Fatty, "but how about a white man's? How about old man Scroggie's, fer instance? You know yourself, Bill, old man Scroggie was a tartar. Nobody ever fooled him while he was alive an' nobody need try now he's dead. If he wants to come back here an' snoop round lookin' fer the money he buried an' forgot where, it's his own funeral. I'm fer not mixin' up in this thing any—"

"Keep still!" cautioned Billy, "an' look yonder! See it?"

He pointed through the trees to an open glade in the grove. The full moon, riding high in the sky, threw her light fair upon the fern-sown sod; across the glade a white object was moving—drifting straight toward the watchers. Billy, tightly gripping his rabbit's foot charm in one sweaty hand and a rough-barked sapling in the other, felt Walter's hands clutching his shoulders.

"Oh Jerusalem!" groaned the terrified Fatty, "It's the ghost! Look, it's shellin' blue grave-mist! Fer the love of Mike let's get out'a this!"

"Wait," gulped Billy, but it was plain to be seen he was wavering. His feet were getting uneasy, his toes fairly biting holes through his socks in their eagerness to tear up the sward. But as leader it would never do for him to show the white feather.

The approaching terror had drifted into the shadow again. Suddenly, so near that it fairly seemed to scorch the frowsy top of the sapling to which he was hanging, a weird blue light twisted upward almost in Billy's eyes. At the same moment a tiny hoot-owl, sleeping off its early evening's feed in the cedar close beside the boys, woke up and gave a ghostly cry. It was too much for overstrained nerves to stand. Billy felt Fatty's form quiver and leap even before his agonized howl fell on his ears—a cry which he and Maurice may have echoed, for all he knew.

They were fully a mile away from the place of terror before sheer exhaustion forced them to abate their wild speed and tumble in a heap beneath a big elm tree, along the trail of the forest.

For a time they lay gasping and quivering. Maurice Keeler was the first to speak. "Say, Bill," he shivered, "is it light enough fer you to see if the hair is scorched off one side of my head? That—that ghost's breath shot blue flames square in my face."

"It grabbed me in its bony fingers," whispered Fatty. "Gosh, it tore the sleeve fair out'a my shirt. Look!" And to prove the truth of his statement he lifted a fat arm to which adhered a tattered sleeve.

Billy sat up and surveyed his companions with disgust.

"A nice pair of scare-babies you two are," he said, scathingly. "A great pair you are to help me find old Scroggie's will an' money. Why, say, if you'd only kept your nerve a little, that ghost would'a led us right to the spot, most likely; but 'stead o' that you take to your heels at first sight of it. Say! I thought you both had more sand."

Maurice squirmed uncomfortably. "Now look here, Bill," he protested, "Fatty an' me wasn't any scarter than you was, yourself. Who made the first jump, I want'a know; who?"

"Well, who did?" snapped Billy, glowering at his two bosom friends.

"You did," Maurice affirmed. "An' you grabbed Fatty by the arm an' pulled his shirt sleeve out. I saw you. And you can't say you didn't run neither, else how did you get here same time as Fatty an' me?"

"Well, I didn't run, but I own I follered you," compromised Billy. "There wasn't anythin' else I could do, was there. How did I know what you two scared rabbits ud do? You might'a run plumb into Lake Erie an' got drownded, you was so scared. Somebody's had to keep his head," he said airily.

"Well I kept mine by havin' a good pair of legs," groaned Fatty. "I'm not denyin' that. And by gravy, if they had been good enough fer a thousand miles I've let 'em go the limit. Scared! Oh yowlin' wildcats! I'll see ghosts an' smell brimstone the rest o' my life."

"Boys," cried Billy in awed tones. "It's gone!"

"What's gone?" asked his companions in a breath.

Billy was feeling frantically in his pockets. "My rabbit foot charm," he groaned. "I fell over a log an' it must'a slipped out'a my pocket."

"You had it in your hand when th' ghost poked its blue tongue in our faces," affirmed Maurice. "I saw it."

"You throwed somethin' at the ghost afore you howled an' run," Fatty stated. "Maybe it was the rabbit foot?"

" 'No ghost can harm where lies this charm,'" chuckled Maurice.

Billy turned on him. "If you want'a make fun of a charm, why all right, go ahead," he said coldly. "Only I know I wouldn't do it, not if I wanted it to save me from a ghost, anyway."

Maurice looked frightened. "I wasn't pokin' fun at the charm, Bill, cross my heart, I wasn't," he said earnestly.

"All right then, see that you don't. Now, see here, I'll tell you somethin'. I did throw my rabbit's foot charm but that was to keep that ghost from follerin'. Maybe you two didn't hear it snort when it got to that charm an' tried to pass it, so's to catch up to us; but I heard it. Oh say, but wouldn't it be mad though!"

"And' that's why you throwed it," exclaimed the admiring Maurice. "Gosh, nobody else would'a thought of that."

"Nobody," echoed Fatty, "nobody, Bill."

"Well, somebody has to think in a case o' that kind," admitted Billy, "an' think quick. It was up to me to save you, an' I did the only thing I could think of right then."

Just here the whistle of bob-white sounded from a little distance along the trail.

"That's Elgin Scraff and Tom Holt comin' to look fer us," cried Maurice.

"Answer 'em," said Billy.

Maurice puckered up his lips and gave an answering call. It was returned almost immediately. A moment later two more boys came into the moonlight.

"We wondered what kept you fellers, so came lookin' fer you," spoke Tom Holt as they came up. "Thought you'd be comin' by the tamarack swamp trail, an' we stuck around there fer quite a while, waitin'. Then Elgin said maybe you had come the ha'nted house way, so we struck through the bush an' tried to pick up your trail. Once we thought we saw the ghost, but it turned out to be old Ringold's white yearlin' steer. It had rubbed up ag'inst some will-o-the-wisp fungus an' it fair showered sparks of blue fire. If we hadn't heered it bawlin' we'd have run sure."

Somewhere behind him Billy heard a giggle, which was immediately suppressed as he turned and looked over his shoulder.

"Yep," he replied, "we saw that steer, too. We've been waitin' here, hopin' we'd hear your whistle. I wonder what time it's gettin' to be?"

Tom Holt, the proud possessor of a watch, consulted it. "Ten twelve an' a half," he answered, holding the dial to the moonlight. "Sandtown 'll be sound asleep. Come on, let's go down to the lake an' make a haul."

"I s'pose we might be goin'," said Billy. "All right, fellers, come along."

Arriving at the lake the boys learned after careful reconnoitering that everything was clear for immediate action. Not a light glimmered from the homes of the fishermen, to show that they were awake and vigilant.

The white-fish run was on and when the boys, launching the big flat-bottomed fish boat, carefully cast and drew in the long seine it held more great gleaming fish than they knew how to dispose of.

"Only one thing to do," reasoned Billy, "take what we want an' let the rest go."

And this they did. When they left the beach the moon was low above the Point pines, the raw-seine was back in its place on the big reel and there was nothing to show the lake fishermen that the Scotia Fish Supply Company had been operating on their grounds.

CHAPTER II.

A Shower of Fish.

Between the fishermen of Sandtown and the farmers of the community existed no very strong bond of sympathy or friendship. The former were a dissolute, shiftless lot, quite content, with draw-seine and pound-net, to eke out a miserable existence in the easiest manner possible. They were tolerated just as the poor and shiftless of any community are tolerated; their children were allowed to attend the school the same as the children of the taxpayers.

Each spring the farmers attended the fishermen's annual bee of pile-driving, which meant the placing of the stakes for the pound nets—a dangerous and thankless task. Wet, weary and hungry, they would return to their homes at night with considerable more faith in the reward that comes of helping one's fellow-men than in the promise of the fishermen to keep them supplied, gratis, with all the fresh fish they needed during the season.

As far back as the farmers could remember the fishermen had made that promise and in no case had it been fulfilled. So they came, in time, to treat it as a joke. Nevertheless, they were always on hand to help with the pile-driving. They were an old-fashioned, simple-hearted people, content with following the teachings of their good Book—"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

And find it they did, ultimately, in a mysterious and unexpected way. One late June morning each of the farmers who had for season after season toiled with those fishermen without faintest hope of earthly reward awoke to find a mess of fresh lake fish hanging just outside their respective doors. It was a great and wonderful revelation. The circuit minister, Rev. Mr. Reddick, whose love for and trust in his fellow-men was all-embracing, wept when the intelligence was imparted to him, and took for his text on the Sunday following a passage of scripture dealing with the true reward of unselfish serving. It was a stirring sermon, the rebuke of a father to his children who had erred.

"O ye of little faith," he concluded, "let this be a lesson to you; and those of you, my brothers, whose judgment of humanity has been warped through God-given prosperity, get down on your knees and pray humbly for light, remembering that Christ believed in His fishermen."

At the conclusion of the service, Deacon Ringold called a few of the leading church members together and to them spoke his mind thus:

"Brothers, you heard what our minister said, an' he's right. I fer one, am ashamed of the thoughts I've thought to'rds them fishermen of Sandtown. I've acted mean to 'em in lots of ways, I'll admit. An' so have you—you can't deny it!"

The deacon, a florid, full-whiskered man of about sixty, glowered about him. No one present thought of disputing his assertion. The deacon was a power in the community.

(To be continued.)

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The Job's Vacation.

Sometimes we hear good women say, not without a touch of scorn, "I have no time for a vacation," meaning that personally they do not believe in vacations. The word vacate means, to leave empty, and hosts of conscientious women shudder at the thought of deserting anything that seems to be better for their attention. When, however, we study this subject of vacations from the right standpoint, we make some discoveries which ought to be made. One of these is that every job that is worth doing at all is worth doing excellently and in order that it may be done in this way, the job itself needs a vacation! That is to say, the human mind, on which all successful action depends, absolutely must have its periods of change and rest. It is "made that way." A bookkeeper who sticks at his books twelve months of the year, loses the ability to do sharp, clean-cut, accurate work at necessary speed. For the sake of the job itself, he must "get out," vacate, empty the job of his immediate presence, empty his brain of the steady grind in order that he may bring back to the job, for the job's sake, new ideas, sharpened powers, fresh strength and inspiration.

The dismal wail that "woman's work is never done" should be drowned by a better song. Woman has accomplished marvels but we all know that her marvels would have been more marvellous yet if she had given her work the benefit of deliberate vacations! It is almost the rule that the people who climb high in their particular callings, are the people who make a business of securing some definite time for play, vacation, change, and who play very thoroughly while they are at it. They must! They do it for the job's sake. If they did not, the job would go stale on their hands.

They tell us that when a woman will, "she will, you may depend on it" and that "when she won't, she won't and there's an end on it." Thousands of glorious women have said "I won't" when it comes to considering such a "foolishness" as a vacation of any kind. Perhaps they would change their minds if they could clearly see that their "job," whether it be farming or mothering or cooking or sewing or mere housekeeping, absolutely needs that they get away from it in order that it may continue to be done in the best possible way. Business women, such as stenographers, clerks in shops and offices, dressmakers, teachers, editors, writers, artists, have all pretty well learned the value of the vacating process and go at it more or less systematically. The woman on the job at home has not yet learned it as thoroughly as she should. Summer days are good days for a first lesson in vacating! Let's all go!

Don't "Take a Chance" in Canning.

Cold-pack canning is the simplest and surest method we have for canning vegetables. The flavor, color, and texture of the product are conserved, and time and labor are saved. But canning by this method is easy, and simple, and sure only when we follow directions.

I always helped prepare the fruits and vegetables for Mother's canning, and so had plenty of chance to study her methods. She was quick, and didn't seem to get tired; but, secretly, I used to think she paid too much attention to the clock and her directions.

Mother always was a great believer in experience, so one day I got my chance. My packs looked wonderful. I had my jars, covers, and rubbers clean and sterilized, but it did seem so poky to test every seal, so I left it to luck. The time of processing wasn't always according to the clock, either.

Luckily things began to happen very soon in spite of our cool and well-constructed storage closet. Of course, some things did keep, but I believe I had practically every misfortune a canner could have, and in almost every case I could trace this misfortune directly to my neglect of some, seemingly, small detail.

The right equipment for the canning season is simple and inexpensive, and having it makes such a difference. My small, stiff-bristled scrub brush, with an easy grip, is about as cheap as one with a sharp finger-cramping back. I use it to silk corn as well as for scrubbing vegetables. I also find several knives with edges that do not dull quickly and handles which fit into the palm comfortably save not only my hands but my temper as well. One of my recent additions to my preparation equipment is a large pair of sharp shears. They cut the time spent in getting greens ready amazingly. I've also found that a number of large basins for washing, rinsing, and draining make the work go faster. If you have running water, you can lessen the time spent in washing greens and other vegetables by attaching a short piece of hose to the cold-water tap. This stream of water washes off the stubborn particles of dirt very quickly.

Either tin or glass containers may be used, but I've found the glass most practical because they may be used over and over again. Since I inherited many of my jars, my collection isn't uniform, but each container has to pass a rigid test before I allow it to have its pack. I find it best to have the containers tested out and standing in cool water on the stove ready to heat before I take the vegetables from the garden.

The jars should be free from cracks and uneven edges. I am especially careful about the rim upon which the rubber fits, since a small projection may cut the rubber and cause an imperfect seal. The covers, whatever the type, must fit perfectly. A good rubber is an economy. I buy new rubbers every year. If a rubber seems as good as a good new one, if it returns to its original shape when stretched, if it will not crease when bent double and pinched, if it fits the neck of the jar snugly, it might be used the second time. However, I'd make it pass a very severe test, because it's better to discard a doubtful rubber than to lose a jar of canned goods. If the rubber does soften or bulge when the jar is processed, I replace it with another sterilized rubber, and put the jar back in the sterilizer for five minutes. To test the sea, put a little water in the jar, put the rubber in place, and screw or clamp the cover on tight; shake, then turn over on the table and watch for drops of water.

We farm women have the best chance in the world for canned vegetables of the highest grade, since we can just about follow the "from the garden to the can" slogan literally. It's amazing how important this precaution is. Canned beans, peas, asparagus, and corn sometimes have a queer, sour taste which is called "flat" sour. This condition develops in any of these vegetables when the time between gathering and processing is very long, especially on warm days. Then, too, all vegetables have a better flavor if canned fresh.

The Department of Agriculture issues a bulletin on "Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables for Home Use," Bul. 93, E. F., which may be obtained free from the Publications Branch at Ottawa. The directions and time tables have been very carefully tested out. In using the time table you may find that setting an alarm clock for the time the process should stop will help. Remember, though, to count time only when the water in the water bath is boiling.

The most important thing in canning, I think, is to use a reliable bulletin and to follow the directions exactly.

Malnutrition.

Malnutrition, says an expert, is caused by physical defects, such as adenoids and bad tonsils; lack of home control, and faulty health habits. She described the malnourished child as having the fatigue posture, that is, drooping shoulders, with prominent shoulder blades, lines under the eyes, and badly warped nerves. The cure is five meals per day, with plenty of milk and cereals, an afternoon rest, and no extra work, such as music lessons or chores after school. In bad cases, school itself should be dropped until the child is built up physically. The child one year behind in weight, is also a year behind in its mental development.

Shadows and Solids.

Few persons realize how much shadows help us to judge the form of solid objects and how much we depend upon them . In looking at photographs of the moon, for example, it is only the shadows that tell us whether what we see is a hill or a hole. If the shadow falls away from the light, the eye sees a hole; if it falls toward the light, a projection. But the eye is easily fooled. Showing a picture of the moon in which the light comes from the left immediately after showing a number of pictures in which it comes from the right will change a crater into a mountain peak even to the experienced eye; a new example, perhaps, of that famous woodchuck hole that stuck out eighteen inches when the frost went out of the ground.

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Circumstantial Evidence.

"Billy Youngdad's baby is beginning to talk now," said one of his bachelor friends to another.

"Why, has he been boring you with stories about it?"

"No, but I sat near him at lunch today, and I heard him say absent-mindedly to the waitress, "Dimme icky dinky watty, pease'. "

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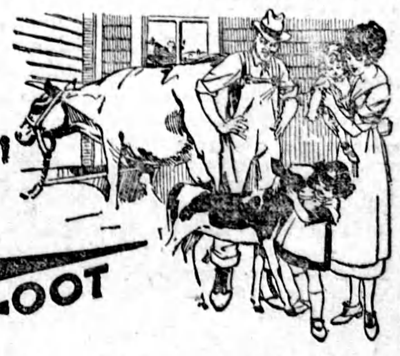

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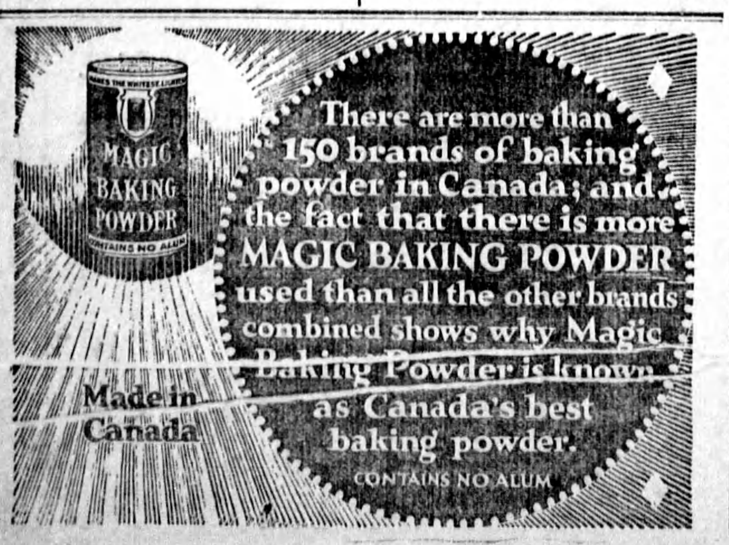
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