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A Boy of the Dominion: A Tale of Canadian Immigration

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
Finding a Profession

It was just past ten o'clock on a chilly morning in the early spring when Joe Bradley emerged from the shop door of the little house which had been his father's, and stepped, as it were, abruptly into life. The banging of the door and the turning of the key were a species of signal to him, as if to warn him that the past, however fair or foul it may have been, was done with, and that the future alone stared him in the face.

"There it is," he said, somewhat sadly, handing the key to a man who accompanied him. "You've paid me the money, and have arranged about your lease. The business is yours."

"And you can wish me success," came the answer. "Hope I'll do better than your father."

"I hope it, with all my heart," said Joe, his lip a little tremulous. "Goodbye! Good luck!"

He could hardly trust himself to say even that; for Joe was but seventeen years of age, and changes are apt to prove trying to one so youthful. Moreover, there are few, fortunately, who at the age of seventeen find themselves face to face with the future all alone.

Joe pulled the collar of his overcoat up over his ears, for the wind was keen and cutting, and thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets. For a little while he watched the retreating figure of the man to whom he had sold his father's business, and then glanced aimlessly up and down the single street of which this little northern town boasted. Let us declare at once that hesitation was not a feature of Joe's character; but there was an excuse for such a display on this cold morning. For, as we have just said, when he stepped out of his shop he, as it were, stepped into this big world; he cut himself adrift from the past and all its pleasant memories, and faced the wide future.

"What to do, that's the knotty question? Can't stay here, that's quite certain. Then where do I go? It's a corker!"

If one puts oneself in the place of Joe Bradley for a few moments, thoroughly understanding his position, it will be admitted that there was good cause for hesitation, and that a dilemma such as he found himself in would puzzle anyone, and even one gifted with greater age and discretion. For beyond the fair education which he had contrived to pick up, and some knowledge of mechanics and cycle fitting, Joe could boast of no special training; in any case, he knew of nothing in this little

northern town which could give him employment.

"I've simply got to move away – only where, that's the question," he repeated to himself for perhaps the fiftieth time that day. "I've sixty pounds in my pocket. That's my capital. If I do nothing I live on that money, and the day draws nearer and nearer when I must work or starve; so work is the thing I want. Exactly so – work. What work? Where?"

He pursed his lips up and whistled – a little habit of his – then he looked up and down the street again, his brows furrowed, evidently thinking deeply. And while he stands there before the cycle shop which had been in his father's possession, we may as well take advantage of his indecision to take a careful look at Joe.

Seventeen he called himself, and the face was that of a lad of about that age, though perhaps, if anything, just a trifle too serious for one so young. But it was unlined, save for the wrinkles which were now upon his brow while he was thinking. It was a frank, open face, and when one caught him smiling, which in other days was often enough, there was something particularly taking about Joe Bradley. Indeed, he was a gay, light-hearted fellow, just the one, in fact, who, finding his fortunes suddenly darkened, might very likely mope and pine and suffer from a severe attack of the blues. But Joe had too much character for that. The shrill whistle he had given broke into a jaunty tune, while he plunged his hands even deeper into his pockets. No, there was no sign of the blues about him, but merely a show of anxiety clearly reflected on a face which bade fair, one of these

days, to be handsome. There was grit, too, about Joe's features; there was budding firmness about the jaw and lips, while the eyes belonged to one who could look friend or foe in the face without flinching. Otherwise he was rather tall for his age, squarely built, and decidedly active.

"Hallo!" called someone to him, and swinging round Joe found himself facing the doctor's assistant.

"Hallo!" he responded, smiling.

"Where away?" came the question, while the doctor arrested his bicycle and balanced it with one foot on either side.

"That's just it," said Joe, looking serious. "I was just asking myself the same thing. It's a conundrum."

"A conundrum, eh? Don't understand, Joe."

"Then it's like this," explained our young friend, while the doctor regarded him closely. "I've just handed over the key of the shop to Mr. Perkins. He's paid me sixty pounds for the business as a going concern. So I'm out of work and homeless. I'm just wondering what to do and where to go. I've sent my box to the station, but exactly in which direction I shall travel is a toss up."

"In fact, you've the world before you, and find it hard to say which part shall be honoured with your presence," smiled the doctor. "Well, Joe, one thing's certain – this place is no good to you. You'd collect dust here, and that's no good to anyone. Make for London, or – George! – why shouldn't you – why not emigrate?"

"Emigrate?"

"Yes; go to Canada or Australia. Strike out a line for yourself. There are thousands who are doing it – thousands who haven't got so much as sixty shillings in their pockets. Think it over."

"I will," declared Joe, his eyes shining.

"Then come and see me to-night and we'll have a talk. Must move along now; I've a patient to visit."

The doctor was off within a few seconds, leaving Joe still standing outside the shop so recently vacated, still with his ears well within his collar and his hands deep in his pockets. But there was a new expression on his face, while the eyes were distinctly brighter. For here was a suggestion; here was a way out of the dilemma which for the past three weeks had faced him. Till then he had hardly known the meaning of the word trouble. He had been content to work in the cycle shop with his father. But the latter's sudden death, the necessity to sell the business and move away had thrown our young friend into a whirl that was bewildering. And this suggestion that he should emigrate was the first solid one that had been made to him.

"Why not?" he asked himself. "Others have done so. Of course I could, if I liked, take the other course Father points out to me. Supposing I were to open the letter?"

He withdrew one hand from his trouser pocket and plunged it into an inner one. When he brought it into the light again there was a long sealed envelope between his fingers. Joe turned it round and read some writing on it carefully.

"To my son, Joe Bradley," he read. "The contents of this letter

will explain to you many things which I have never cared to refer to. But I beg of you never to open it till you are in direst need, or have earned the right to do so. Make your way in the world; gather riches. Then you can open and read."

"Make your way in the world and then open. I will," declared Joe aloud, forgetful of his surroundings.

"Will what? Eh? You ain't ill, Joe?" asked a man who had approached from between the houses. In fact, he had suddenly emerged from an alleyway that cut in between the shop which Joe had so recently vacated and the next one, belonging to the nearest grocer. Swinging round, our young friend found himself face to face with the local constable. A huge, hairy face was grinning at him from beneath an absurdly small helmet.

"Will what?" demanded the constable, his smile broadening till he showed an uneven array of teeth, from the centre of the upper row of which one was missing. Joe's eyes were attracted by the gap, and in a flash he remembered that Constable Near had come by the injury during a contest with some poachers. "Will what?" demanded the hairy fellow again. "It's a queer thing to hear a young fellow saying as you spring out upon him. There was you, Mister Joe, standing all alone, wool-gathering I should reckon, and holding out a paper before you. 'I will!' you cries, as if you was gettin' married. What's it all about?"

Joe told him crisply. "I'm wondering what on earth to do with myself," he said. "Doctor Tanner suggests emigrating."

"And why not?" exclaimed the constable. "Why not, me lad?

If I was young again, same as you, I'd go. Don't you make no error, I'd hook it termorrer. And I'll tell yer fer why – this country's too full of people. Out there, in Canidy, there's room for me and you, and thousands like us. There's free grants of land to be had; there's labour fer all, and good wages."

"And no failures?" asked Joe shrewdly.

"In course there's failures. In course there's people too tired to work when they do get out, and there's others taken in and robbed by those who should know better; but there's success fer most, Mister Joe. There's better than that; there's indipendence – indipendence, me lad! For two twos I'd sell up and be going. Now look you here, come along to the station, where I'll show you a few figures."

Here was a treasure; Joe snatched at the opportunity, and accompanied his old friend the constable to his own cosy little cottage. Nor was he there for long before he learned that it was possible to obtain an assisted passage to Canada, with the definite promise of work on landing. Moreover, with the money he had he could easily pay his way and still have enough to make him independent when he arrived.

"You jest think it all over," said Constable Near, when he had shown Joe various papers. "You're young enough, and supposing you don't like Canada, why, you could go along on to Australia. But like it you will; I've heard tell of it often."

"Then I'll go into the matter," Joe answered. "If I want more particulars I'll call in again. Thanks, constable; I already feel that

I have fewer difficulties."

It was with a lighter and a brisker step that he emerged into the street again. Cramming his hat down on his head, Joe tucked his collar about his ears again – for it was very cold outside – and went striding off towards the country.

"Can't think in this town," he told himself. "I always get back to the shop, as it were, thinking of Father and of his letter. That letter's a temptation to me. I won't open it; I swear I'll make my way before I venture to break the seals. Now about Canada – or shall it be Australia?"

It was a sensible idea of Joe's to clear out of the town and all its old associations. For, recollect, he was young, and almost up till that moment had had a father to refer to in all his youthful difficulties. But Mr. Bradley, never a very robust man, had died somewhat suddenly some three weeks earlier, and Joe was now an orphan. As to his parentage, he was even then somewhat vague. His mother he had never known. She was not even a memory to him, having died shortly after his birth. Of his father he knew little more. Obviously he was one who had been born to better things than a cycle shop. There were many in this northern town who wagged their heads when speaking of Mr. Bradley, and the doctor, a shrewd judge of character and of men, had long ago decided the point; only, being a discreet fellow, had mentioned it to none other than his wife.

"There's something about that Mr. Bradley that bothers me, my dear," he had said. "He's a gentleman through and through,

while his personal appearance, his reserve, and his manners generally proclaim that he has seen better days. He never grumbles; but I know there is a history behind his reserve. The boy takes after him, too; he keeps much to himself, and is obviously superior to boys of a similar station."

That was the general opinion of the keeper of the cycle shop, and seeing that Mr. Bradley gave himself no airs, and was always pleasant to all and sundry, he was, in his quiet, retiring way, a popular character in the town. His death had been followed by the usual gossip. Then a buyer for the business had speedily turned up, and with his help and that of a local solicitor Joe had had no difficulty in settling all his affairs and in paying all debts. As we have said, here he was with sixty pounds in his pocket, good health, good temper, and good appearance, and the world before him. But he had no fixed purpose in life. He was like the man who enters upon business without a plan of action; like the general without a settled scheme of campaign, and likely enough to expend his whole strength in useless and profitless skirmishes. Joe, without a plan to work with, was certain to see his little fortune slip from between his fingers before he found remunerative work.

"Must get out of the place and think," he told himself. "Here's for a sharp walk."

Head buried in his collar still, and hands deep in his pockets, he went striding away into the country, nodding to those acquaintances who gave him good day. It was a little later when

he heard in the far distance the echo of a motor horn.

"Big car," he told himself, for his father had dabbled in motor-car repairs, and Joe had learned more than a smattering of those useful and wonderful machines. "Coming along fast, too. Fellow's in a hurry. They'd better pull up soon, for the corner yonder is a sharp one, and there are cattle on the road."

His eyes followed the long greasy ribbon ahead, winding in between the hedges till it was cut off at an abrupt angle where the road doubled almost upon itself. The corner was, in fact, one similar to those to be found so often in England, perhaps a relic of the early days when roads were first constructed, and some selfish owner declined to allow their passage, save and except they passed round the confines of his property. Whatever the reason, here was a greasy strip of macadam doubling upon itself, with a herd of cattle ambling aimlessly along it. Boom! The horn sounded again, while the whirr of machinery died down a trifle.

"Driver has seen the triangle marking a dangerous corner and is slowing," Joe told himself. "He'll have a surprise when he gets round; it'll be a case of brakes hard on."

Boom! Boom! The car was up to the corner. It came shooting round, not necessarily at too fast a pace; for your modern, low-hung car can legitimately attack curves at a speed of twenty or more miles an hour. But the careful driver allows for the unexpected. Wagons are to be discovered often enough at a corner, and invariably on the wrong side of the road. Pedestrians, gifted with wonderfully thick heads and, one suspects, with a

degree often enough of stupid obstinacy, insist on adhering to the centre of the road. Yes, there are often unexpected obstacles, and here there were cattle. Round the car came – a big red one – its glass wind shield flashing in the light. Burr! Screech! The brakes went on instantly, and the scream of metal came to Joe's ear.

"Old car," he told himself again, with the air of one who has had experience. "New cars don't make a sound with their brakes. My! He's put 'em on hard; he'll skid if he isn't careful."

He just had time to observe the fact that there was a single individual in the car, seated in the driving seat, and then what any experienced motorist might anticipate happened. The car skidded; its nose shot to one side, and Joe got a glimpse of it broadside. Then it swung round again, slued across to the side of the road, turned completely till its back passed before his eyes and was again replaced by the front. Whereupon, with irresistible impulse behind it, it charged the bank, ran up it and turned over with a thud, coming to a stop within ten feet of the nearest beast, with its four wheels still spinning. Joe jammed his hat firmly on to his head and raced towards the scene of the accident.

"Chap killed, I expect," he said. "Anyway, he's under the car. I saw it come down over him; beastly place that corner! Besides, the fellow was going too fast. His own fault; inexperienced, perhaps."

It took him a matter of three minutes to reach the scene of the upset, when he found the drover gazing at the upturned car as if spellbound, his mouth wide open, his small store of intelligence

utterly gone.

"Drive the cattle into that field and then give me a hand," cried Joe, seeing that he must give a lead. "Quick with it! The driver is under the car, and we must get him out. Don't stand gaping, man! Bustle! Bustle!"

He pointed to a gate near at hand giving entrance to a grass field, and ran on to the car. The wheels were still spinning, at least those in front were, while the back ones had come to a rest. A man's cloth cap was lying just outside the car, while the lifting trap, which often enough is fitted to the floor of the back part of cars, had swung downward. Joe leaned over, thrust his head through the opening, and peered beneath the car. There was a man's arm just beneath him, and farther along he could see the rest of the unfortunate fellow's body.

"Hallo!" he called. "Hurt?"

A groan answered him. He heard the late driver of the car gasping, then he was answered in a weak voice, the words interrupted by gasps.

"Wind knocked clean out of me," he heard. "Can't move; I'm pinned down by the top of the front seat. Get the car off me."

Joe moved rapidly; slowness was not one of his failings. He vaulted to the other side of the car and peered beneath it; then he lifted his head and gazed around.

"Hallo!" he called again, going to the opening he had used before. "Where's the jack? Can I get at it?"

"Back of the car," came the gasping answer. "Don't be long.

I can scarcely breathe; the whole weight of the thing seems to be on my chest."

Joe raced to the back of the upturned car, wrenched at the brass handle which operated the lock of the cupboard usually to be found there, and, tearing the door open, discovered a jumbled mass of rags, spare motor parts, an inflator pump, and a lifting jack. He whipped the latter out in the space of a few seconds, and darting round to the side of the car, looked shrewdly at it. Then, careless of the damage he might do to the coachwork, he placed the jack beneath the lowest edge, pushed it into position and rapidly worked the lever which operated it. Slowly he managed to raise the side of the car a matter of some three inches.

"How's that?" he called.

"Better," came the answer, in what seemed to be a tone of relief. "There's not so much pressure on me now. But I'm pinned fast; I think my trousers are under the other side. What'll you do?"

"Leave it to me," called Joe. "I'll not go away till you are released. Still the car is a heavy one, and there are only two of us here. I've told the drover to put his cattle into the field near by and then come and help. Stay still, or you may jerk that jack out of place. I'll get hold of the drover, and we'll see what can be done."

"Be he killed, maister?" he heard, as he lifted his head. "He were coming that tremendous fast, that I knew he'd smash. I hollered; but it warn't no sort o' good. He just come round like

a rocket."

"He's alive, but pinned down by the car," Joe explained. "We must have something to use as a lever. Look for a strong rail."

They went together along the hedge seeking for something to suit their purpose, and presently came upon two lengths of timber beside a stack of hay. Joe led the way back to the car, running as fast as he could.

"Now, we want something to use as a point for our levers," he said. "A pile of bricks would be best, but there are none hereabouts."

"How'll stones do?" asked the countryman, his mouth still agape. "There be plenty jest here."

Close to the gate there were quite a number of squared blocks which had probably at one time been built as a support for the gate post. Joe seized upon one, while the lusty drover brought a couple.

"Now, let's consider the matter," said Joe. "With these long poles we shall be able to lever the car up; but that isn't enough. We want to turn her clean over. We want a rope."

The driver had that, for a wonder. "I be one of those careful sort," he explained, with a giggle. "Most times there ain't no need fer a rope. But still I carries one, 'cos you never do know, now do yer? I carries one in case there's a fretful beast. And here it is."

Joe already had his plans made. There was a tree on the opposite side of the road, within five yards of the upturned car. He took the rope and made it fast to the far edge of the car. Then

he carried the other end to the tree, passed a loop round it, and beckoned to the countryman.

"Hold on," he said. "As I lever the car up, take in the slack and hold fast. Mind you don't bungle, or that poor chap may be killed."

A minute later he had his long lever in position, with the end well beneath the edge of the car, and a pile of stones some fifteen inches from the point of leverage. With such a pole as he had – for it was fourteen feet long, perhaps – he had now tremendous power, and firm pressure at the end first caused the pole to bend, and then lifted the car with ease.

"Hold on!" he shouted, and, obedient to the word, the drover hauled in the slack of his rope. "Again! Once more! Now stand fast; that's enough for the moment."

By dint of careful effort Joe had now raised the edge of the car a matter of two feet, and having built his stone fulcrum still higher, he soon had the space beneath even greater. Waiting to see that the drover had firm hold of his rope, he then dropped his lever, and, stepping under the car, dragged the imprisoned driver out.

"Much damage?" he asked.

"Shaken, that's all. Nothing broken, I believe. I've been feeling myself all over. Arms all right, you see; legs ditto. Chest, er – yes. No ribs broken, I imagine, though I feel as if I had been under a steam roller. You're a fine fellow; I owe you a heap."

"Then you rest there for a little," said Joe, dragging him to the

hedge, and well out of harm's way. "We'll turn the car right side up if we're able."

It was fortunate that at that moment two men came along the road in a trap. Dismounting, they assisted in the work, and very soon the car was righted, coming down on to her four wheels with a bump which might have been expected to shake the engine out of her. But no harm was done; beyond badly-bent mud guards, there seemed to be no damage. Even the steering gear was unharmed. Joe busied himself with the engine, threw the gear lever into neutral, and soon had the motor running.

"I'll take you along to the doctor," he said, going to the damaged stranger. "Like to come?"

"You can drive? Got a licence?" came the questions – and then, as Joe nodded – "Right! Here's something for the men who helped; please thank them for me."

Two minutes later Joe was driving the car back into the town he had so recently left. His first day's battle with the world had resulted in an adventure.

CHAPTER II
An Ocean Voyage

"Not a single bone broken, I assure you," declared Dr. Tanner, when he had thoroughly examined the stranger, to whose help Joe had so opportunely come. "Bruises, of course; plenty of them. There's a swelling here on the back of your head almost as big as a turnip. You'd better rest quietly for the night."

"But – but I have business to attend to," declared the stranger, who we will at once introduce by his correct name of Hubbard. "I'm due in Manchester to-morrow, then in Birmingham, and later in Coventry. I can't sit down and rest."

"You must, or take the consequences," answered Dr. Tanner, smiling. "Come and have some tea. Joe, you join us; I've that yarn to have with you about Canada. Now, Mr. Hubbard, what do you advise a young fellow like this to do? He's not on his beam ends; far from it. He has a little capital; but he's adrift as it were. Has no occupation, and no means at present of earning a living."

"Then I'll offer him work at once, work to last a week," declared Mr. Hubbard. "Only a week, though, mind that, my young friend and rescuer. I'm no great hand at driving a car, and after this accident I feel that my nerve is shaken. Come along and drive the car. You managed beautifully this afternoon. Come as a friend; I'll pay all expenses, and give you three pounds into the

bargain."

"Done, sir!" It was characteristic of Joe that he accepted the post at once. In fact, he leaped at it; for it was exactly to his liking.

"But don't forget it's not a permanency, Joe," sang out the doctor, lifting a warning finger and shaking it at him. "Permanent jobs are the only posts for young fellows. They learn then to be useful, to manage things. Temporary jobs lead to unsettlement. Besides, you know the old adage, "a rolling stone gathers no moss". Moss is wealth and position, all that makes for happiness, and you want to gather it with both hands. Eh, Mr. Hubbard?"

"Spoken like a wise counsellor," came the laughing rejoinder. "But you began to speak of our young friend."

"Well, there he is," said the doctor, pausing in the act of pouring out a cup of tea, and pointing to Joe with the spout of the teapot, "there he is, employed at this moment as chauffeur to yourself, but likely to be without a job in the course of a week. What are his prospects in this country? Fair, we will say; for he is one of the steady lads. What are his prospects in Canada or Australia?"

"Depends; he's a worker, you say?"

Joe flushed as he listened to this conversation that reflected on himself, then he laughed good-humouredly.

"A worker, yes; steady, certainly," replied the doctor.

"Then Canada will brighten his prospects. I know the country; I'm doing business for a firm out there, and so can speak with some knowledge. Certainly Canada will improve his prospects.

He's got capital?"

"Sixty pounds," said Joe, who was listening eagerly.

"Then forget it. Buy your ticket for the crossing, and then earn your way. Forget the dollars till you've learned experience, then invest them as you'll soon ascertain how to do. Bless us, but I wish I was in his shoes! Think of the interest of such a life; think of the enjoyment of working one's way up, of climbing higher! This humdrum existence we most of us lead is tame beside such an opportunity for flattering one's ambition."

"In fact," asked the doctor, "you advise emigration?"

"Indeed I do," came the prompt answer, while Mr. Hubbard stirred his tea. "Mind you, I don't say that there is no opportunity in this country for youth and ambition. What I do say is this. Where a man has no ties, where a young fellow has lost his parents, and has little or no influence to start his career, then Canada calls loudly to him. There he will make new ties, new friends, new hopes. There he can have land for the asking, if farming is what he wants; and success is assured, one way or the other, if only he will put his back into the work. Of course, I know what you're going to say, Doctor," he went on, arresting the latter's interruption with uplifted teaspoon. "Men come back again; men fail. Of course they do; the lonesomeness of the long winter gives the half-hearted the blues. Others attempt to follow a vocation for which they were never suited. Weak men break down under the strain. Slackers get deported; but young active fellows, with pluck behind them, and with grit and strength and

health, they make good every time, sir. They help to form the backbone of Canada."

Joe's eyes glowed as he listened. His cheeks took on a colour to which they had been a stranger of late, since trouble had come upon him. He began to wonder what life in Canada would be like. He leaned forward, one hand at his cup, his eyes shifting from the doctor to this voluble stranger. Moreover, Mr. Hubbard was no ill-looking man to watch; there was eagerness and keenness written on every feature of his face. Perhaps he was thirty-five years of age, perhaps even younger. But he was shrewd and level-headed without a doubt, also he gave one the impression that he was a man who had travelled far and seen much, and who ventured his opinions only when he knew his subject. It was plain that Canada was an open book to him.

"The long and the short of the matter then is this," smiled the doctor, vastly interested in his visitor, "you advise Joe to go."

"I advise him to go, and I'll put him up to the ropes. There!"

Mr. Hubbard helped himself to cake, fixing his eyes sharply on our hero; and Joe returned the glance unflinchingly. "You'll make good, or I'm right out of my calculations," declared Mr. Hubbard, after quite a long scrutiny of his features. "Then's the time when a man finds life enjoyable, for he knows he's done well; he ain't got much to regret."

That evening Joe heard more of Canada from his friend the constable. He supped at the local hotel with his employer, and turned in early. The following morning, after bidding farewell to

the doctor and a few others, he brought the car out of the yard, ran to the station, there to pick up his box, and then came to a halt opposite the hotel door.

"Been at work, I see," said Mr. Hubbard, surveying the car. "You've straightened those mud guards and cleaned her. That's push; some fellows wouldn't have thought of it. Others would have been too proud to do the cleaning. Now let her hum."

It does not require that we should follow the two on their trip about the country. Suffice it to say that, thanks to previous experience, Joe drove the car with ease and dexterity, a fact which his employer had already noted.

"And mighty lucky I am to have hit upon you," he laughed, as they buzzed on their way to Manchester. "First, for the fact that you dragged me out of my prison after that upset, and now because you were free to come with me. I'm so stiff to-day that I couldn't have driven had I wished, and I rather expect it will be a few days before I am quite fit again. So it's a huge convenience, for my business wouldn't wait."

A week later the two ended their trip at Liverpool.

"Where we see to this passage of yours to Canada," said Mr. Hubbard. "Now, if you'll be advised, you'll go steerage. As you're emigrating, best start in right at the beginning with the people who'll be alongside you. I shall pay for your passage."

In spite of Joe's protests, Mr. Hubbard insisted on doing this, and did not finally say goodbye to our hero till he had seen him aboard the Canadian Pacific liner which was to bear him to his

destination. Moreover, his gratitude to Joe took the form of an outfit as well as a passage.

"Clothes of every description are very dear out there," he said, "so you'll want a kit with you. Everything warm, mind. That's the way. In the hot weather you can leave off what you don't need; but in the winter warm things are wanted."

In the end Joe found himself with a strong box containing several flannel shirts and underwear, a pair of high boots and two pairs of strong nailed ones, socks in abundance, a suit of corduroy and one of strong tweed, two neck handkerchiefs, a slouch hat, and various other articles, not to mention a kettle, a teapot, a tin mug, basin, and plate, with the necessary portable knives, forks, and spoons, and a canteen containing tea and sugar and a tin of condensed milk.

"Looks stupid to be taking all that rig, don't it?" asked Mr. Hubbard, with a quizzical smile. "But then, you see, I've been through the mill. You'll get to Quebec and then go aboard the train. Well, food doesn't grow by the wayside nor on the cars. You've got to take it along with you and cook whatever you want; so don't forget to buy up a tin or so of sausages and such things. With those and the kit you've got here you'll be in clover. Now, lad, there's the bell for landlubbers to get ashore. Don't forget to give me a call one of these days when you're round by Ottawa; and always remember to make good. Goodbye!"

Their hands met, they looked keenly into one another's eyes, and then he was gone. Joe was alone again, alone upon the

deck of a ship swarming with people, but alone for all that; for everyone about him seemed to have friends. He plunged his hands deep into his pockets and whistled a merry tune; for if he were alone, Joe felt happy. The fingers of his right hand nursed the banker's draft for those sixty pounds he had banked; the fingers of his left handled the cash which his liberal employer had paid him. His coat bulged to the right where his father's letter was secreted, and somewhere on the ship was the steel trunk which contained his kit. Alone! Joe scoffed at the thought, and went on whistling merrily.

"All ashore!" someone bellowed, while sailors ran past him on some errand. The steam siren of the ship sent a wide spray of water over the passengers, and then, as if thereby it had cleared its throat, it set up a deep, reverberating roar that deafened all other sounds. The deck thrilled and throbbed; the water right astern was churned into milk-white foam, while the shore seemed to be moving. Joe leaned over the side and waved frantically to Mr. Hubbard. Down below, he could see a thousand faces. A thousand handkerchiefs waved frantically up at him. Alone! Why, they all seemed to be friends; they all seemed to be wishing him good fortune. Even the tall, stern waterside policemen seemed to unbend and smile.

"Hooray! Hooray!" shouted Joe, unable longer to restrain his enthusiasm. "We're off."

"Hooray!" came back from the throng on the landing stage. Then, as the ship's head paid off to the pull of a tug, and another

thrill went through her as her turbines turned, the blaring notes of a trombone came to the passengers. It was "Auld Lang Syne", and the tune sent people sobbing. Joe watched a big fellow close beside him, and saw the tears stream down his face. But the scene changed with the tune, and that in an instant. It was "Rule Britannia" now, and the man was standing erect and as stiff as a poker.

"Old soldier," thought Joe. "Going out?" he asked.

"To Canidy, yessir," came the answer. "Going out along with the missus and the youngsters. Couldn't get work here in the old country. I don't grumble, mind you. I'm not the one to shout out about aliens crowding the likes of me out. It's the training that's wrong. I've none; I'm good only for casual work and unskilled jobs, and there's thousands more for 'em. But Jim – he's my brother – he went out this five years ago, and he's made a pile already – a pile, sir, enough to pay a passage for me and the missus and the children."

There was hope in the honest fellow's face; he was looking with a glad heart to the future, and no doubt at that moment was bidding farewell to a past which, if not too pleasant and uncrowded with thoughts of plenty and of enjoyment, at least had its touches of colour, its memories, and its faces.

By now the steamer was well in midstream, and the throb of the engines was better felt. Not that your turbine leads to much vibration; but still, with the horse-power possessed by these leviathans, it is only reasonable that there should be some

commotion. Joe walked to and fro along the deck, and then began to feel hungry. He went to the companion, a wide gap leading to the lower deck, and descended. There was a woman halfway down vainly attempting to escort four children, all of small stature.

"Allow me," said Joe, and promptly picked up two of them. "Going out to Canada?" he asked, though the question was hardly necessary, seeing that that was the ship's only destination.

"Winnipeg, sir," came the answer. "Husband went out a year ago; I'm going to join him. Thank ye, sir!"

Joe dived still lower into the depths of this monster ship, and found himself in a huge hall with long tables set along the length of it. Cloths were already laid, and there were mugs and plates in unending rows, while dishes containing sliced cold meat were placed at intervals. Already a number of people were seated, and Joe at once took a place close to a respectable-looking couple.

"Pardon," he asked, bumping the man as he sat down.

"Eh?"

"I apologized for knocking your arm," said Joe, flushing at the bluntness of this individual.

"Ah, me lad, thank ye," came the hearty answer. "Only it sort of took me by surprise. I ain't used to overmuch politeness; we don't seem to get much time where I come from. Been out before?"

Joe shook his head, and asked for the plate of meat and bread and butter.

"Then you're green?"

Joe smiled. "As grass," he said briskly.

"Going to work or to play?" asked this stranger, as he stuffed a huge piece of cake into his mouth.

"Work – got to; I'd rather, any day."

"Farming?"

"That's my intention," declared Joe, helping himself liberally.

"Then you'll like it. I'll be able to put you up to the ropes. You're going out just at the right time, too, for it'll be fine weather. Tea, me lad?"

Joe accepted with pleasure, and began to look about him. People were beginning to swarm down into this species of dining-hall, and they presented all sorts and descriptions. There was a party of men shepherded by an official of the Salvation Army, a dozen or more young married couples, and as many women going out to join their husbands. A small regiment of Scandinavians passed by, and were followed by a crew of Russians.

"Don't look as if they'd had so much as a bath between 'em, do they?" grinned his neighbour. "But they've been travelling these many days, and most like have crossed over from the continent during the night. They're the boys fer work. Give me a Russian or a Scandinavian on the farm. They earn their dollars and don't grumble. Now, lad, if you've not been aboard one of these ships afore, you'd do well to settle your bunk and take possession of it. There's a couple of likely youngsters along here that we know of. They've come from our part of the world in England, and they're

decent fellows. Maybe you could pitch upon a cabin fer three. If not, you'll have to sleep in the bunks out in the open. Jim and Claude," he called, "here's a mate fer ye; get right along and fix your bunks."

Joe liked the look of the two young fellows instantly. They were about his own age, and better dressed than many. He exchanged a smile with them, then, having finished a meal which was excellent, to say the least of it, and undoubtedly plentiful, he accompanied his two new friends to the sleeping deck. Here were rows of canvas bunks suspended on steel uprights and cross pieces, the whole looking clean and compact and comfortable. At the vessel's sides were cabins of considerable size, and, since they were amongst the first on the scene, they had no difficulty in securing one to accommodate the three.

"We'll be fine and comfortable in there," said one of the young fellows named Claude. "We'll bring our things along just to prove possession. Shouldn't leave anything about if I were you; for there might be a thief aboard."

Joe took the warning to heart, and so that there could be no danger of a robbery where he was concerned, went to the purser promptly and there deposited his banker's draft, his father's precious letter, and the majority of the loose cash he possessed.

"Now let's have a look round, and see if we can do anything to help," said Jim, leading the way to the upper deck. Here they found a seething crowd, for the ship was packed with emigrants, to say nothing of her complement of first- and second-class

passengers. She presented, in fact, a good-sized township, with facilities for dealing with every class of business, of which catering was not the least important. In the centre of the crowds of emigrants our hero was soon attracted to a railed-in space wherein was a mass of sand, and in this a number of children were digging. Elsewhere men lounged and smoked, while women sat on their worldly possessions, many of them looking forlorn and lost.

"Give them two days to settle down, and all will be happy and contented," said one of the stewards who happened to be passing. "We're going to have a smooth crossing, so that will help."

He pushed his way through the throng and dived down below. A stewardess followed him, and others came bustling after her. Officials now were engaged in inspecting the tickets of the passengers, while a summons brought the emigrants in a long waiting queue to a table set in the dining-hall, where one of the doctors with an assistant took careful stock of them, particularly to observe whether or no each person had been recently vaccinated.

Joe was glad to creep into his comfortable bunk that night, as it had been a day of movement; but a good sleep did wonders for him, and when he rose on the following morning he was as fresh as paint.

"How do yer like it?" asked the pleasant fellow, close to whom he had sat on the previous day when he descended for a meal; for, following a habit on emigrant steamers, he took the same

place at table.

"There's something interesting all the time," said Joe. "This sea air gives one an appetite."

"Then peg in, lad," came the hearty advice. "Here's tea; help yerself. Here's eggs and bacon, or will you have sausages?"

The meal was an eye opener. No doubt there were many poor fellows aboard who had not sat down to such a breakfast for many a long day, for we must recollect that emigrants are not always prosperous when they set out from the shores of Old England. It made Joe wonder of what size was the storeroom on this ship, and how it was that the purser or his assistants managed to gauge what would be required *en route*.

"Now you jest come along on deck with me and the missus and have a yarn while I smoke. Do yer smoke?" asked the man who had been so friendly.

"Not yet," was Joe's blushing answer.

"And a good thing too. Not that I'm against it, seeing that I smoke hard, and most of the day. What's yer name?"

"Joe Bradley."

"Mine's Sam Fennick. Sam's enough, and Joe'll do fer you. You ain't been out before, you say. Who's sent you?"

Joe was a confiding fellow, and told him his story; for Sam seemed an excellent friend and listened with interest.

"What'll you do?" he asked. "You'll land up in seven days, or perhaps eight, at Quebec. There you'll go before the emigration authorities, and will be examined again by the doctor. If all's well,

you can start right off on your own, providing you've sufficient dollars in your pocket to make 'em sure you won't be a pauper. Paupers ain't what Canada wants. She wants men with a little cash, not much – just enough to keep the wolf away for a few days. But above everything, they must be workers. And the Government over there won't have slackers. She deports 'em double quick. Well, what'll you do?"

"Look out for a farm," said Joe; "but where, beats me."

"Then jest you think of New Ontario. It's the coming country. Now, see here, mate; I'll give yer a piece of advice. You get along down from Montreal. Accept a job on a farm, and stay there till the winter. Then have a turn with the forest rangers. They don't do much in the winter, it's true; but a few are kept going. Or you might go along with a gang to a lumber camp. It'll keep you from rusting. Next spring you could work again on a farm, and come the following cold weather you ought to be able to look to yourself. We're off to seek a location in this here New Ontario."

"Then why couldn't I come with you?" asked Joe, for he liked the look of this Sam Fennick.

"And so you shall, but not at first. It'll take us best part of two months to find a likely location. Then we've to make a heap of arrangements, so I doubt our getting to at the job till late in the year. So you'd better fix elsewhere; you can come along when we're ready."

It may be imagined that Joe spent many an hour discussing matters with Sam, and soon began to long for Canada to heave in

sight. However, there were many miles of sea stretching between the ship and the Gulf of St. Laurence, and they were not passed before he was involved in another adventure.

CHAPTER III
Volunteers called for

It was rather late on the third morning of the voyage when Joe had his attention attracted to one particular portion of the huge ship in which he had taken passage to Canada. Not that this one particular portion had escaped his notice; for, like the majority of young fellows nowadays, our hero was certainly quick at observation.

"Them things hum and squeak and flicker most of the day," said Sam Fennick, withdrawing a somewhat dilapidated brier pipe from his mouth and pointing the bowl at a deck house situated on the upper deck. "What's it all about, youngster?"

"Marconigrams coming and going," answered Joe; for the little house alluded to was given up to that recent wonderful invention which allows of messages being sent across space, without the aid and intervention of the customary wires. "The young officer there used to live in our neighbourhood. I once thought of becoming an operator myself, and, in fact, had many lessons from him."

"You had?" asked Sam, staring at Joe; for every hour that the two conversed revealed to Sam that Joe was a little better than the ordinary. Indeed, it is only reasonable that we should be fair, and admit that in coming to such a conclusion Sam was strictly

right. After all, emigrants are not made up of the most intelligent or of the highest educated of our population. Too often they are men and women seeking a new life because of the failure of that which they had previously followed; or they are young people with a fair education, and with little else. In Joe's case, thanks to his own restless ambition, and to the fact that his father had devoted many an hour to him, the lad was acquainted with much unknown to the average emigrant. And here was something. To Sam a marconigram was neither fish, flesh, nor fowl; he didn't precisely know what it was, whether it had actual shape, nor what was its colour.

"Eh?" he asked. "You know the chap as works up there? And you've had lessons? What's a marconigram, anyhow?"

Joe explained with enthusiastic lucidity.

"I've sent 'em, too," he said. "There was a station not so far from us, and that's where I met Franc. It's nice having him aboard the same ship. But he is busy, isn't he? There must be something happening out of the ordinary. Wish I could go up there and join him; but it's forbidden. He told me that particularly."

It was only natural that our young hero should wish to see something of a chum associated with former days. But Franc, the young Marconi operator, was never get-at-able when on duty. It was only between the spells of work in his office that he met Joe down on the emigrant deck for'ard. Now, at the time when Sam and Joe were together, Franc was undoubtedly busily engaged. Moreover, there was a subdued air of mystery, if not

of anxiety, about the officers who occasionally passed amongst the emigrants.

"What's up?" demanded Sam bluntly of one as he passed. "That thing yonder" – and he again withdrew his pipe and pointed the bowl at the Marconi office – "that thing's busy, I guess. Sending messages as fast as the air'll take 'em. What's up, mister? Revolution back in the Old Country, eh? What?"

He received merely a curt answer; the officer hurried on, leaving Sam none the wiser.

"All the same, there's a ruction stirring somewhere," he said; "I can see it with half an eye. The captain's walking up and down his bridge as if there was lions after him. What's it all mean?"

It became clearer, as the hours passed, that there was something seriously wrong in some direction, though where or what the trouble might be none could guess. Joe descended with his friend to dinner, and it was not till he mounted to the deck again that he gained tidings of what was happening. A huge column of pungent smoke was rising from the fore hold of the ship as he gained the deck, while sailors were moving about with wet cloths tied round their mouths.

"A fire down below," said Sam, with a catch in his voice. "Lor'!"

"Fire!" shrieked one of the passengers, a woman, as her eyes lit on the smoke. Then the alarm was echoed from a hundred quarters. Men came rushing up into the open. Women screamed, and one huge fellow, a Russian by his appearance, came rushing

across the deck and cast himself into one of the boats.

"Silence!" commanded the captain through his megaphone, coming to the front of the bridge. "Quartermaster, turn that man out of that boat."

"Aye, aye, sir!" came from a burly individual, already advancing on the spot in question. "Now then," he said, when he had reached the boat, "you hop out, quick."

But the Russian was not inclined to do so. Terror had taken firm hold on him, and he sat clutching the thwarts, heedless of the quartermaster and of the fact that the boat sat firmly upon its guides on the deck, and offered as yet no sort of protection. But he remained there for only a minute, for the quartermaster hopped over the thwarts, seized the Russian by his coat and by the seat of his trousers, and threw him out without ceremony.

"Passengers," called the captain, in a voice so steady that he might have been inviting them to dinner, "there is nothing as yet to be alarmed at. Please go on with your work or your pleasures as if nothing were happening. I call upon every man and woman to set a good example, remembering that there are children amongst us."

That was enough. Men who had run forward with alarm written on their faces went back to their wives and children at once. Others gathered into anxious knots and went on with their pipes, while the children, unconscious of their danger, romped about the decks.

"All the same, it's a ticklish business," said Sam, after a while.

"They've got the hatches off, and I expect they're trying to clear out the stuff that's afire. That looks bad, for as a rule they'd leave the hatches on and turn steam sprays on to the burning cargo. Perhaps the sprays can't get at the stuff that's afire."

"In any case, the crew won't be able to continue for long at the work unaided," added Joe. "Look! There's one overcome by the smoke; they've carried him off along the deck to the doctor."

In the course of the next hour four men were rendered incapable by the pungent smoke issuing from the hold, while the smoke itself had become even denser. Huge clouds arose through the hatchway and, caught by the breeze – for all this while the ship was forging ahead at her fastest pace – went billowing out behind her. So dense, in fact, was it, that the passengers for'ard could not see the bridge nor any other part of the giant vessel.

"Want volunteers?" asked Joe of an officer hurrying along the deck.

"Eh?" came the curt and hurried answer.

"Do you want any help?" repeated Joe. "There are plenty of us who would be eager and willing. That would free the men who are needed for the usual work of the vessel."

"Well now, that's a fine idea. See here," said the officer hurriedly, "I'll get along to the skipper and ask him what his wishes are. Of course he may say he's right as things are, but then the 'Old Man' may think differently. Meanwhile, you get a few likely chaps together. If they're wanted, everything'll be ready."

He went off at a quick pace, striding over the deck, and Joe

saw him clambering to the bridge, where he sought the anxious captain.

"Well?" demanded Sam, for the idea of volunteers being called for had never occurred to him. "What'll you do?"

"Get a few men together at once," said Joe. "You stop here, and I'll send 'em over to you. That'll allow them to gather without creating a fuss. Anything is likely to increase the uneasiness of the passengers, and we don't want to add to the alarm they already feel."

He left Sam smoking heavily by the rail and went off amongst the passengers, who, in spite of their efforts to remain calm, were obviously filled with alarm. For if huge clouds of smoke had been coming from the open hatch before, it was billowing out now in vast volumes, smoke, too, which set everyone on the bridge choking, for there was a slight headwind, and the breeze the ship herself made in her rapid passage through the air helped to carry the smoke backward. As to the first- and second-class passengers, they had been driven to take shelter on the lower deck right aft, and were therefore entirely invisible. Joe accosted Jim and Claude, the two young fellows who were his cabin companions, and, whispering to them, sent them over to Sam. In the course of some ten minutes he had selected a couple of dozen young fellows, all of whom he had chatted with at various times during the past two days. That, indeed, is one of the curious results of travel aboard a ship. One becomes acquainted with one's fellow passengers during the first day; their inner history

is often known by the evening of the second; while, long before the trip is ended, often enough their innermost thoughts, their ambitions, and their hopes are the property of one or other of the many friends they have made on board. In any case, Joe was the sort of lad who makes friends quickly. Free from that stupid side which sometimes afflicts the youth of this and other countries, he had a welcoming smile for everyone, and was ready to exchange his views with Dick, Tom, or Harry. It was not remarkable, therefore, that he had already become acquainted with a number of young fellows, bachelors like himself.

"I'll choose them in preference to the married men," he told himself. "The latter have pluck and dash enough, I know; but they have wives and children, and their services will be required by the families. Hi, Bill!" he called to another of his chums, beckoning him, "volunteers are likely to be wanted to help the sailors. Are you – "

"Right!" declared the man abruptly.

"Then get across to Sam Fennick; he's away over there at the rail. Just go on smoking as if nothing out of the way were happening. Got a good-sized handkerchief in your pocket?"

"No, no; I ain't got that," admitted Bill, after hunting about his person.

"Then get off to the cabin steward, or to the purser, if you can find him, and ask for three dozen towels. We can easily get a bucket of water up on deck, and that will give us the right thing to put round our mouths."

It was perhaps five minutes later when Joe went sauntering back to Sam. Quite a couple of dozen men had already congregated about him, and stood for the most part lolling against the rail and smoking contentedly; but there was not one who was not watching the smoke issuing from the hatchway critically.

"Seems to me as there's more of it, and it's kinder hotter," said Sam, almost in a whisper, as Joe came to his side. "Well, you've got the boys together, and the right sort too. Now, if I'd been asked, I'd have been flummoxed from the very beginning, and as like as not I'd have chosen the wrong sort."

"They're all single men," answered Joe. "Married men will be wanted to set an example of coolness to the passengers and allay their fears. Has that officer come along again? Ah, here's Bill! Well?" he demanded, as the latter came over to him with a bundle beneath his arm.

"Got 'em easy," panted the latter. "A steward gave 'em to me right off. Now?"

He asked the question in excited tones and in a loud voice.

"Keep cool, and don't speak too loud," Joe cautioned him. "We want a bucket of fresh water. Who'll get it?"

Jim went off promptly, and when he returned some three minutes later it was to meet the officer coming towards the group.

"Ah," said the latter, singling Joe out, "you're the young fellow that spoke about volunteers. Well, now, the skipper says that he'd be glad of 'em, but they must be carefully selected – single men only, you know."

"How'll these do then, mate?" asked Sam, swinging his open palm round so as to embrace the little band of men Joe had selected. "This here young chap" – and he pointed to our hero – "seems to have the right ideas always tucked away at the back of that head of his. You'd no sooner gone than he was away selecting his men. Every one of 'em single, too, 'cos he says as the married 'uns must be calm, and set all the rest an example. And he's got towels for every man, and a bucket o' water here to soak 'em in. Spry, ain't it?"

For perhaps a whole minute the officer looked Joe coolly up and down. Indeed, at any other time his open inspection might have been interpreted as a rudeness. But there was something more than mere curiosity in his eye. He stretched out a hand sailor fashion and gripped our hero's.

"You're young," he said bluntly, "but you've the right sort of pluck, and a headpiece with which to back it. Bring your men along; I like the look of 'em. But first to explain. This fire's been going ever since two in the morning. It's somewhere in a lot of cotton goods right under a heap of other cargo, and try as we have we can't stifle it. Nor can we get at it with our sprays. So we're attempting to move the other stuff, and then we'll pitch what's alight overboard or swamp it with water from the hoses. It's the smoke that's the trouble. You come right along."

He led the way to the hatchway, Joe and his men following, while almost at once a crowd of steerage passengers massed themselves along the rail which cut them off from that part of the

deck, and detecting the object of the little band, and realizing that they were volunteers, sent up a hoarse cheer of encouragement.

"Just you skipper the lot, youngster," said the officer, turning when close to the hatchway. "Keep those not at work below well to windward, then they'll be able to breathe easily. You can see that the skipper's put his helm over, so as to blow the smoke more abeam, for the people aft could hardly breathe. Now, you come down with me and I'll show you what's wanted; then you can set your men to at it."

Joe damped a towel in the bucket of water and tied it round his mouth and nose. Then he followed the officer over the edge of the hatchway, and gripping the iron ladder which descended vertically, soon found himself standing some thirty feet below on a pile of huge boxes.

"Machinery, and heavy stuff too," said the officer, taking him across to a part where there was little smoke. "Now, you can see for yourself whereabouts the fire is. The smoke tells you. Ah! there's another man done for!"

Joe's surroundings were indeed sufficient to cause more than the usual interest, for the scene was filled with movement. Overhead the square of the open hatchway framed a beautiful if confined area of blue sky, across which a few white clouds were scudding. But it was not always that one could see this view, for huge columns of smoke issued from the hold in front of him and went swirling up, to cease entirely at moments and then to gush forth again, for all the world as if someone were stationed in the

depths amongst the cargo and were using a gigantic bellows. For the rest, a couple of huge reflectors threw the light from a number of electric bulbs into the hold, though without any seeming effect, for the dense smoke made the darkness almost impenetrable. Here and there a man rested well to one side, his mouth bound up with a handkerchief, while deeper in, entirely invisible, were other men. One heard a shout now and again and the clatter of moving boxes. Overhead, too, dangled a rope swinging from a derrick. It was at the precise moment when Joe's quick eye had gathered these details, that a couple of men came into sight staggering across the boxes and bearing a man between them.

"Dropped like a rabbit, he did," gasped one of them, as they placed the man on his back on one of the boxes. "Went down jest as if he'd been shot. Above there! Lower away."

A head appeared in the opening of the hatchway, while a second later a cloud of smoke shot upward, hiding the head and setting the owner coughing. But the derrick above swung over promptly, and the rope descended.

"You two men get to one side and rest," said the officer. "I and this friend here will see to the man. Now," he went on swiftly, "lend a hand while I pass the rope round this poor chap. That's the way. Now steady him while I go aloft. You'll get your men down as you want 'em."

He had already spoken to an officer on duty down below, and now went clambering upward. A moment later Joe was guiding the unconscious body of the sailor as he was hoisted upward.

Then, cramming the towel close round his nose and mouth, he dived into the clouds of smoke till, aided by the electric light, he saw an officer.

"Shall I bring some of the men down now, sir?" he asked. "I've two dozen up above, all ready to lend a hand. I thought it would be best to employ them in two batches."

The officer, a young man of some twenty-five years of age, rose from the box he was helping to lift, coughed violently, and then accompanied Joe back to the part directly under the hatchway.

"My word," he gasped, when at length a violent attack of coughing had subsided and allowed him to speak, "we'll be glad to have you. That's hot work in there. You've two dozen, you say? Then bring along half of them; they'll be mighty useful."

Joe went swarming upward at once and, arriving on the deck, promptly told off twelve of the men. He was down again with them within a few seconds, at once leading them forward to where the work was in progress.

"That you?" asked the officer, peering at him through the smoke and coughing. "Then get to at these boxes. We're pulling them aside, and till we've got a heap more away we shan't be able to reach the spot where there's fire. When we do, things won't be so easy. There'll be a burst of smoke and flames, I should imagine."

"Then we'd better have the other half of this gang ready with sacks and blankets damped with water," cried Joe. "A hose

wouldn't stop the fire, and the water would do a heap of damage. Eh?"

"You're the boy!" gasped the officer. "That's an idea; will you see to it?"

Joe nodded promptly, and then set his gang to work to help the sailors already employed in moving the cargo. Dashing away as soon as he saw that they understood what was required of them, he swarmed up to the top of the hatchway and called loudly to one of the gang above.

"Find one of the officers if you can, or, better still," he said, "go along to the purser. Ask for twenty or thirty old blankets. Take a mate or two with you and bring the lot along here; then swamp them with water. When you've got them ready have them slung down into the hold. You've followed?"

The young fellow nodded eagerly. "Got it pat," he declared, swinging round. "I'll be back inside ten minutes."

Joe slid down below without further waiting, and, joining his men, attacked the cargo with energy. Half an hour later, perhaps, after a bulky parcel wrapped in matting had been dragged from its place, a sudden burst of smoke drove the workers backward. It was followed by a hot blast of air and then by tongues of flame.

"Looks bad," declared the officer, rising to his feet from the box on which he had been seated; for he was taking a well-earned rest. "There's stuff below there that's well alight. Look at that! There's smoke and flames for you."

"And we'll need to drown the fire at once," cried Joe. "I'll

bring the other gang down and set them to fight it."

Once more he clambered over the boxes from the dark depths of the hold and, gaining the open space beneath the hatchway, shouted loudly. At once a head appeared, and another call brought the second half of his gang tumbling downward.

"Each of you take one of the damped blankets," said Joe, standing beside them. "See that the towels are well over your mouths and noses, and then follow me. We've got to the seat of the fire, and have to do our best to damp it out. Now, follow one after the other."

Seizing a blanket himself, he led the way till within twenty feet of the spot where the last bale had been torn out of its position. The workers whom he had left had been driven backward to that point, and were crouching down with their heads as low as possible, coughing and choking as dense masses of smoke swept about them. Joe saw red tongues of flame, and at once, without hesitation, advanced on the spot, holding the blanket before him. But if he imagined he had an easy task, he was quickly to learn that he was mistaken. The choking clouds of pungent smoke which swelled past him and hid him from the men was the least part of the difficulty. It was the heat which threatened to defeat his efforts. For a hot blast surrounded him. He felt of a sudden as if he had plunged into a furnace, while his nostrils burned as if he were inhaling flames. Then the blanket, in spite of its soaking, steamed heavily and began to shrivel.

"Forward!" Joe commanded himself. "This is not the time to

give back. Push on and get your blanket down right on the spot where the cargo is alight."

Pulling himself together, as it were, and summoning all his energies, Joe dashed forward over the uneven flooring, the heat wave about him increasing in intensity. A gust of hot air, an intensely burning breath gripped him, while lurid flames swept past him on either hand. Even the wetted blanket showed signs of giving way before such an ordeal, for one corner curled upward and then burst into flame. But Joe was a stubborn fellow. He was not the one to be beaten when so near the goal, and half stifled and roasted he pushed on, cast his blanket over a spot which appeared to be white with heat, and trod it down manfully. He retreated then as fast as he could, followed by a dense smoke which made breathing impossible.

"Next!" he shouted, when he could speak. "Don't stop. We must pile the blankets on as thick as possible."

It says much for the courage of those steerage passengers that not one of the volunteers hesitated. Helped by the members of the crew, to whose aid they had come, they rushed forward pell-mell, casting the wetted blankets over Joe's; then, having trodden them down, they retreated before the dense smoke which drove them out. They sat in groups and anyhow, gasping beneath the open hatchway, some of them even having to beat the fire from their clothes.

"We've fixed that fire, I think," gasped the officer at last, for the smoke seemed to be less intense. "If so, it's the luckiest thing

I've ever encountered."

"Wait," cautioned Joe. "That smoke's more pungent. That looks as if the fire were still burning."

Five minutes later it was clear that he was right; for flames suddenly shot out at the gang of workers, scorching their hair and driving them backward. Nor was it possible to advance again with wetted blankets. For an hour the gallant workers struggled to subdue the blaze by throwing water from a couple of hoses into the hold. But that effort too proved useless. It was clear that the fire had got beyond control, and that the safety of the passengers depended on the ship reaching a port very soon, or coming in with another vessel. Then, and then only, did the news circulate that Franc, the young Marconi operator and Joe's friend, had been placed out of action.

"It's just broken up our chances," groaned the officer who had been working beside our hero. "That fellow has been calling for four or five hours so as to get in touch with another vessel. But there was none within reach fitted with the Marconi apparatus. Now he's fallen down the gangway, and lies in the doctor's quarters with one leg broken and himself unconscious. It's a regular bad business."

CHAPTER IV
Joe Gathers Credit

"All passengers come aft," shouted the captain as Joe and his gang, together with the sailors, clambered out of the reek of heat and smoke and ascended from the hold. "All passengers must collect their belongings at once and come aft of the bridge. Be quick, please; we can allow only ten minutes."

Blackened and singed by the heat, with their clothing scorched and actually burned in some places, Joe and his helpers came up through the hatchway and almost fell upon the deck, for they were exhausted after their long fight in a stifling atmosphere. Then the hatches were thrown on and wedged down.

"We've got to leave things like that," said the officer to whom Joe had first of all suggested that volunteers should be called for. "We shall turn on the steam sprayers and hope that they, together with the want of air, will kill the fire. You've done well, young fellow. The captain's been asking for your name. But just you hop along right away and gather your traps, else you'll lose everything."

In a little while it began to look as if our hero might lose even more than his belongings, or rather that the loss of his kit would be of little moment to him; for the fire in the hold, which perhaps had been little more than smouldering before, now blazed out

with redoubled fury. Indeed, it was not long after the steerage passengers had gone scampering aft, dragging their children and their belongings with them, that the deck right for'ard became almost too hot to walk on, while the sides of the ship were red-hot.

"The deck'll fall in soon if this goes on," said the same officer, accosting Joe as he came aft. "I've known a steamer afire keep moving till she reached port, and then she was red-hot from end to end. But we've a steel bulkhead just on a level with the bridge, and I guess that's keeping the blaze forward. So it'll be the fo'c'sle that'll be burned out, and that deck'll fall in before long. Then the blaze'll become worse. You fellows were grand; you did your best for us. Now you come along to the captain."

They found that anxious officer striding up and down the bridge, as if there were nothing to disturb him. But there were perhaps a thousand eyes upon this chief officer of the vessel, and, knowing that, he set an example of wonderful sangfroid.

"I thank you greatly," he said, as the officer brought Joe on to the bridge. "Mr. Henry has told me how you raised volunteers, and likely volunteers too, and Mr. Balance has reported how well all behaved. I thank you, sir, in the name of the ship's owners and her crew and passengers. It's a nasty business."

"Thank you, sir," answered Joe, blushing at the receipt of such praise. "I was wondering whether I could be of further service."

"Eh? Why, yes; but how?" asked the captain.

"I was thinking of your Marconi operator, sir."

"Eh? Ah, poor chap! That's the most unfortunate thing that could have happened. But – I don't quite follow," said the captain, looking closely at Joe.

"Only I knew him well, sir, and often worked with him. I've frequently sent a Marconi message. There's no great difficulty if you are fond of mechanical things and have learned the code. I worked hard at it, as I thought once of going into the Marconi service."

"The deuce you did!" came the sharp answer, while the skipper of this huge ship, with so much responsibility on his shoulders, turned a deep red colour beneath his tan and whistled shrilly. "You can – but you don't mean to tell me that you could handle his apparatus, that you could call up and talk with a ship if she happened to be within reach of us?"

"Let me see the things and I'll soon tell you," said Joe quietly, feeling nevertheless somewhat nervous lest his recent lack of experience should have resulted in forgetfulness. For it must be remembered that although a code such as is used by Marconi and other telegraphic operators becomes second nature, and is as easy to them as is writing to the average individual, yet such codes with want of practice soon become forgotten. Joe might have forgotten; want of practice might have stiffened his wrist. His "transmitting" powers might be now so cramped and slow, that an operator "receiving" aboard some other ship would not pick up his message; also, the converse might well be the case. His ear, unaccustomed now for some little while to the familiar

sounds so particular to a telegraph instrument, might fail to pick out the meaning of dot and dash coming across the waves of ether so rapidly.

"Let me have a look into the office and also a talk with Franc. He'll tell me what is the company's usual call. I'm not so cocksure of being able to send and receive for you, sir; but I can try, and I think I'll succeed."

"That's fifty times better than being dead sure and failing miserably," cried the captain. "I'd sooner by a lot have a fellow tell me he'd try, than go off full of assurance and conceit. Of course you can see the operator. But he's hurt badly; they tell me he was stunned. Take him along, Mr. Henry."

It was a fortunate thing for the passengers aboard the vessel that Joe found his friend able to speak and understand. Indeed, the unfortunate Franc was fuming and fretting on account of the injury that had come to him; not because of the damage he had suffered, or of the pain, which was considerable, but because of his helplessness and the ship's dire need help. He raised his head as Joe entered, then called out gladly.

"Why, I'd forgotten you entirely, Joe!" he almost shouted. "I might have remembered that you knew the code and had worked the 'transmitter'. Get right along to the office and call up help. We want a ship to come over and take off the passengers, and then stand by while we run on into port. Here, I'll give you the company's call."

A few minutes with his friend told Joe sufficient to send him

along to the Marconi office full of assurance, and within a quarter of an hour the apparatus, silent since Franc came by his damage, was flicking and clicking again, causing a thousand and more anxious pairs of eyes to be cast upward at the raking masts and at the web of wires suspended between them.

"There's an answer," he told Mr. Henry, when he had sent the call across the water on a dozen and more occasions. "Wait till I can say who it is. What am I to tell them about our position?"

The officer at once wrote down the ship's approximate position on a piece of paper, while Joe tapped on the key and listened to the receiver.

"Tell 'em we've fire in number one hold, and are almost roasted," he said. "Ask 'em to come along and take off our passengers, unless she happens to be steering the same course, when, if she'll run on beside us, there may not be need to transfer the passengers. Ah, she's calling you."

Rapidly did Joe get accustomed to the apparatus. No doubt he could neither send nor receive a message at the same rate as his injured friend; but if the messages were slow and laboured, and not always too correct, they were accurate enough for his purpose. Indeed, it was not long before he was able to send a long dispatch to the captain.

"S.S. *Kansas City* answered us," he wrote. "She's steering west-north-west, and on a line to intercept us. Doing fifteen knots and a little better. She's a hundred miles away, and will look out for us. She sends that she's bound for Halifax."

"That'll suit well," said Mr. Henry, coming back from the bridge and the captain. "She ought to fall into company with us about midnight or early in the morning, and, of course, if there's need, we can slow down or stop altogether, while she turns north and runs direct up to us. But we can see this thing through till morning. By then the fo'c'sle'll be little better than an ash heap. It'll be a case of clearing the passengers and then fighting the flames, or the ship'll go to the bottom. See over here; it's worth looking at, if only to remember."

He took Joe out of the office to the rail of the vessel and then drew his attention to the steel plates for'ard. If they had been of a dull red heat before, they were now of a bright redness, while flames were actually issuing from some of the lower portholes. As for the deck, it was a smouldering mass of blackness, to which a thin cloud of smoke clung tenaciously.

"You'd want thick boots on to walk across it," said Mr. Henry, "and then you'd never know when it might fall in and take you into a furnace. I tell you, a fire aboard ship is almost as bad as one in the forests of Canada. Ever heard tell of them?"

"Never," replied Joe, shaking his head.

"Then they're bad, real bad, and you've to move quick if you want to live through one. Now aboard a ship you can batten things down, just as we've done; or you can rouse up some of the cargo, get a hold of the stuff that's alight, and heave it into the water. That's what we tried and failed to do. Now there's nothing more but to wait till we join company with the *Kansas City*. Reckon

there's a crowd of people will be glad to say goodbye to this vessel."

A saunter between decks proved that rapidly to our hero. Not that there was any great alarm or any marked sign of uneasiness. People congregated in little bunches; men stood lounging and smoking together, talking in eager, low voices. Here and there a woman was weeping; but there were few who showed less courage than the men, and, indeed, not a few displayed noble devotion.

"How's things going?" asked Sam, accosting our hero and whispering his question. "They tell me you've been up with the captain and have been working the Marconi office. You'll come in for something, me lad. Guess the skipper of this ship did a lucky thing when he booked you as a passenger. But what's happening?"

Joe told him in a few words. "We've got into contact with another ship," he said.

"Which means that you have," answered Sam, catching him up abruptly. "Give things their right names, lad. But there, I've seen it with you afore. It's jest like Joe Bradley to leave himself out of the question. So you've got talking with another vessel?"

"The *Kansas City*," Joe explained. "She's steering a course south of us and almost parallel. She's coming north a little of her course, and should reach us early in the morning. If need be, and we cut off steam, she could come due north and get alongside before midnight even."

"Then that's a bit of news that'll help people," said Sam, satisfaction in his voice. "I'll go and tell folks about here. Truth is, there's a few got the jumps bad, but we've give 'em a lesson. Jim and Claude and me, when we all came aft, saw that one or more of them foreigners was likely to prove troublesome. We found some of 'em packing their kit in the boats and pushing agin the women; but I fetched one of 'em a smack that'll make him sit up fer a fortnight, while when a bunch of 'em – low-down rascals, as I should name 'em – got out o' hand and went howling along towards the officers' quarters with the idea, it seems, of putting their dirty hands on the skipper and forcing him to quit the ship and put 'em aboard the boats, why, me and some of the boys you got together went for the beggars. There was a proper turn-up between us, and there's a few nursing their heads at this moment; but it jest settled matters. You see, the best of the foreigners came in and joined with our party, and what with that and the hiding we gave these fellows, why, things has quieted down wonderful. Only, of course, there's anxiety; a chap can't be altogether easy when he's sailing on a red-hot furnace, with miles of sea about him."

There was, in fact, wonderful order and coolness displayed on the ship, and nowhere more than amongst the emigrant passengers. Indeed, all vied in endeavouring to keep up the courage of the women and to leave the officers and crew of the vessel to carry out their work unimpeded. As for Joe, he spent the next few hours in the Marconi office, keeping in constant

touch with the *Kansas City*, and every hour he was able to report that she was nearer.

"You'd better send along and ask her to make slick up here," said Mr. Henry, as darkness closed about them. "Some of the plates for'ard have burned through, and the air rushing in is making the fire blaze up terribly. The skipper is going to shut off and lie to. It's the only way of saving the vessel."

He handed Joe a written message, which the latter transmitted through his instrument, reporting in turn that the other ship had now changed her course and was coming direct toward them. Meanwhile the burning vessel was brought to a standstill, the throb of her engines ceasing save for an occasional thrill, as one or other of the screws was rotated so as to keep the stern always before the wind. The bugles rang out for tea almost at the accustomed hour, and, to the amazement of many, the emigrants found food and drink ready for them, but not in the same quarters. They were now huddled together, without cabins and without bunks to lie in, except in the case of the women and children, who, thanks to the unselfishness of the first- and second-class passengers, were accommodated in the cabins previously occupied by single gentlemen.

It was near midnight when at length a loud booming in the distance, and the turning of a brilliant light upon them, intimated to the people aboard the burning ship that the *Kansas City* was within reach of them. A deep cheer broke from a thousand lips, while many people burst into tears. Then Joe and his little band

were again requisitioned.

"The captain's compliments," said Mr. Henry, "and he wishes that you will organize the men again, so that there may be no confusion when embarking the women. Get double the number this time if you can, and place them in batches near every boat. The stewards will help, and between you it ought to follow that there will be no confusion. But there's never any saying when you have to deal with foreigners."

"Then Sam's my man this time," thought Joe, going in search of that worthy. "If between us, as Mr. Henry says, we can't keep order, why, what's the use of us at all? Ah, there he is! Sam!" he called loudly.

"Going to tranship us?" asked the latter.

"Yes; women and children first. They've asked me to organize double the number of helpers. Let's call out the old lot. We can select the others very quickly; a few Russians and Scandinavians amongst them would help greatly. Ah! There's Jim, and Claude with him. Boys!" he called, waving to them.

It may be imagined that the work of selection was not accomplished in a minute; for with the coming of the relief ship there was huge confusion amongst the emigrants, as also amongst the first- and second-class passengers. The courage of many, bravely shown through a number of trying hours, broke down suddenly. Men, and women too, who had set a fine example to their fellows, were seen to lose their heads and their coolness. Passengers dashed to and fro, bumping into any who crossed

their path, while one or two became absolutely violent in their efforts to push nearer to the spot where the gangway would be lowered. However, Joe and his friends were soon collected together, and then, with Sam's help, a body of forty or more was rapidly selected.

"You tell 'em off; you've the orders and hang of what's wanted," said Sam, lighting his pipe for perhaps the twentieth time.

"Then break up into parties of five," said Joe. "Now get along to the boats, five to each. Don't let a soul enter unless you have the captain's orders. Sam, you and I will help the stewards; I see that they are already ranging the women and children into lines. Some of the poor things look half-distracted."

The ordeal was indeed a severe one for many on board, and rendered not a few of the women completely helpless. However, what with the help that the stewards gave, aided by the stewardesses and Sam and Joe, the long lines were soon quieted. Then, beneath the flare of huge electric lamps, the work of transferring women and children to the *Kansas City* was conducted, the latter ship lowering her boats for that purpose, while those aboard the burning vessel were reserved for a future occasion.

"Men now," shouted the officer standing at the top of the gangway; and at the order the men aboard filed slowly downward and were taken off, till none but the crew, the stewards, and Joe and his gang remained.

"Now," called Mr. Henry, seeing our hero and his party, "your turn."

Joe walked directly up to him, with Sam at his side, while the captain descended from the bridge at that moment and joined them.

"We volunteer to stay," he said. "We've talked it over. It seems that now that the passengers are gone, particularly the women and children, you will tackle the fire again. You will want help for that. We're game to stay. We'd like to stand by till this job is finished."

"And, by George, so you shall!" cried the captain, bringing a hand down on our hero's shoulder and almost flooring him. "By James, sir, so you shall stand by us! A pluckier lot I never hope to run across, and I've never seen men better handled. You, sir, Mr. Joe Bradley, I understand is your name, and this other gentleman whom you call Sam, have behaved with conspicuous gallantry. I can tell you, gentlemen, it means much to the officers and crew of a vessel such as this is if, when a pinch comes, when danger faces them, there are men at hand to quieten the foolish, to reduce the would-be rioters to subjection, and to fight the danger side by side with the crew. It means a very great deal. Often it means the difference between security and disaster. Stay, gentlemen – we are about to fight those flames again, and you can help us wonderfully."

By now the *Kansas City* had sheered off a little, lying to some three or four hundred yards from the blazing vessel, which

presented a truly awful appearance, for in the darkness her red-hot plates shone conspicuously. Lurid flames belched from her lowest ports forward, while at one part, where the plates had burned through, there was a wide ragged gap through which a veritable furnace was visible.

"We've got to flood the fo'c'sle," said Mr. Henry, as he stood beside Sam and our hero. "The carpenter, 'Chips', as we call him, is hammering up a staging at this moment, and when that's popped into a boat a man will be able to reach that opening where the plates have gone. We couldn't do it by lowering a seaman over the side, for the simple reason that the deck away for'ard is far too hot to allow anyone to walk on it. So we shall try from the sea. At the same time, we shall pull off the hatches and pour water in amongst the stores till they're flooded. You come along to the hatchway. It's not likely that we'll be able to go down. But later on, if we're fortunate, we might be able to do so, and so get closer to the fire."

Working without confusion, and indeed in no apparent haste, the crew soon pulled the hatches off the hatchway. Meanwhile a pinnace had been lowered, and into her the carpenter had built a species of platform raised some ten feet above the thwarts. Peeping over the side, Joe saw that there was a crew already aboard her, while men were paying out a ship's hose over the rail, where there was no heat and therefore no danger of the hose burning. In a little while two lusty fellows were perched on the top of the staging, and, operating the nozzle of the hose together,

were directing a stream of water in through the ragged gap which existed for'ard, and which we have already mentioned. By then, too, Joe and his friends had contrived to get three hoses going through the hatchway, though their efforts seemed to be little rewarded.

"We're not reaching the actual seat of the fire, and the place is so huge that even a flood of water fails to swamp the flames," said Joe, as Mr. Henry came along to see how they were progressing. "There's one thing helping us, and that is the absence of smoke. I suppose the stuff which sent out that pungent smoke has got burned, and there is no more of it."

"Shouldn't wonder," came the answer. "As to reaching the fire, you must just keep at it. This hatchway is too hot yet to allow a man to clamber down the ladder."

It was decidedly hot, for when Joe put his hand on the iron ridge which surrounded the open hatch he withdrew it with a sharp cry. Indeed, the metal was almost red-hot, while a fiery heat as from a furnace ascended, cooled a little perhaps by the sprays of water sousing in from the hoses.

"I believe a fellow could reach the fire if only he could get below there and bear the heat," said Joe, perhaps half an hour later. "Look here, Sam, I'm going to make an effort. I'll tie a noose in the rope from the derrick, sit in it, and then get lowered. The men can play a hose on me while I'm descending, and even when I'm down below. Let's see if I can bear it."

A shout from Sam brought Mr. Henry, and an order from the

latter soon secured a long length of steel cable with strong electric lamps at the end of it. At his suggestion this was made fast to the wire rope, in which a wooden seat was fastened. Then Joe stepped into the noose, gripped the rope and the hose, and called on the engineman to lower slowly.

"You don't need to trouble about the electric lights," called out Mr. Henry. "They're well insulated and perfectly watertight. The only thing that will damage the cable is the heat. Raise your arm if it's too great for you. We'll haul you up in a jiffy."

Out swung the rope, and Joe with it. For a while he was dangled well above the open hatchway, with a sheer fall of forty feet beneath him, and a glowing furnace somewhere in the hold for'ard. Whisps of smoke curled up about him, while the heat was almost stifling, but not so severe as it had been when he and his helpers had attacked the flames at closer quarters.

"Lower away," he shouted, and then nodded to Sam to turn his hose on him. "Keep the water going, and start my hose," he called to those at the edge of the hatchway. "Now, slowly does it."

Very gently the engineman slacked out the rope running over the top of the derrick, causing Joe to slowly disappear within the open mouth of the hatchway. Meanwhile those in charge of the hoses paid the one out which Joe carried, and Sam, as if he were bent on doing his young friend an injury, sent a stream of water squirting against our hero till the latter was drenched, and till the force of the impact of the stream caused him to sway and twist at the end of the sling.

"Steady!" he shouted. "Less water; you'll drown me!" and, obedient to the order, Sam shouted to the men and saw that the stream was reduced. He sent a cascade downward now, for Joe had descended still lower, causing the water to fall on his shoulders and then go tumbling and hissing to the floor beneath. And, thanks to this deluge, and to the water spouting from the hose he carried, Joe was able to prepare the way before him. He could hear the fluid actually hissing, and see it rising in thick clouds of steam as it fell on iron and woodwork. It bubbled as it tumbled in a heavy cascade on huge masses of tightly-packed machinery directly beneath him, and then it began to settle into quiet pools.

"Steady!" he shouted again. "Hold on till things get a little cooler."

But ten minutes later he called to them to lower away, and in a little while had stepped from the sling and was actually advancing into the hold. A sailor joined him, and then Sam, both filled with enthusiasm. There were five hoses going within the hour, while another was all the while directing a powerful stream through the gap forward. Smoke gave way in time to steam, while the clouds of the latter, which had risen from every heated surface, and particularly from the vessel's plates, became far less in quantity. When three hours had passed, the atmosphere in the hold was almost pleasant, and certainly not too hot for safe working, while the fire appeared to have been conquered entirely. Then the ship's head was turned towards the west, and once again her

turbines sent the decks throbbing. They came to Sam and Joe in the bunks which they occupied and told them of it; for the intense heat which they had faced, the stifling smoke, and the strenuous fight they had made had had their natural effect. Both had been hoisted from the hold in an insensible condition.

"Eh?" asked Sam. "She's right? Fire under? Then call me late in the morning. I've never yet travelled first class aboard a ship, and this bunk's just lovely. Hallo! That Joe? Eh? He's unconscious? Well, I am sorry; guess there's many a one will say he helped a heap to save this vessel."

They slept profoundly side by side, and the sun was high in the heavens before either opened his eyes. When Joe looked round, it was with a groan of recognition and remembrance. His hands were blistered all over and in bandages. His face was smeared with some greasy preparation, while there no longer trace of eyelashes, eyebrows, or hair. He was bald – a terrible object – with lips and tongue hugely swollen.

"My word," exclaimed Sam, staring at him, "what a sight!"

Joe giggled. After all, however tired, however sore with a struggle, he could look on the queer side of things. "My eye!" he gurgled, for speech was almost impossible. "Just you take a look at yourself; it'll make you feel downright faint, I do assure you." Then he went off into a laugh, which ended in a cry of pain and tribulation, for cracked and swollen lips make laughing painful. As for Sam, he rose in his bunk, leaned outwards, and stared into the mirror. It was with a groan of resignation that he threw

himself backward, for, like Joe, he was wonderfully disfigured.

"The wife wouldn't know me," he said. "What a sight! No wonder you giggled."

But time does wonders for sore hearts and sore heads. Five days later, when the ship put into Quebec, both were moderately presentable, though Joe still had his hands in bandages. But think of the reward! A thousand and more disembarked passengers from the steamship *Kansas City* awaited their arrival and cheered them to the very echo as they landed. It was Joe's welcome to Canada, the land wherein he trusted to make his fortune.

CHAPTER V
One of the Settlers

"Now we get right in to business," said Sam, two days after the ship had brought them to Quebec, and he and Joe had gradually recovered their usual appearance. For, till then, they were hardly presentable, both having had every hair singed from their heads, while Sam, who wore a moustache, as a rule, merely retained a few straggling ends of that appendage. As for Joe, his hands were so blistered, that even now he was able to do little for himself.

"But you've got something inside there in your pocket that'll make amends," grinned Sam, as they sat in the parlour of the little hotel to which Sam had taken his wife, and whither Joe, Jim, and Claude had accompanied them. "You've got notes in that 'ere pocket that'll make you ready and eager to get burned again. There! Ain't I speaking the truth? I'm fair jubilant."

A cockney from his birth upward, Sam had not, even now, lost touch with the Old Country and its manner of speech, though into his conversation there was now habitually pressed many a Canadian slang expression, many an Americanism which to people of the Old World is so peculiarly fascinating. He pulled a huge leather wallet from his own hip pocket, a capacious affair that accommodated quite a mass of material, and was fellow to one on the far side harbouring a revolver. Not that Sam was of a

pugnacious frame of mind; on the contrary, he was just one of the numerous citizens of Canada whose daily thoughts were centred in "making good". Indeed, as is the case with all in the Dominion, with few exceptions, Sam was out, as he frankly admitted, to make a pile, to build up a fortune.

"And I'll tell you for why," he had once said to our hero. "It ain't only because dollars look nice and can buy nice things. It ain't only because I'd like to be rich, to put by a heap and feel and know that me and the missus needn't want when the rainy day comes along, and we're took by illness or old age. Don't you go and believe it. There's people will tell you that Canadians think and dream of nothing but dollars, and jest only for the sake of the dollars. Don't you go and believe it. They're jest like me; they've been, many a one of 'em, down on their beam ends in the Old Country – couldn't get work, for one cause or another. Then they've emigrated, fought their way through, nearly gone to the wall maybe, and then made good. It's making good that fascinates us, young feller. Making good! Jest that and mostly only that. I'd be a proud man if I could put by a pile; for, don't yer see, it shows as I've succeeded. That's what I and many another are after. We've been failures, perhaps. We want to show the world that we're good for something. Dollars spells success – that's why we're after them all the time."

But Sam was not pugnacious, as we have observed. He dragged his huge leather case from one hip pocket and his revolver from the other, laying both on the table.

"I always carry a shooter," he said to Joe, "and so'll you after a bit. The usual run of fellow you come across is a decent, hard-working man. But this here country's full of 'bad men', as we call 'em. Ne'er-do-weels, remittance men, as some are known, loafers, and thieves. A chap as shows he's got sommat to defend himself with has a good chance of sendin' 'em off; so I carry a shooter. But we was talking of the stuff you'd got in your pocket, same as me. That makes up for burned hands."

Very deliberately he began to count out the values of the flimsy, blue-backed money notes rolled in his wallet, while Joe dived into an inner pocket and did likewise. He drew out quite a respectable bundle and counted the amounts also.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars," said Sam solemnly. "Reward for work done aboard the burning ship."

"Seven hundred and fifty dollars," murmured Joe, blushing when he thought of the amount.

"Jest so – reward for pluck and fer gumption," declared Sam. "My, wasn't you bashful up in the office when we was called in! You was for refusing almost. Said as you'd done nothing. That ain't the way of Canadians, lad. You did do good work; it was you who organized the volunteers and led 'em. That's a deal. It ain't nothing! It helped a whole heap, and therefore a reward was earned. That's the way in Canada – but let's get to business. What'll you do?"

"Act on advice you've already given," said Joe, pocketing his money. "My idea is to learn farming out here, and some day to

take up a quarter section of land. But I'm going to learn the work first. I couldn't so much as milk a cow at this moment."

"Jest so," observed Sam dryly. "That's sense, that is. There's prosperity in this country, as I've told you often enough, but only for the workers. There's millions of acres, too, and no fear that if you wait you'll find none left for you. But where men fail is if they come out ignorant like you and pitch upon a quarter section when they ain't got the knowledge to choose their country. Their difficulties would often enough kill a man with farming knowledge; but, bless you! without even that knowledge, often enough with precious little money, they goes under almost afore they've had time to look round. So I say it's sound advice to you to say, 'Learn the farming work first'. Then take up your quarter section; for you'll be eighteen by then. Now, New Ontario's booming. Me and the missus will make there and prospect for a little. A single man can take a hundred acres in New Ontario for nothing. So can a married man; while, ef he's got a child under sixteen years of age, he can have two hundred fer the asking. Any more that's wanted costs two shillings and a halfpenny an acre. Cheap, ain't it? Wall, now, we comes again to you. You learn farming this summer. In the winter, get along into the towns and take most any job; next summer come right along to us. We'll have fixed a location by then, and you can take up a holding close handy. We'll get Claude and Jim in too, with one or two others, and we'll run co-operative farms. That is, instead of each man having a bunch of hosses, we'll keep enough for all, and

help plough each other's holdings. We'll buy seed in bulk and get it cheaper fer that reason. And we'll sell our stuff in the same market, making one doing of the transport – so you come along next summer."

"I will," agreed Joe. "I've thought it over a lot, and will do as you advise; meanwhile, I shall bank most of the money."

"And mighty wise of you; only, see here," said Sam, his face wrinkling. "There's money to be made often enough by a wise fellow if only he has a little capital. With the sixty pounds you brought along, and the hundred and fifty you've been given, you've a tidy nest egg. Now you bank most of it, keeping twenty pounds for emergencies. One of these days, along where you're working, you'll drop on a site where the railway's approaching, and where there's likely to be a town. Towns spring up in new countries like mushrooms. Acres bare now, and worth perhaps two shillings, are worth twenty and thirty and more pounds in English money within a few years if they gets covered by a town. So, likely enough, you may drop on sich a place. Then draw the money you've banked, buy your land, and sit down to wait. Only, don't put all the money into one holding. Spread it about, young fellow. Don't put all the eggs into one basket."

There was little doubt that Sam was perfectly right, indeed, the experience of huge numbers in the Dominion goes to prove that. Towns do spring into being almost with the rapidity of mushrooms. A tiny settlement composed of wooden huts, called "shacks", and perhaps a log church, may, in the matter of three

or four years, develop into a town, and, later on, even into a city. Those with knowledge and experience, and possessed of far-seeing eyes, may, by a fortunate purchase in the early days reap a big reward, and many a one has done so.

"So that's fixed," said Sam. "And now fer orders. We leaves here to-morrow fer Sudbury – that's beyond Ottawa. There me and the missus gets off the train. We'll buy a "rig", as a cart and horse are known, and we'll make off to the north-west looking fer a holding. You'd better come along with us to Montreal, where you can switch off fer Toronto, and look out in that direction fer a farm job, or you can come right along to or beyond Sudbury. Round Toronto you get Old Ontario, the country that's been known and settled this many a year. They're mostly fruit and dairy farmers about Toronto. North-west Ontario, New Ontario as it's called, is a different country. People kinder missed it till lately. It wasn't known that it was jest as good as many another, and no colder. But it's booming now, and there's where you'll find heaps of men jest wheat-growing. You could, of course, go right along to Manitoba, getting off at Winnipeg or somewheres close. But it's wheat-growing land there also; so ef you're going to join up with us later on you might jest as well stay somewheres near in Ontario."

Joe put on his cap and went out for a sharp walk. He clambered up the steep, old-fashioned streets of Quebec, still preserving their old French houses, to the Plains of Abraham, once the scene of a fierce engagement between English and French, when

the gallant Wolfe won Canada for our Empire from the equally gallant Montcalm. He looked out from the heights across the flowing St. Lawrence River to the Isle d'Orleans, where Wolfe's batteries once thundered against the forts of Quebec, and past which the fierce Irroquois Indians, in days long since gone by, paddled their war canoes and kept the French colonists from crossing. And all the while he debated his future movements, for with the practical mind that his father had helped to train in him, Joe wanted to see his way clear. He had his future to make; a false step now might delay that success at which he aimed, at which, according to the worthy Sam, all newcomers and old colonists of the Dominion aim. Let those who would sneer at the seemingly grasping methods of many in Canada not forget what Sam had to say. Dollars do not spell happiness; they spell success. The immigrant who has few, if any to speak of, on arrival, and who fails to make wealth, is a failure, and failure causes a man to become despondent and to lose self-esteem. But gain, riches to one who was poor, who broke from old paths, left home and friends and all to start a new life, dollars in his case spell success, success that raises his head and his own self-esteem.

"I'll go along to Sudbury," Joe told himself. "Then I'll look out for a farm, and I'll bank all the money save fifty dollars. That's it; pay for my transport, and then bank all but fifty dollars, keeping father's letter with me."

The following morning found our hero aboard the train bound for Sudbury. They occupied places in a long car with two rows

of seats, one on either side. At the far end of the car there was a miniature kitchen, where a fire was burning in a stove. Others who had crossed from England were with them, and the party soon settled down to their journey. Mrs. Fennick, with experience gained by earlier travel, had provisioned a basket, and with the help of Joe's kit, containing kettle and teapot, the little party were never at a want for good things to eat and drink. At night the seats, which were arranged in pairs facing one another were pulled out, making a respectable couch for one person, while the negro attendant lowered other bunks hinged to the side walls of the enormous car high overhead.

Late the following day the train pulled up at Sudbury, and they got down. Then Joe, Claude, and Jim waited till the Fennicks had bought a rig and had set out on their journey, when they, too, shouldered their bundles and strode off along the track, out of the town and into the open country. An hour or more later his two companions had accepted an engagement with a farmer whom they met driving along the track. Joe bade farewell to his two chums and strode onward.

"I'll make away more into the open," he told himself. "I'll get away from the settlements, so as to see what the life is really like, and whether the loneliness is so irksome as some make out."

Trudging along contentedly, he had covered some miles by noon, and then sat down to devour his luncheon. All that day he tramped, and the following one also, spending the night in the open; for it was beautiful weather, and frosts had long

since departed from the land. Here and there he came upon settlements, and many a time was employment offered him, for the busy season with farmers was at hand, and labour always scarce. Sometimes he passed isolated farms, and on the third night put up in the shack of a settler who had little cause to complain of his progress.

"Came out as a youngster," he told Joe. "Took jobs here and there for four years, and then applied for a quarter section. It happened to be free from trees, though there was many an old rotting stump in the ground. I ploughed a quarter of the acreage the first year and secured a fine crop. Next year I did better, and broke up still more ground. If things go along nicely I shall do well, while already the section is worth some hundreds of dollars. Am I lonely? Don't you think it! I've too much doing in summertime and sufficient in winter. The chaps as is lonely are those who've lived in towns all their lives, and are used to people buzzing about them, and to trains and trams. They want to go to a theatre or a picture entertainment most every night, and having none about find things lonesome. I don't. If I want company I get the rig and drive off to a neighbour, or use the sleigh if the snow's too deep. Then there's a moose hunt at times, while always there's work to be done – tending the cattle, feeding the pigs and poultry, sawing logs, and suchlike. In summer there's picnics with the neighbours – shooting and fishing too at times. No, I ain't lonely."

Joe left his hospitable roof and pressed on towards the north-

west, with his back to the railway. And a little later he came upon a small settlement, with farms immediately adjacent. Here he had no difficulty in obtaining work as a farm hand, the payment to be ten dollars a month and his board and keep.

"Know anything?" asked his employer, a man of some forty years of age, a colonial born, to whom Joe soon took a liking.

"Know anything about farming?" repeated Peter Strike, the man in question.

"Nothing," was Joe's answer, with an accompanying shake of the head.

"Never farmed, eh?"

"Never; couldn't milk a cow."

"Yer don't say so," grinned the farmer. "Now you'll do, you will, fine."

Joe was at a loss to understand. It seemed somewhat curious to him to hear that a hand engaged on a farm would do well when it was known that he was utterly ignorant. He explained the difficulty.

"Of course you don't understand," said Peter, guffawing loudly; for Joe's open speaking delighted him. "Of course you don't, 'cos back in England a man would be expected to know everything. But I'll tell you how it is with us. You're English; wall, now, in past years Englishmen got such a name with us colonials that we wouldn't employ him if we could help it. Eh? You'd like to know why? That's easy. Your Englishman would reach here dressed in knickers, perhaps – a regular swell. Us

colonials with our old clothing would be fair game for him. Then he'd know everything. He'd be wanting to do things as he'd done 'em back in his own country, and not as we've learned they has to be done here. He'd want to teach his master, and grumble – my word, nothing pleased him! Now that's all getting altered. We find immigrants readier to learn, and you're one of 'em. Mind you, there's faults with others besides the Englishman who knows everything. There's faults with us. There's a sight of colonials who think they know more than they do, and when they get having advice from a man fresh out to the country – why, they get testy. It makes 'em angry. They ain't too fair to the newcomer. But guess that's getting altered, as I've said. Anyway, you don't know anything, ain't that it?"

"Nothing," laughed Joe; for the open-hearted Peter amused him.

"Then you come along in and see the missus and the children. Afterwards there's a job for you."

Joe was introduced to Peter's family circle, consisting of his wife and four small children. He found the shack to contain three rooms, a somewhat liberal allowance.

"Most of 'em has but one or two," explained Peter. "A man who has to be his own house builder can't afford too much time for fixing rooms. However, I made two, the kitchen here and the bedroom. Later on I built a lean-to, making an extra room. That'll be for you. Now we'll feed. Like beans and bacon?"

"Anything," said Joe heartily. "I've had a long tramp and am

hungry. This fine air gives one an appetite."

"It's jest the healthiest place you could strike anywhere," cried Peter, his face glowing. "We've been here this four years. I bought the section from a man who had broken most of it and then got tired. You see, we've prairie all round, save for the settlement close handy. They say that the railway'll soon be along here. Anyway, there's no muskegs (swamps) hereabouts, and therefore no mosquitoes to speak of."

"He don't know what's a muskeg," laughed Mrs. Strike. "Tell him."

"It's a swamp, that's all," came the answer, "and there's miles of them in Canada. Often enough they're covered with low bush and with forests of rotting trees that ain't worth nothing as timber. But here we've open prairie, with plenty of wood, and huge forests at a little distance; so it's healthy. Now, you come along out and fix this job," he said, when Joe had finished the meal and had swallowed a cup of tea. "I'm so busy I haven't had time to see to a number of things, specially since my man was taken ill and left. There's the pigsty, for instance; it wants cleaning out. You jest get in at it."

Joe had long since donned his colonial outfit. He wore a slouch hat, with which no one could find a fault save for its obvious newness. An old pair of trousers covered his legs, and thick, nailed boots were on his feet. His jacket he had carried over his arm, and it was now reposing with his baggage, while a thick brown shirt and a somewhat discoloured red handkerchief

completed his apparel. He followed Peter to an outhouse, and found at the back a range of wooden pigsties which might, with truth, be said to be in an extremely unsavoury condition. There was a fork and a spade near at hand, together with an old tin bucket.

"Right," he said briskly, turning up the ends of his trousers; "I'll make a job of it. I should say that a chap who had no knowledge of farming could do this as well as any other. I'll come along when I've finished."

Peter stood watching his new hand for some few moments, and then strode off out of sight. Joe turned his sleeves up, climbed into the sty, and set to work with a will.

"Not an overnice job," he told himself, "but then it's part of farming work. If I turn up my nose at this sort of thing and think myself too good for it – why, that would be a nice sort of beginning! Someone has to clean the sties on a farm. I'm the labourer, and so it's my job."

His jovial whistle could be heard in the shack as he worked, and brought Mrs. Strike to the door with an infant in her arms.

"Why, it's the new hand," she told her husband. "He's whistling, as if he liked the job you'd given him. Now I think that was a little hard. You can see as Joe's a better sort of lad. He's had an education, and I wouldn't wonder if he was something in the Old Country. And you put him right off to clean out the sty."

She regarded her lord and master with some severity; but the latter only grinned. Peter had a most taking face; in fact, his

features were seldom severe, and more often than not wore a smile. He was a tall, burly man, with broad shoulders and long limbs. Possessed of fair hair and of a peaked beard, he was quite a handsome fellow, though wonderfully neglected as to his raiment. Indeed, contrasting Joe and Peter, one would have said offhand that the latter was the labourer and Joe the owner of the property.

But that is just the curious part of things outside the settlements in Canada. The more patched a man's garments, the more probable it is that he is successful. A colonist is not there judged by his fellows because of his clothing. He is judged by results – results of his labours on the soil or his astuteness in business. Compare this with England, where fine clothes make fine birds, where appearance is of so much importance, and do not let us sneer at either people. Custom has brought either condition about, and no doubt with good reason.

As for Peter, he was grinning widely as his wife turned somewhat sharply upon him.

"You've given him right off the nastiest job, and he quite green," she said.

"And I've done so with a reason," laughed Peter. "There's men I have hired before who had obviously seen something better back where they came from. They would have kicked at doing that sty. They would have forgotten that their old life was nothing to me, and that they were seeking their living in this country. Their old pride would be too much for 'em, and I would have

to suffer. Now a chap who comes out here has to drop pride. If he's ignorant, he oughtn't to be above starting right at the bottom. I like hearing that lad whistling; he ain't too proud to earn an honest living, even if the job is what it is."

"Hallo!" he called, coming over to Joe some half-hour later and looking into the sty. "How're you doing?"

"Fine," said our hero, borrowing an expression somewhat common in the Dominion. "Almost finished."

"Then you've been mighty slippy," admitted Peter, his eyes opening when he saw that our hero had indeed almost finished the task. "This lad'll do for me," Peter said to himself. "He works, he does. He's the kind of fellow who likes to get ahead, whether he's working for another or for himself. My, if he ain't washing the place down now!"

Evidently his new hand was cleanly also, and that was pleasing. Peter began to think that in gaining Joe's services he had made quite a bargain.

"That'll fix it right, lad," he sang out. "You've made a fine job of it. Jest you hop out now, and put the fork and spade back where you found 'em. It's yer first lesson in farming and in other things."

Joe looked up smiling. "Eh?" he said.

"Yes," went on Peter, "Mrs. Strike's been pitching into me for giving you such a job first off; but I wanted to see for meself whether you'd kick, or whether you meant to get on whatever came along. Reckon you'll do – now come along in and feed the

hosses."

When a month had passed, Joe found another ten dollars added to the fifty he had kept by him; also he had settled down wonderfully with the Strikes, and was already getting along with his farm work.

"He's a treasure is that lad," admitted Mrs. Strike warmly, when she and her husband were alone one evening. "It don't matter what it is that's wanted, he'll do it. If it's one of the children to mind, he'll smile and wink at the bairn. If it's water for the shack, he's willing. And if it's a log for the stove, he jest takes the saw and goes off whistling. That lad'll get along in the world."

"He's fine," agreed Peter. "He's the sort we want out from the Old Country."

Whether he was or not, Joe had taken kindly to the new life, without a shadow of doubt. His attentive mind was constantly absorbing details from the garrulous Peter or from his neighbours, and the end of that month's service on the farm had taught him quite a smattering of the profession he was to follow. As for being lonely, that he certainly was not; he was almost too busy even to have time for thinking of such a matter. Then, too, there were neighbours, while each shack actually possessed a telephone. However, if there were monotony in the life he was living, it was not long before an exciting incident occurred that would have aroused anyone even more lethargic than our hero.

CHAPTER VI
A Canadian Bad Man

"You jest put the hosses into the rig and make along to Hurley's," said Peter, Joe's employer, one early morning when the land was already ploughed, harrowed, and sown, and there was little to do but tend the animals and await the growth of the wheat crop, upon which Peter anticipated so much. "And don't stop longer than you need, lad. He's a bad man is Hurley, one of England's ne'er-do-weels, who came out years ago, and has now taken to farming. I've lent him a seeder this two seasons, and he hasn't returned it. Jest hitch it on to the back of the rig and bring it along."

"And you can take something from me along to Mrs. Hurley," said Peter's wife, who was one of those kind-hearted colonists one so often meets. "She's a poor, down-trodden thing, and most like she doesn't have too many of the good things. Here's butter for her, and eggs, and a leg of pork."

Joe was by now quite an adept at the management of the rig, and soon had his horses harnessed in, an operation of which he had been supremely ignorant before his arrival. He mounted into the cart, having placed Mrs. Strike's basket there already, cracked the whip, and went off across the prairie track between the ploughed acres already sprouting into greenness.

Hurley's quarter section was a matter of four miles away, and Joe had met the man only once before. But already something of his reputation had reached his ears, and Joe had gathered that amongst a farming class of industrious fellows this Hurley was looked at askance.

"He's a bully, and a sullen bully with it all," Peter had said once before. "He don't keep a hand more'n a month, as a general rule, while I reckon the boy as he has apprenticed to him has none too good a time. Hurley's a man I don't take to."

Bearing all this in mind, Joe whipped up his horses and took them at a smart pace across the fields. On every hand lay wooded country, with clearings to right and left, where the industry of the settlers had felled the trees, paying toll to the Government of Canada for them, and had then rooted the land, broken it, and placed therein the seed which was to spring into such bounteous growth. In every case a log hut was erected somewhere on the quarter section, consisting of one hundred and sixty acres; and these log huts often enough disclosed from their outward lines something of the character of the inmates, for in one case the shack was barely twelve feet by twelve.

"Jim Canning's," Joe told himself, for he had met Jim and liked him. "A confirmed old bachelor; been in Canada for ten years and more, and seems to like living by himself. He's a jovial fellow. Hallo, Jim!" he shouted, seeing that worthy crossing his section towards him. "How'dy."

Observe the expression, and gather the fact that even his own

short residence in the Dominion had already caused Joe to copy those who lived about him. He was becoming quite a Canadian in his speech. Already one could detect something of that pleasant drawl that marks the sturdy colonial.

"Hallo, Joe!" shouted the stranger, beaming at our hero and disclosing handsome features, sunburned to a degree, while even his chest was of a deep brown; for Jim wore no collar, and had discarded the customary neckcloth. He was, in fact, a tattered-looking object – a huge patch in the seat of his trousers, a shirt which might have been blue or green or red in its palmy days, but which was now of a curious brown, evidently from much exposure to the sun. "How'dy," he cried. "Where away?"

"Hurley's, fetching a seeder."

"Huh! Then you look lively back agin," came the answer. "There's ructions down there. Hurley's been fighting with his hands, and though I believe they've settled the quarrel for the time bein', you never know when it won't break out again; he ain't no use ain't Hurley."

They waved to one another and then parted, Joe jogging along the rough track, now with the wheels on one side deep in an old rut, which threatened to upset the rig, and then bumping over boulders and tree stumps, which made riding anything but comfortable. But what cared Joe? He whistled shrilly; his face was rosy and tanned, his eyes clear, his broad-brimmed hat thrust back on his head, till a lock of hair showed to the front. Nor could his own clothing be very favourably contrasted with Jim's;

for Joe's shirt had a large rent in it, made that very morning. A portion of the brim of his hat was missing, while the ends of his trousers were threadbare, to say the least of them.

"Clothing don't make the man, anyhow," Peter had said many a time. "You ain't any the wuss fer a rent in yer breeks."

"Hallo, Joe!" came a hail across from another quarter section. "How's the Strikes?"

Joe shouted back a greeting, and was soon exchanging others with farmers farther on. Indeed, he called at one of the shacks, a magnificent affair, showing the pluck and ability of its owner. It belonged to a city clerk from the city of London, one who had been ignorant of farming conditions, and when Joe was last in this direction it was not entirely finished.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.