

The Free Press' Short Story

THE DERELICT

CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES

JAMES DUBY came to the lumber camps on the Abol River, a worn-out backwoods derelict. On the eve of a January blizzard he thrust his shivering form into the cookroom, huddled by the hot stove and cried: "Beans, beans—Jim DUBY wants beans; he's hungry!"

"They poured beans on a tin plate and watched him eat. He put the edge of the plate to his mouth and pushed the beans with his knife. The gravy dripped down on his ragged coat."

"More!" he quavered. They gave him three heaping platefuls and hot black tea in a quart dipper. When he had finished they pointed to a vacant bunk, put the oldest blankets into it and left him sleeping, the sleep of exhaustion. It would have been murder to send him out into the threatening storm. While he slept and as the first flakes of snow came whirling down a teamster was brought into camp with a broken leg. Because the crews were short-handed the boss ordered a cook and next morning, much against his will old Jim DUBY was given a thorough bath and set at work paring potatoes and washing dishes.

"As worthless a man as I ever see," Donald MacLaren grumbled, not minding in the least that the old man was listening to every word. "There's not been another time since I can remember when I'd let him stay by me, and now that I can use him I mistrust he'll vamoose the first clear day." But treat him square; he's human!" And MacLaren stamped out of the room, leaving old DUBY gaping at the unflattering summary of his character. MacLaren had known James DUBY forty years before, but none of the men knew that.

The storm cleared; a week passed, and the old man was still at work. "Do you know, Mr. MacLaren," the cook said one day, "I'm beginning to think the old fraud actually likes it."

"It's three square meals a day and a warm bunk at night! The hills are cold in January. He'll go with the coming of spring."

MacLaren looked off at the white summit of Russell Mountain and smiled grimly.

The rain and sleet of gray March and the wild freshets and warm winds of April found the old man almost contented in his quiet way. Ignored by the men, cursed by the cook, patronized by the cook, he pared potatoes and washed dishes from gray light to sundown, ate, slept and seemed satisfied; but ever and anon the keen glance of Donald MacLaren would detect a yearning, wistfulness in the old man's eyes, and now and again the cook would find him staring at the leaping rips of Abol, at the wet, bare ground, at the budding branches of the trees.

On a morning in early May he shuffled into the office, looked timidly away from MacLaren's stern face and said with an apologetic grin, "Well, I mus' be goin' on."

MacLaren drew from the safe a long black book, took out three bills, pushed them across the desk and bent over his accounts.

"What's this?" quavered the old man. "Wages?" MacLaren did not look up. "I warn't hired out." The old man waited for a reply, but got none. "I ain't asked nawthin'!"

MacLaren raised his head, pointed at the door and again frowned over his problem.

The old man reached out a trembling hand, took the money, thrust it inside his sweater, which MacLaren had given him, and went out.

"Good for nothing!" MacLaren growled to the cook that night after supper. "I've seen 'em before. I knew he'd go in the spring time!"

At the moment when MacLaren spoke those words the old man was squatting in the underbrush on the hillside, watching the camp with eyes from which timidity and indecision had departed, eyes in which had appeared subtlety, craft and cunning.

One by one the camp lights appeared, and the small stars twinkled in the gray sky. Two teamsters with swinging lanterns splashed through the slush in the camp yard. The high-pitched voice of Sammy Clarkson, the ballad singer, quavered through a chorus and died away. The yellow light disappeared from the windows of the bunk room. The lantern in the cookroom was extinguished. The little camp lay in the starlight, a huddled mass of low, squat, shadowlike buildings. On every side tall pines waved their boughs and whispered in the night wind. By and by the old man, James DUBY, came down the hill from his hiding place. He placed his feet silently on rocks, bare earth and logs that would not crackle or turn. He smiled craftily and paused to survey the silent camp once more.

He crossed the yard in the half light that is everywhere on a clear night. As he paused in front of the office building the slim born of a crescent moon disappeared behind the brow of Russell Mountain, and he smiled, for he planned to travel far that night with only the stars to guide him.

The door of the office was never locked, and he entered softly. He fumbled along the counter, which was piled with shirts and socks and trousers, and felt his way over the bread books, the axe shelves and the account books. He knelt in front of the little safe and with his ear close to the door turned the knob, listening to the click of falling tumblers. James DUBY knew more about safe locks than any man on Abol. Before he had become a vagabond he had worked in a shop where safes were made, and since then he had not forgotten.

The bolt slid back; the door creaked open. The old man tumbled in the safe, took out a long black-pocketchook, shut the door, pushed back the bolts and threw off the combination. He paused a moment by the counter, feeling of the warm coats and gloves and boots; then he went out into the yard. It was early May; he had no need for winter clothing. He peered this way and that in the shadows of the lonely camp and slipped as silently as a marten down the long dark road that led under the arching pines.

The white water of Abol leaped away and away; it roared angrily over the rips, laughed across pebbled shoals and swirled down under the alders in a swift, powerful current. A black, bent figure crossed the old log bridge and vanished.

James DUBY harbored behind the mask of his aged face all the resources and trickery of a long life of petty crime. He plugged along at a stiff pace and covered sixteen or seventeen miles before he stopped. He left the road by a fallen log, doubled back on his tracks and lay down under a dwarfed pine where the needles were dry and thick. He was tired, and he fell asleep almost instantly. When he woke he heard voices.

Crawling silently out of his hiding place, he stretched himself in the thicket of young firs. He recognized the voices of the speakers. For a time he listened with his mouth open; then the corners of his eyes wrinkled in a crafty smile, and he laughed noiselessly. He had heard his own name mentioned.

"That kind ain't never to be trusted. They'll turn on the hand that feeds them and bite it like a scorpion, that they will!" The speaker's knowledge of scorpions was purely Scriptural.

"Well, lad, I suppose maybe he's now at this minute chucklin' over last night's work. Three hundred dollars is no great work of a loss, but him with MacLaren's sweater on his back and MacLaren's food in his belly—it's shameful, that it is! Put out the fire, and we'll be on our way!"

The old man, lying concealed in the bushes, once more laughed gently. When they had gone he crawled down to the roadside and stared at their blackened fire. He chuckled and patted the red sweater behind which was concealed the thick roll of stolen bills. "They're after me," he whispered to no one at all; "MacLaren's found out and sent 'em."

He set off after his two pursuers. Presently he came to an old dead pine broken off thirty feet above the ground. He turned into the bushes with twinkling eyes. He had travelled that road years and years before, and he knew more of its short cuts than either of the two who were trying to find him.

But there was another man who knew more even than he. Twenty minutes later Donald MacLaren himself turned into the short cut and smiled when he saw the track of a patched shoe.

As the old man climbed the hill the sweater caught on a broken limb, and he unfastened it carefully. He felt an impulse to tear it off his back. It seemed to him that he could feel Donald MacLaren's eyes fixed upon him, that Donald MacLaren's voice was calling on him to keep the money, but to give him back the sweater because the sweater stood for kindness and good will. The old man sat there. For a moment he rubbed the roll of bills in his shirt pocket; then he pushed on again more swiftly than before.

Presently he began to talk to himself. "Money!" he chuckled. "I'm rich! I'll go to Oldtown; I'll go to Bangor; perhaps I'll go to Boston. I'm rich—no, Mr. MacLaren ain't callin'; he don't want his sweater—"

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Ten minutes he walked on in silence; then he began to talk to himself again. "Turn on the hand that feeds them." Those had been the man's words. The old fellow tried to think that he did not care; a year before he would not have cared. But MacLaren had taken him in; MacLaren had paid him wages without his asking. The old man chuckled deep in his throat. "Yes, he's muthered. 'I'm gettin' soft—yes, I'm gettin' soft!' Ah, he marched determinedly on."

He passed spruces, firs, cedars and open marsh. He waded through the tamaracs and again clambered through the cedars. "Soft," he muttered to himself. "Soft," he repeated again and again and grinned at his own weakness. "Soft, soft, soft!" The words failed to stir him; he felt weak, old and disconsolate. Through the mist of half a life-time came a picture of one MacLaren whom he had known; he had

DOGS—HOW TO APPROACH AND HANDLE THEM

The following was written by Frank B. Dole, a celebrated dog fancier, to promote safety of employees of the Consolidated Gas and Affiliated Gas, Electric and Steam Companies.

It was Charles A. Dana, the celebrated editor, who said, "When a man bites a dog, it's news." In many more cases than most people realize, when a dog bites a man it is really the man who causes the biting. Few dogs like few human beings, go out of their way to cause trouble, and when trouble does occur, and a man is bitten by a dog, it is usually because the dog fails to understand that the use of his teeth is not necessary to protect either his master or his master's property. The prime instinct of any dog is to protect, with his life if necessary, those he loves.

No two dogs are alike in disposition any more than are any two human beings. But there are some general rules that can be laid down for any person whose work takes him into houses where there are dogs which naturally cannot read a badge or know at a glance that the visitor has legitimate business on the premises. One of these is the fact that virtually all dogs will first announce the visitor's presence to their masters by barking. That is, of course, provided they are not taken by surprise. Thus it is well not to approach a dog's domain too quietly. Another important fact is that few dogs will use their teeth unless startled by some sudden motion which they fail to understand or which they construe as a threat to themselves or to the safety of the person and property of their master. If the dog has a chance to give the visitor the "once-over" and the visitor shows by his confident bearing and normal actions that he has legitimate business, the dog will either ignore friendship or content himself with quietly watching what the intruder is about.

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A FURTHER STEP on the Road to Recovery

A Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada

THE Dominion of Canada will offer for public subscription the next few days the 1934 Refunding Loan. It is an undertaking of such significance to every citizen that I think it fitting to present this brief explanation of its close relation to the welfare and continued progress of our country.

1. National Credit

National credit means to a nation what an honest reputation means to a man. Its maintenance is a primary essential and necessitates that each obligation be met fully and promptly, as it comes due. Our debt conversion programme is then, in the first instance, our method of meeting our obligations and thus maintaining our credit.

2. National Economy

The debt conversion programme, in the second place, is providing substantial savings in public interest charges. The debt which we are refunding was incurred with interest rates at artificially high wartime peaks. Refunding is now being accomplished with interest rates throughout the world moving steadily downward toward more normal levels—an encouraging world movement which is essential to business recovery.

3. National Recovery

The debt conversion which Canada has achieved since 1931, by thus maintaining national credit and securing national economy, has been a major factor in our progress toward business recovery.

Table with 3 columns: Item, Percentage Increase, Since Low Point of Depression February 1933. Items include Physical volume of business, Industrial Production, Carloadings, Electric Power Production, Employment, Wholesale Prices, and Farm Products Prices.

Our external trade figures are equally encouraging. During the first eight months of the present year, exports of Canadian products increased approximately \$99,000,000, or 32.7% over the same period last year. The corresponding increase for imports has been slightly under \$93,000,000, or 38.2%.

A Further Step

Anyone who reflects upon these three aspects of credit, economy and recovery will at once appreciate that the debt conversion programme is vitally important to every Canadian and that, consequently, the success of the 1934 Loan is the personal concern of every man and woman in the Dominion.

The 1934 Loan is a further step in a great national undertaking; its success means a further step on the road to recovery. I know that I need not stress the attractiveness of the Loan as the soundest possible investment, for that will be universally recognized. I do, however, earnestly call upon my fellow Canadians to support this Loan to the limit of their abilities as an opportunity to promote our national welfare. I know of no way in which the individual citizen can render greater service to himself and to his country.

DOMINION OF CANADA 1934 REFUNDING LOAN