

Too High a Price for a Second Cup



Cartoon—Courtesy Knight, Windsor Star



The early night came on. There were lights now in Mrs. Allison's house, and within was warmth and laughter. The old ladies, excited and eager, told each other in flashing accents that Mr. Towne was the great Frederick Towne. The one whose name was so often in the papers, and his niece, Edith, had been deserted at the altar. "You know, my dear, the one who ran away."

When Jane said that she must be getting home, they pressed around her, sniffing her flowers, saying pleasant things of her prettiness—hinting of Towne's absorption in her. She laughed and sparkled. It was a joyous experience. Mr. Towne had a way of making her feel important. And the adulation of the old ladies added to her elation.

As Frederick and Jane walked across the street towards the little house on the terrace, a gaunt figure rose from the top step and greeted them.

"Evans," Jane scolded, "you need a guardian. Don't you know that you shouldn't sit out in such weather as this?"

"I'm not cold."

She presented him to Frederick. "Won't you come in, Mr. Towne?" But he would not. He would call her up. Jane stood on the porch and watched him go down the steps. He waved to her when he reached his car.

"Oh, Evans," she said, "I've had such a day."

They went into the house together. Jane lit the lamp. "Can't you dine with us?"

"I hoped you might ask me. Mother is staying with a sick friend. If I go home, I shall sup on bread and milk."

"Sophy's chops will be much better." She held her flowers up to him. "Isn't the fragrance heavenly?"

"Towne gave them to you?"

She nodded. "Oh, I've been very grand and gorgeous—lunch at the Chevy Chase club—a long drive afterward."—he broke off. "Evans, you look half-frozen. Sit here by the fire and get warm."

"I met both trains."

"Evans—why will you do such things?"

"I wanted to see you."

"But you can see me any time—"

"I cannot. Not when you are luncheon with fashionable gentlemen with gold-lined pocketbooks." He held out his hands to the blaze. "Do you like him?"

"Mr. Towne? Yes, and I like the things he does for me. I had to pinch myself to be sure it was true."

"If what was true?"

"That I was really playing around with the great Frederick Towne."

"You talk as if he were conferring a favor."

She had her coat off now and her hat. She came and sat down in the chair opposite him. "Evans," she said, "you're jealous." She was still vivid with the excitement of the afternoon, lighted up by it, her skin warmed into color by the swift flowing blood beneath.

"Well, I am jealous," he tried to smile at her, then went on with a touch of bitterness. "Do you know what I thought about as I sat watching the lights at Mrs. Allison's? Well, as I came over today I passed a snowy field—and there was a scarecrow in the midst of it, fluttering his arms, a lonely thing, an ugly thing. Well, we're two of a kind, Jane, that scarecrow and I."

Her shocked glance stopped him. "Evans, you don't know what you are saying."

He went on recklessly. "Well, after all, Jane, the thing is this. It's a man's looks and his money that count. I'm the same man inside of me that I was when I went away. You know that. You might have loved me. The thing that is left you don't love. Yet I am the same man—"

As he flung the words at her, her eyes met his steadily. "No," she said, "you are not the same man."

"Why not?"

"The man of yesterday did not think—dark thoughts—"

The light had gone out of her as if he had blown it with a breath. "Jane," he said, unsteadily, "I am sorry—"

She smiled at once and began to scold him, almost with tenderness. "What made you look at the scarecrow? Why didn't you turn your back on him, or if you had to look, why didn't you wave and say, 'Cheer up, old chap, summer's coming, and you'll be on the job again?' To me there's something debonaire in a scarecrow in summer—he dances in the breeze and seems to fling defiance to the crows."

He fell in with her mood. "But his defiance is all bluff."

"How do you know? If he keeps away a crow, and adds an ear of

corn to a farmer's store—hasn't he fulfilled his destiny?"

"Oh, if you want to put it that way, I suppose you are hinting that I can keep away a crow or two—"

"I'm not hinting. I am telling it straight out."

They heard Baldy's step in the hall. Jane, rising, gave Evans' head a pat as she passed him. "You are thinking about yourself too much, old dear; stop it."

Baldy, ramping in, demanded a detailed account of Jane's adventure.

"And I took Briggs to market," she told him gleefully, midway of her recital; "you should have seen him. He carried my parcels—and offered advice—"

Baldy had no ears for Briggs' attractions. "Did you get the things Miss Towne wanted?"

"We did. We went to the house and I waited in the car while Mr. Towne had the bags packed. He wanted me to go in but I wouldn't. We brought her bags out with us."

"Who's we?"

"Mr. Towne and I, myself," she added the spectacular details.

"Do you mean that you've been playing around with him all day?"

"Not all day, Baldy. Part of it."

"I'm not sure that I like it."

"Why not?"

"A man like that. He might fill your head with ideas."

CHAPTER VI

Baldy Barnes fared forth to find Edith Towne on Sunday morning was a figure as old as the age—youth in quest of romance.

It was very cold and the clouds were heavy with wind. But neither cold nor clouds could damp his ardor—at his journey's end was a lady with eyes of burning blue.

People were going to church as he came into the city and bells were ringing, but presently he rode again in country silences. He crossed the long bridge into Virginia and followed the road to the south.

It was early and he met few cars. Yet had the way been packed with motors, he would have still been alone in that world of imagination where he saw Edith Towne and that first wonderful moment of meeting.

So he entered Alexandria, passing through the narrow streets that speak so eloquently of history. Beyond the town was another stretch of road parallel to the broad stream, and at last an ancient roadside inn, of red brick, with a garden at the back, barren now, but in summer a tangle of bloom, with an expanse of reeds and water plants, extending out into the river, and a low spidery boat-landing, which showed black at this season above the ice.

For years the old inn had been deserted, until motor cars had brought back its vanished glories. Once more its wide doors were open. There was nothing pretentious about it. But Baldy knew its reputation for genuine hospitality.

He wondered how Edith had kept herself hidden in such a place. It was amazing that no one had discovered her. That some hint of her presence had not been given to the newspapers.

He found her in a quaint sitting-room upstairs. "I think," she said to him, as he came in, "that you are very good-natured to take all this trouble for me—"

"It isn't any trouble." His assurance was gone. With her hat off she was doubly wonderful. He felt his youth and inexperience, yet words came to him, "And I didn't do it for you, I did it for myself."

She laughed. "Do you always say such nice things?"

"I shall always say them to you. And you mustn't mind. Really," Jane would have recognized returning confidence in that cock of the head. "I'm just a page—waving a lyre."

They laughed together. He was great fun, she decided, different.

"You are wondering, I fancy, how I happened to come here," she said, leaning back in her chair, her burnished hair against its faded cushions. "Well, an old cock of Mother's, Martha Burns, is the wife of the landlord. She will do anything for me. I have had all my meals upstairs. I might be a thousand miles away for all my world knows of me."

"I was worried to death when I thought of you out in the storm."

"And all the while I was sitting with my feet on the fender, reading about myself in the evening papers."

"And what you read was a play—"

"said Baldy, stangly. "Some of those reporters deserve to be shot."

"Oh, they had to do it," indifferently, "and what they have said is nothing to what my friends are saying. It's a choice morsel. Every girl who ever wanted Del's millions is crowing over the way he treated me."

The look in his eyes disconcerted her. "Do you really think that?"

"Of course. We're a greedy bunch."

"I don't like to hear you say such things."

"Why not?"

"Because—you aren't greedy. You know it. It wasn't his millions you were after."

"What was I after—I wish you'd tell me. I don't know."

"Well, I think you just followed the flock. Other girls got married. So you would marry. You didn't know anything about love—or you wouldn't have done it."

"How do you know I've never been in love?"

"Isn't it true?"

"I suppose it is. I don't know, really."

"You'll know some day. And you mustn't ever think of yourself as mercenary. You're too wonderful for that—too fine—"

She realized in that moment that the boy was in earnest. That he was not saying pretty things to her for the sake of saying them. He was saying them all in sincerity.

"It is nice of you to believe in me. But you don't know me. I am like the little girl with the curl. I can be very, very good, but sometimes I am horrid."

"You can't make me think it." He handed her a packet of letters.

"Your uncle sent these. There's one from Simms on top."

"I think I won't read it. I won't read any of them. It has been heavenly to be away from things. I feel like a disembodied spirit, looking on but having nothing to do with the world I have left."

They were smiling now. "I can believe that," Baldy said, "but I think you ought to read Simms' letter. You needn't tell me you haven't any affection."

"Well, I have," she broke the envelope. "More than that I am madly curious. I wouldn't confess it though to anyone—but you."

"They can cut me up in little pieces—before I break my silence."

Again they laughed together. Then she broke the seal of the letter. Read it through to herself, then read it a second time aloud.

"Now that it is all over, Edith, I want to tell you how it happened. I know you think it is a rotten thing I did. But it would have been worse if I had married you. I am in love with another woman, and I did not find it out until the day of our wedding."

"She isn't in the least to blame, and somehow I can't feel that I am quite the cad that everybody is calling me. Things are bigger sometimes than ourselves. Fate just took me that morning—and swept me away from you."

"It isn't her fault. She wouldn't go away with me, although I begged her to do it. And she was right of course."

"She is poor, but she isn't marrying me for my money. The world will say she is—but the world doesn't recognize the real thing. It has come to me, and if it ever comes to you, you're going to thank me for this—but now you'll hate me, and I'm sorry. You're a beautiful, wonderful woman—and I find no excuse for myself, except the one that it would have been a crime under the circumstances to tie us to each other."

"In spite of everything, 'Faithfully, 'Del.'"

There was a moment's silence, as she finished. Then Edith said, "So that's that," and tore the letter into little shreds. Her blue eyes were like bits of steel.

"He's right," said Baldy. "I'd like to kill him for making you unhappy—but the thing was bigger than himself."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Of course if you are going to condone—dishonor—"

He was leaning forward hugging his knees. "I am not condoning anything. But—I know this—that some day if you ever fall in love, you'll forgive—"

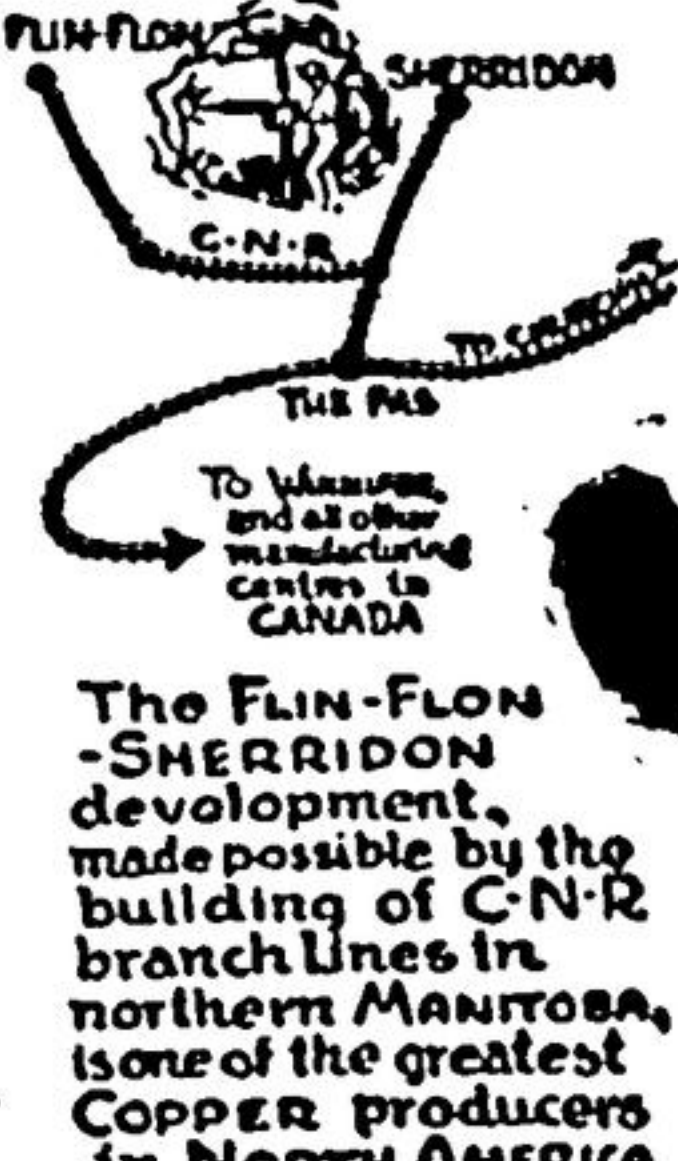
They came up the path.



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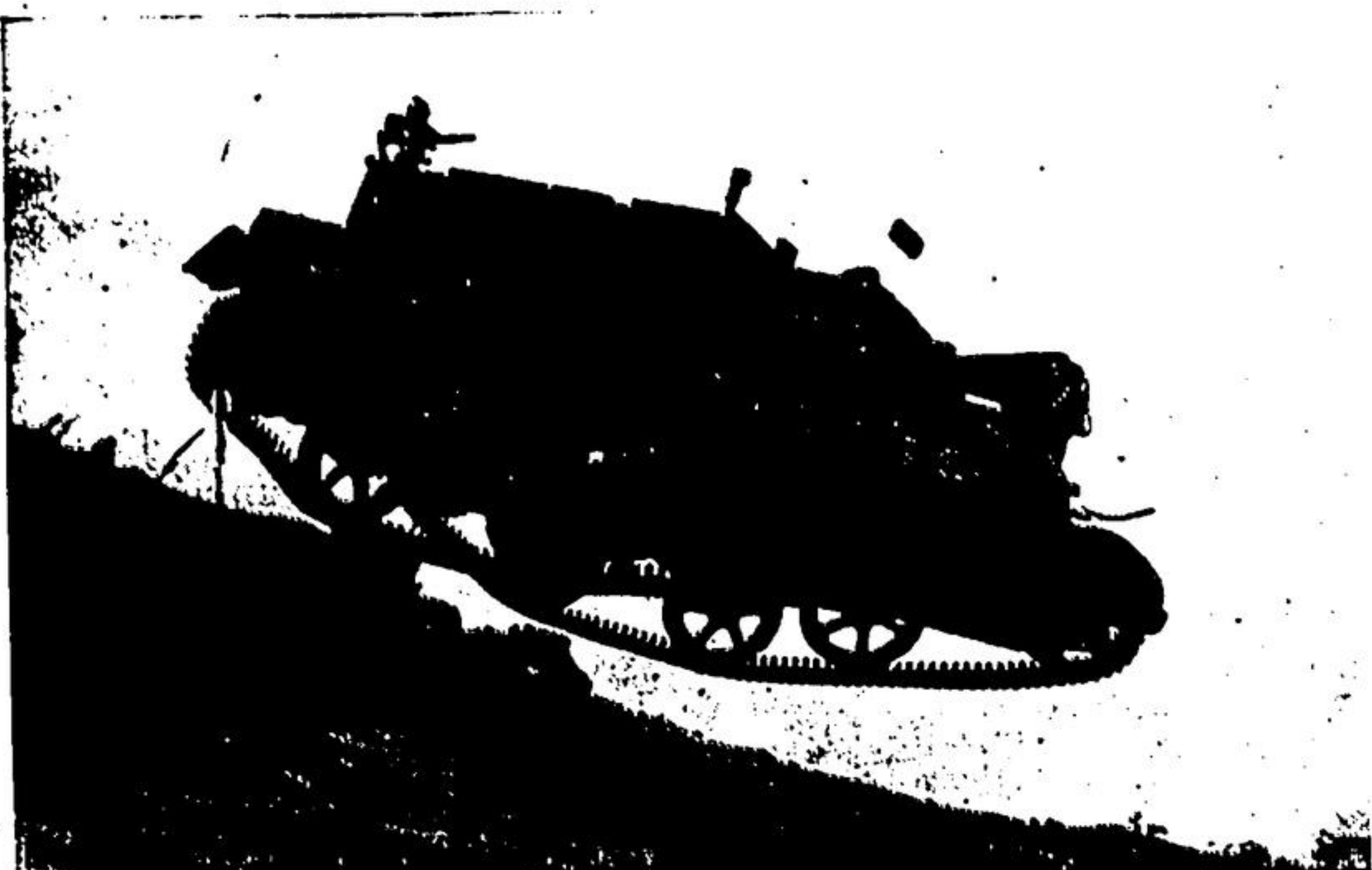
THE RAILWAY AND THE WAR . . . By Thurston Topham

COPPER, vital wartime metal, is now being produced in great quantity from areas which were wilderness before the rail-ways came. Lines of the National System that were built into the unpopulated sections of the country have proved to be of tremendous value in CANADA'S WAR EFFORT



NORANDA-SENEGONDE AXIA, developed since construction of C.N.R. TRANS-CONTINENTAL LINE in 1915, where 27 Mines produced Gold, COPPER and other metals, to the value of \$55,000,000. in 1941

The FLIN-FLOON-SHERIDON development, made possible by the building of C.N.R. branch lines in northern MANITOBA, is one of the greatest COPPER producers in NORTH AMERICA



ROUGHRIDERS OF CANADA'S ARMY

Canadian soldiers send their sturdy Canadian-built carrier flying over the snow of a knoll during manoeuvres at Camp Borden. With expert service crews to keep them rolling, machines are not spared in training men for the toughest brand of modern warfare. When these boys come up against the enemy they'll be the equal of the toughest battle-scarred warriors.

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