

# The March of the White Guard

By SIR GILBERT PARKER.

## CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd.)

Immediately after, at a sign from the Sub-factor, Cloud-in-the-Sky began to transfer the burning wood from one fire to the other until only hot ashes were left where a great blaze had been. Over these ashes pine twigs and branches were spread, and over them again blankets. The word was then given to turn in, and Jeff Hyde, Gaspé Toujours, and Late Carscallen lay down in this comfortable bed. Each wished to give way to their captain, but he would not consent, and he and Cloud-in-the-Sky wrapped themselves in their blanket like mummies, covering their heads completely, and under the Arctic sky they slept alone in an austere and tenantless world. They never know how loftily sardonic nature can be who have not seen that land where the mercury freezes in the tubes and there is light but no warmth in the smile of the sun. Not Sturt in the heart of Australia with the mercury bursting the fevered tubes, with the finger-nails breaking like brittle glass, with the ink drying instantly on the pen, with the hair falling off and fading, would, if he could, have exchanged his lot for that of the White Guard. They are in a frozen endlessness that stretches away to a world where never voice of man or clip of wing or tread of animal is heard. It is the threshold of the undiscovered country, to that untouched north whose fields of white are only furrowed by the giant forces of the elements; on whose frigid hearthstone no fire is ever lit; a place where the electric phantoms of a

nightless land pass and repass, and are never still; where the magic needle points not toward the north but darkly downward, downward—where the sun never stretches warm hands to him who dares confront the terrors of eternal snow.

The White Guard sleeps.

## CHAPTER IV.

No, Captain; leave me here and push on to the Manitou Mountain. You ought to make it in two days. I'm just as safe here as on the sleds and less trouble; a blind man's no good. I'll have a good rest while you're gone, and then perhaps my eyes will come out right. My foot is nearly well now.

Yes, Jeff Hyde was snowblind. This, the giant of the party, had suffered most.

But Jaspar Hume said, "I won't leave you alone, my man. The dogs can carry you, as they've done for the last ten days."

But Jeff replied, "I'm as safe here as marching, and safer. When the dogs are not carrying me, you can get on faster; and that means everything to us; now, don't it?"

Jaspar Hume met the eyes of Gaspé Toujours. He read them. Then he said to Jeff Hyde, "It shall be as you wish. Late Carscallen, Cloud-in-the-Sky, and myself will push on to Manitou Mountain. You and Gaspé Toujours will remain here."

Jeff Hyde's blind eyes turned toward Gaspé Toujours, and Gaspé Toujours said, "Yes. We have plenty of tabac."

A tent was set up, provisions were put in it, a spirit-lamp and matches were added; and the simple menage was complete. Not quite. Jaspar Hume looked round. There was not a tree in sight. He stooped and cut away a pole that was used for strengthening the runners of the sleds; fastened it firmly in the ground, and tied to it a red woolen scarf, which he had used for tightening his white blankets round him. Then he said, "Be sure and keep that flying, men."

Jeff Hyde's face was turned toward the north. The blind man's instinct was coming to him. Far off white eddy drifts were rising over long hills of snow. When Jeff turned round again his face was slightly troubled. It grew more troubled, then it brightened up again, and he said to Jaspar Hume, "Captain, would you leave that book with me till you come back—that about infirmities, dangers, and necessities? I knew a river-boss who used to carry an old spelling-book round with him for luck. It had belonged to a schoolmaster, who took him in and did for him when his father and mother went into Kingdom Come. It seems to me as if that book of yours, Captain, would bring luck to this part of the White Guard, that bein' out at the heels like has to stay behind."

Jaspar Hume had borne the sufferings of his life with courage; he had led this terrible tramp with no tremor at his heart for himself; he was seeking to perform a perilous act without any inward shrinking; but Jeff's request was the greatest trial of this momentous period in his life. This book had not left his breast, save when he slept, for twenty years. To give it up was like throwing open the doors of his nature to such weaknesses that assail and conquer most men at some time or other in their lives.

Jeff Hyde felt, if he could not see, the hesitation of his chief. His rough but kind instincts told him something was wrong in his request, and he hastened to add, "Beg your pardon, sir, it ain't no matter; I oughtn't to have asked you for it. But it's just like me; I've been a chain on the leg of the White Guard this whole tramp."

The moment of hesitation had passed before Jeff Hyde had said half-a-dozen words, and Jaspar Hume put the book in his hands with the words, "No, Jeff Hyde, take it. It will bring luck to the White Guard. Put it where I have carried it, and keep it safe until I come back."

Jeff Hyde placed the book in his bosom, but hearing a guttural "Ugh" behind him he turned round defiantly. The Indian touched his arm and said, "Good! Strong-back book—good." Jeff was satisfied.

At this point they parted, Jeff Hyde and Gaspé Toujours remaining, and Jaspar Hume and his two followers going on toward Manitou Mountain. There seemed little probability that Varre Lepage would be found. In their progress eastward and northward they had covered wide areas of country, dividing and meeting again after stated hours of travel, but not a sign had been seen; neither cairn nor staff nor any mark of human presence.

Jaspar Hume had noticed Jeff Hyde's face when it was turned to the eddy drifts of the north, and he understood what was in the experienced huntsman's mind. He knew that severe weather was before them, and that the greatest difficulty of the journey was to be encountered. Yet, somehow, the fear that possessed him when the book was taken from his breast had left him, and he reaped in his act of self-sacrifice a larger courage and rarer strength than that which had heretofore stayed him on this cheerless journey.

That night they saw Manitou Mountain, cold, colossal, harshly calm; and jointly with that sight there arose a shrieking, biting, fearful north wind. It blew upon them in cruel menace of conquest, in piercing inclemency. It struck a freezing terror to their hearts and grew to violent attack until, as if

repenting that it had foregone its power to save, the sun suddenly grew red and angry and spread out a shield of blood along the bastions of the west. The wind shrunk back and grew less murderous, and ere the last red arrows shot up behind the lonely western wall of white, the three knew that the worst of the storm had passed and that death had drawn back for a time. What Jaspar Hume thought we shall gather from his diary; for ere he crawled in among the dogs and stretched himself out beside Jacques, he wrote these words with aching fingers:

"January 10: Camp 39.—A bitter day. We are facing three fears now: the fate of those we left behind; his fate; and the going back. We are thirty miles from Manitou Mountain. If he is found, I should not fear at all the return journey; success gives hope. We trust in God."

Another day passes and at night, after a hard march, they camp five miles from Manitou Mountain. And not a sign! But Jaspar Hume knows that there is a faint chance of Varre Lepage being found at this mountain. His iron frame has borne the hardships of this journey well; his valiant heart better. But this night an unaccountable weakness possesses him. Mind and body are on the verge of helplessness and faintness. Jacques seems to understand that, and when he is unhitched from the team of dogs, now dwindled to seven, he goes to his master and leaps upon his breast. It was as if some instinct of sympathy, of prescience, was passing between the man and the dog. Jaspar Hume bent his head down to Jacques for an instant and rubbed his side kindly; then he said, with a tired accent, "It's all right, dog; it's all right!"

Jaspar Hume did not sleep well at first that night, but at length oblivion came. He waked to feel Jacques tugging at his blankets. It was noon. Late Carscallen and Cloud-in-the-Sky were still sleeping—inanimate bundles among the dogs. In an hour they were on their way again, and toward sunset they had reached the foot of Manitou Mountain. Abruptly from the plain rose this mighty mound, blue and white upon a black base. A few straggling pines grew near its foot, defying latitude, as the mountain itself defied the calculations of geographers and geologists. A halt was called. Late Carscallen and Cloud-in-the-Sky looked at the chief. His eyes were scanning the mountain closely. Suddenly he paused. Five hundred feet up there is a great round hole in the solid rock, and from this hole there comes a feeble smoke! Jaspar Hume's hand points where his eyes are fixed. The other two see. Cloud-in-the-Sky gives a wild whoop, such a whoop as only an Indian can give, and from the mountain there comes a moment after a faint replica of the sound. It is not an echo, for there appears at the mouth of the cave an Indian, who sees them and makes feeble signs for them to come. In a few moments they are at the cave. As Jaspar Hume enters, Cloud-in-the-Sky and the stalwart but emaciated Indian who had beckoned to them speak to each other in the Chinook language, the jargon common to all Indians of the west.

Jaspar Hume saw a form reclining on a great bundle of pine branches and he knew, what Rose Lepage had prayed had come to pass. By the flickering light of a handful of fire he saw Varre Lepage—rather what was left of him—a shadow of energy, a heap of nerveless bones. His eyes were shut, but as Jaspar Hume, with a quiver of memory and sympathy at his heart, stood for an instant and looked at the man whom he had cherished as a friend and found an enemy, the pale lips of Varre Lepage moved and a weak voice said, "Who—is there?"

"A friend!"  
"A friend! Come near me friend!"  
Jaspar Hume made a motion to Late Carscallen, who was heating some liquid at the fire, and he came near and stooped and lifted up the sick man's head and took his hand.

(To be continued.)

## CROP AND TRADE CONDITIONS THROUGHOUT THE DOMINION

### Bank of Montreal Annual Meeting.

Complete Reports Submitted on Conditions in the Various Provinces of the Dominion at Annual Meeting of the Bank of Montreal Will Be of Special Interest to Mercantile and Farming Communities.

At the Annual Meeting of the Bank of Montreal complete reports were submitted by the Superintendents of the Bank, dealing with trade and farming conditions in the various provinces of the Dominion. These reports cover the particular operations carried out in the various sections of the country and on this account become of very special interest to the mercantile and farming communities desirous of keeping in touch with the important developments that are occurring throughout Canada. Our Superintendent reports as follows:

#### Ontario.

Manufacturing in Ontario has been limited only by shortage of supplies and disturbances in labor. Government credits for goods sold to Europe have stimulated manufacturing, and domestic demands have been insistent. New industries have been started, and a number of successful manufacturing concerns in the United States have been making enquiries with the intention of locating in Ontario.

Ontario farmers have been steadily bettering their position in recent years, installing modern equipment and improving their modes of living. The past year has been one of fair crops and high prices. A wet spring was followed by an exceptionally dry summer, and grain crops, with the exception of fall wheat, fell below the average. Root crops were good; corn and tomatoes were a record yield; the season was poor for all fruit except grapes. Cheese production showed a falling off. There is a shortage of hogs; sheep raising is on the increase. The cattle situation is somewhat unsettled, owing to the limited amount of feed available for carrying through the winter.

The production of lumber has been seriously reduced owing to shortage of labor. 1919 has been an excellent marketing year, with heavy sales to Great Britain and the United States, and a steady domestic demand for all classes of lumber. Prices have been unusually high, there is no accumulation of stocks on hand, and notwithstanding the scarcity of labor and increased costs of operating, the year has been a successful one. Pulp and paper have been in large and increasing demand, with soaring prices for the latter.

Mining production during the year has been curtailed. The demand for nickel fell off after the Armistice; strikes lessened the silver output.

Both these situations are improving and larger production has taken place at the gold mines.

Both wholesalers and retailers report it easy to sell goods. Credits are shortened and bad debts negligible. Larger expenditures were generally made by municipalities this year in an effort to overtake works postponed during the war.

Population shows a general increase, with a tendency to drift to urban and manufacturing centres.

There has been a continued extension in hydro-electric power during the past year, and works at Nipigon and Chippewa, as well as at other places less important, will within the next two years add very largely to the available power for manufacturing and other purposes throughout Ontario.

Generally speaking, the year has been one of great activity throughout the Province.

#### Prairie Provinces.

During part of the past season extensive areas in Saskatchewan and Alberta experienced, in common with the North-Western States, severe drought and loss of crops, but owing to good yields in other areas and to high prices, the value of grains raised exceeded that of the year 1915, when the largest crops in the history of the West was produced.

Failure of pasture and hay in certain districts caused anxiety to ranchers, and while autumn rains brought relief, the scarcity and high price of feed for winter use forced the sale of some unfinished cattle at prices adversely affected by worse conditions in the United States.

The West on the whole has had a prosperous year, exceptions being the districts in which crops were lost through drought.

#### British Columbia.

Grain crops were affected by drought and were below the average. Fruit and vegetables have been good crops with prices ruling high. More attention is being given to agriculture, and farmers and growers generally have had a profitable season.

Wholesale trade has been good and retail trade active.

The population has increased, and further immigration is expected during the coming year.

Conditions throughout the province on the whole are better than they have been for some years, and prospects appear good for continued business activity into the new year.

#### Befogged.

The morning was cold and foggy when old Farmer Giles and his man started out to drive a bullock into the market. The farmer, being uncommonly stout, left the work to his employee.

After tramping about eight miles in silence, hardly able to see each other for the fog, the man was startled to hear a voice just in front of him exclaim:

"We're getting along in good style, aren't we, Bill?"

"Lordy!" cried the farm-hand. "Be that you, maister? Whoy, Ah bin droivin' ye for the last hour!"

And the bullock had vanished in the fog, while Bill herded his bulky master to market.

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#### Her Father Knew.

Little Nelly told little Anita what she terms a "little fib."

Anita: "A fib is the same as a story, and a story is the same as a lie."

Nelly: "No, it's not."

Anita: "Yes, it is, because my father said so, and my father is a professor at the university."

Nelly: "I don't care if he is. My father is an editor, and he knows more about lying than your father."

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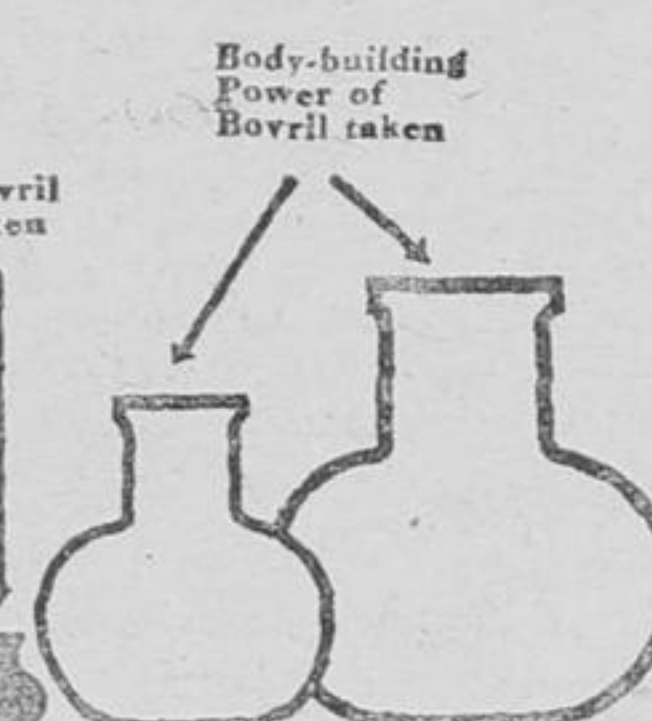
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