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JOHN BARTLEY

Chestertown, Maryland.

THE DESERT AND A MAN

By F. W. LUENING

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EVEN the trail was gone. Only a line of telegraph poles remained, bleached yellow-white—as dry and dead as the land about them. Two wire threads flashed heat from pole to pole and quivered strangely. Stifling dust clouds settled on the teams, and the yellow wagons assumed the color of their freight—cement for the most. Men swore wearily as the caravan followed the metallic line. A sun-baked river bed crossed their way. They stopped. From out of the bed protruded an iron pump and near it lay a crude trough of planks. So they found Cheepetah—The Well of Lost Water.

Four men watched the empty wagons disappear in the dust. A line of cement sacks marked Cheepetah, a pile of lumber and a tent. The four turned to work, for the sun beat upon them mercilessly. They erected a flimsy shed. It offered shade, and they rested. Under a cliff that towered sheer they pitched the tent. Then ate of canned beef and sank to weary, exhausted slumber. And the moon shone on the desert and the coyotes howled.

They awoke to days of toil. Sheltered from the burning rays they labored under their shed—molding hollow blocks of cement. These they ranged neatly in long rows under a blazing sun—then staggered back to their refuge to curse and toil again. As the rows of finished blocks grew long the pile of cement sacks dwindled. So the four watched the line of telegraph poles. But the expected—the string of yellow, dust-covered wagons—did not come. The last of the cement sacks emptied, they waited. The rest was good. They smoked calmly under the shed. Heat waves simmered without and lizards played on the rocks. Within was drowsy peace and they sprawled on the sands, content.

The fiery disk of red sank into the western ledges. They sought the tent. The canned beef was gone, so they ate dried prunes. There was flour, and they baked biscuits. Then slept. A mountain rat came slyly out of the night. The glittering tin spoons fascinated. It nosed among them eagerly, upsetting the can with a crash. The Man stirred uneasily and the rat fled. It returned warily, later on. When the four awoke two spoons were gone—and the dried-up prunes. They drank coffee and finished the last of the oatmeal—then smoked—and waited—under the shed. The day passed idly away. Only the lizards stirred and a buzzard—high above.

The rat came again when they slept. It carried away another spoon. It found the flour and feasted freely. In the morning they had coffee and six biscuits between them, then returned to their vigil. No wagons came. The inactivity wore on their tempers and they quarreled. There was only coffee for supper. They quarreled more bitterly that night, then slept restlessly.

The Man heard the mountain rat rattle the spoon. He followed it out into the night—then forgot it. He bowed his head in his hands.

"God," he whispered, "it'll be hard to die—in such company."

Restless breathing came from the tent. Someone stirred and muttered oaths. The Man gulped. He arose and went to the pump. The iron handle lifted lightly and dropped clanging on to its rest. The valves offered no resistance. The Well of Lost Water was dry!

"It'll come sooner, now," he muttered dispassionately. He sat down on the empty well and slept.

With the morning came thirst. Three men dug frantically in the well. The Man remained calm. He sat under the shed and smoked. The three labored long, but found no trace of moisture. Then they quarreled fiercely—and fought. Unreasonable, brutish anger ruled them. Fear awoke the beast. The sun drove them to shelter, so they sank exhausted under the flimsy roof and glared at the telegraph poles. Nothing came. The sun shone cruelly and the sandstone ledges and the cactus quivered in the heat.

That evening they chewed coffee beans. There was no water. The Man shunned the tent. He lay down among the rocks. His parched throat kept him awake. When he slept, feverishly, moaning a little, he dreamed. A coyote howled dismally, very near. He stirred, awoke, and stared hopelessly into the starlit skies above him. His eyes burned and his lips felt hot and cracked.

Only one man sat under the shed next day. He chewed an empty pipe. Near him lay three things. Gaunt, haggard things, that scanned the line of poles with glittering, animal eyes. Fear shone in the eyes—a restless, haunting fear. The things watched one another furtively. They cursed thickly now and again and fought—blindly, causelessly—when the slow coming of the desert death goaded them to desperate, insane activity. Then they glowered at the Man—intently, wolfishly. Snakelike they edged nearer—nearer.

The Man saw the distant ledges tremble in the heat. He saw a ripple of water fleck the sandstone. Spreading, a river of blue flowed gently. It touched the parched hills. A mat of green o'erspread them. Trees grew, and there came people. Great crowds of people, who cheered wildly, and flaunted colored banners. A boat appeared. A long, narrow, tapering boat, that cut into the waters and sped swiftly—all too swiftly. Bare-armed figures rowed with the regularity and precision of a machine. Oars flashed beautifully in the sun. Then, strangely, the Man felt every nerve a-tingle. Vaguely he knew he must fight—fight hard. He felt the sun strike his bare arms and shoulders. The desert sun. No—the—the—why, the sun that shone on the Hudson—of course. He panted. He strained every muscle. Suddenly he heard a voice. It was counting—sharply, decisively! "One, two! one, two! Hit 'er up! Take the stroke! One, two!"

The Man bent to his task—his oar flew. He heard the gurgle of the water. He must win—they must win. His 'varsity—his crew. They were gaining. Out of one corner of his eye he saw the other boat; two fishing oars, then three; then four; then only three again. The Man gasped. How hot it was—how dry his throat! He wanted so to drink—drink—of that cool, blue water. But he couldn't—he couldn't. He must row—they must win. Suddenly they forged ahead. He heard a crash and a rending of wood. He saw the other boat strike something—go to pieces on a rock—a sandbar—a ledge. The river sank into the dust and the green died out of the hills.

The Man stared stupidly at his hands. He felt faint—sick. Three Things lay under the shed. They cursed and wept hysterically and groveled at his feet. Bruised, bleeding, beaten Things, with battered heads and delirious, hunted eyes.

A hard, dry sob shook the Man. He staggered out into the blinding light—fell—and staggered on. Then crawled painfully over the scorched sands. Trembling frightfully he drew himself up. He clawed at a pole—a telegraph pole. Weakly he held himself in upright position. He babbled thickly.

"Love—life—a Man—no quitter—fight," then shook off his delirium and tried to think.

"Wires," he muttered, "help—save them."

He looked up at the threads of steel above him. They were very low—just out of reach. He stretched up an arm, then fell heavily and rolled into the dry river bed. And night came and the stars.

A coyote circled warily around the inert body. It approached, sniffed uneasily, and scratched in the baked sand; then dug quickly down—down.

The Man stirred. The coyote fled and howled dolefully in the moonlight. The Man, moaning miserably, dragged himself on.

"No quitter—fight—wires," he whispered, then pitched forward in sudden weakness. His head hung over the hole where the coyote had scratched. His neck muscles relaxed. His seared lips touched the sand. It was moist and cool! Desperate, despairing energy came upon him. He clawed the wet earth into his mouth, he sucked every little, life-giving drop from the gritty, alkaline soil—then clawed again and groveled, his face in the mud. Bye and bye reason returned and strength. The Man scooped out handfuls of the saturated sand and drank greedily—but sanely.

He arose. With infinite, patient, heart-breaking toil he built a pyramid of stones. From its top he could just touch the wires. Another stone and another. He mounted his pile laboriously, swayed dizzily and clutched—blindly, wildly—at the steel line above him. His fingers closed convulsively. Then he lurched forward—and the wire snapped off short. Minutes passed—hours—ages. The Man lay exhausted, breathing weakly. Another struggle and he regained his feet. He remounted the pyramid. The other wire snapped. And he fell and lay very still.

* * * * * * *

The government mule-teams left the fort. Four troopers scanned the telegraph line carefully. Fifty, sixty, seventy miles, and they found the break—and the Man. Cool, wet sand was in his hands and he tottered to the shed, unseeing. The Things scarcely breathed. He pressed the sand to their lips. Carefully, methodically he passed from one to the next. Then sought the river bed again to bring more sand. The troopers stopped him, gently.

"No," he murmured. He reeled. "No—must save them—no quitter—fight—win." And he sank limply into their arms.

One Sincere Wisher

"I enjoy my birthdays," declared a Cass avenue resident. "Everyone wishes me many happy returns of the day. I always get a handsome, embossed card from one of my life insurance companies wishing me health, happiness and prosperity during this and many coming years. The other well-wishers may not be sincere. They may shout just as a matter of form. But this life insurance outfit is absolutely sincere. And that sincerity is good for a long laugh every birthday."—Detroit News.

Substitute for Platinum

German chemists are producing, as a substitute for platinum, alloys of aluminum and silver whose surfaces have been dusted with platinum black and then hammered or subjected to heavy pressure, according to a report issued by the American Chemical society. Alloys of this kind are on the market under the names "alargan," "platalargan and "platnik." "Alargan" consists only of aluminum and silver. "Platalargan" contains aluminum, silver and platinum, while "platnik" consists only of nickel and platinum.

Subscript To The Chestertown Transcript $1.50

PREPAREDNESS

"What happened in Alaska last week when children and grown ups but particularly children were stricken with diphtheria, and when the entire country waited each day for news of the heroic progress through the Arctic storms and blizzards, of the dog teams that were carrying the much needed anti-toxin to diphtheria stricken Nome, could just as easily have happened in Maryland, if anti-toxin were not always readily available," said Dr. R. H. Riley, Chief of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases, of the State Department of Health, in speaking of the methods now used in the control of diphtheria.

"But with this exception the Maryland State Department of Health has placed supplies of anti-toxin for the treatment of diphtheria, at centers that are conveniently accessible to every local Health Officer and to every physician in the state. The Deartment blieves in preparedness.

"Through this arrangement there is no place in the counties that is more than two and a half hours distant from one of these supply centers. You can better understand what that signifies when you think of the one hundred and twenty-seven hours over five days that were required to get the anti-toxin to Nome, and then only by the most strenuous, self-sacrificing work of the most skilful dog-team drivers in the whole of Alaska.

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"The anti-toxin that was carried to Nome was used in two ways curative and preventive. It was administered in large quantity units, as they are called to those already ill with the disease, to counteract the effects of the toxins or poisons generated throughout the body by the dipheria germ. It was also used in smaller quantities as a preventive, to persons who had been in contact with the disease.

"Similar procedures are followed in Maryland whenever a case of diphtheria occurs, but we are going even a step farther. Since children are particularly susceptible to the disease, and since a way has been found by which they can be permanently immunized aganist diphtheria that is protected from attacks by the diphtheria germ we are advising parents to have their children vaccinated against the disease. The protection is secured by three treatments one each week for three weeks. In the last five years the method has been tried among thousands of school children in all parts of the United States and its use has brought about a great reduction in the number of cases of the disease.

"A number of children in Dorchester county were immunized last year by Dr. E. A. Jones, the Deputy State Health Officer for that county. Since the beginning of the school year Dr. J. P. Franklin, the Deputy for Queen Anne County has immunized 200 children children and their younger brothers and sisters in that county, and Dr. John Collinson, the Deputy for Anne Arundel County has immunizeed 200 children in that rounty.

"The State Department of Health furnishes the material that is used in vaccinating children to give permanent protection against diphtheria, entirly free of charge. No children are immunized without the consent if their parents. The antitoxin that is used in treating the disease, and in protecting persons who have been exposed to it, is supplied to physicians, by the State Department of Health, at the actual cost of the material. The price that is paid by the patient will of course include the doctor's fee for his services, in addition to the charge for the anti-toxin.

"Before the descovery of anti-toxin, one out of every three persons who contracted the disease, died. Sometimes, in severe epidemics there were two deaths for every three cases. Now, the number is much less, one death for every 14 cases, in the counties of Maryland, with the possibility of a much freater reduction in both sickness and death when vaccination against the disease is generaelly adopted.

Cave Hunter Dead

The uncovering of the body of Floyd Collins late Monday afternoon ended the long effort to rescue the imprisoned mine explorer, who had been entombed in a cave since January 30, and without food for twelve days. It is recorded by the physicians in attendance on the rescue work that the prisoner had been dead at least 24 hours and perhaps longer, and that death had probaly been caused by starvation and lack of water.

Collins' feet were still engripped by the boulder from which it was thought he had been freed. The uncovering of the body came before it had been anticipated, the rescuers accidentally breaking through the roof of the imprisoned cavern, when one of the diggers investigating the opening, being held head downward by his companions, saw the face and part of the body of Collins, much of which was embeaded in the slime and fallen rock and sand of the cave. His body was buried in the cave where he met his grusome death.

—Oystermen, at least some of them, firmly believe that in a few years from now the bulk of the oyster business will be in cans. They are of the opinion that oysters will be steamed or processed the same as canned corn or tomatoes and then sold throughout the country. Cooking oysters kills all germs of disease and makes them safe as far as keeping is concerned provided they are properly handled.

Early Chicks Pay The Best

While it pays to raise chickens from January to September, the early chickens are the money-makers. The broilers go on a higher market and the pullets lay when eggs are high.

We put in our FIRST HATCH MONDAY, JANUARY 12, for both Custom Hatching and Day-Old Chicks. A hatch every week from January 12 until fall.

CHIX OF HIGHEST QUALITY

All our chix will be of the very highest quality, from free-range, purebred stock. We will have the following varieties: S. C. White Leghorns, Brown Leghorns, Barred, Buff and White Rocks, White Wyandottes, S. C. Rhode Island Reds, Blacks Giants (higher).

(All the above breeds for $15 per 100, excepts Giants). 100% delivery guaranteed.

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Larro Dairy and Our Egg Mash.

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Our assortment of Nuts, Candies and Fruits are of the best quality, and our prices cheapest.

SPECIALS IN DRY GOODS

Amoskeag Apron Ginghams	12½c yd.
Fast Color Dress Ginghams	18c "
Hill Muslin	19c "
Heavy Outing Flannel, solid colors	22c "
Silk Stripe Madras	35c "
Shirting Percale, fast colors	22c "

A large lot of Ladies' Shoes at one-half price to clean out stock.

Ball Band and Goodrich Boots, in Short, Three-quarter and Hip. Rubber Shoes for the whole family.

Men's and Boys' Heavy Pants and Coats, made by Sweet-Orr & Co.

Floor Coverings in Congoleum, Matting and Woolen Fibre Rugs.

Cook Stoves, Ranges and Airtight Heaters in stock.

GROCERY SPECIALS

Seeded and Seedless Raisins	12½c lb.
Currants	22c "
Citron	55c "
Mixed Nuts	20c "
Six Velvet Soap	25c
Six P&G White Naptha Soap	30c

Will take Chickens and Eggs in trade.

T. H. M. BRAMBLE, Fairlee, Md.

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