54-40 OR FIGHT

BY EMERSON HOUGH

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ILLUSTRATIONS by MAGNUS G. KETNER

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SYNOPSIS.

Senator John Colleton is invited to become a partner in a mine in Utah, but he declares that if he accepts Texas and Oregon be added to the Union, he sends his secretary, Nicholas Tyler, to the Oregon country. Tyler, on his way, stops at Washington, Philadelphia, to call on his apartments. While searching for the secretary's name, a carriage drives up and Nicholas is invited to enter. The occupant, Colleton's secretary, Nicholas Tyler, is unable to explain to Nicholas why he thinks that the baroness has lost a slipper, she gives him the remaining fellow, and pledges that she will tell Colleton she is coming to Washington. Nicholas is anxious lest Colleton should see the slipper, so Nicholas gives her a trinket he intended for his sweetheart, Elizabeth Colleton. Tyler tells Patenham that the baroness has lost a slipper, and Patenham, who knows the slipper, that he had had one of the twin fellows. Forty, or Flight, Colleton's secretary, secretly, and states, to Baroness Nicholas to Meet Colleton. Nicholas is unable to find time to be married that night. That baroness says she will try to prevent the marriage. A drunken conversation, Colleton's secretary, Nicholas, Patenham, Colleton's secretary, and the baroness' slipper in Elizabeth's hand, Colleton, and the wedding is called off. Nicholas finds the baroness in Montreal, she having escaped from Colleton. Tyler, the secretary, receives instructions from Colleton. She tells him that the slipper he had in his possession contained, a note from the attache of Texas to the Texan Commissioner, stating that the United States did not intend to fight with us 30 days, she would lose both Texas and Oregon. Nicholas meets a naturalist, Von Rittenhofen, who gives him information that Colleton's secretary, Nicholas, is secretly disguised from Montreal simultaneously. Colleton engages Von Rittenhofen to take charge of the secretary. Colleton orders Nicholas to Oregon. Nicholas, on his way to Oregon, Nicholas has an unexpectedly interview with Elizabeth. Colleton excites the jealousy of Bessie Tyrrell, Colleton secures the signature of the Texas Commissioner, and is assassinated. Nicholas starts for Oregon.

CHAPTER XXV.

Oregon.

The wind and the light of each path we pursue,
If woman be there, there is happiness too.
—Moore.

Twenty miles a day, week in and week out, we edged westward up the Platte, in heat and dust part of the time, often plagued at night by clouds of mosquitoes. Our men endured the cruelties of the journey without complaint. I do not recall that I ever heard even the weakest woman complain. Thus at last we reached the South pass of the Rockies, not yet half done our journey, and entered upon that portion of the trail west of the Rockies, which had still two mountain ranges to cross, and which was even more apt to be infested by the hostile Indians. Even when we reached the ragged trading post, Fort Hall, we had still more than 600 miles to go.

By this time our forces had wasted as though under assault of arms. Far back on the trail, many had been forced to leave pathed belongings, relics, heirlooms, implements, machinery, all conveniences. The finest of mahogany blistered in the sun, abandoned and unheeded. Our trail might have been followed by discarded implements of agriculture, and by whitened bones as well. Our footsore teams, gaunt and weakened, began to faint and fall. Horses and oxen died in the harness or under the yoke, and were perforce abandoned where they fell. Each pound of superfluous weight was cast away as our motive power thus lessened. Wagons were abandoned, goods were packed on horses, oxen and cows.

We put cows into the yoke now, and used women instead of men on the drivers' seats, and boys who started riding finished afoot.

Gaunt and brown and savage, hungry and grim, ragged, hatless, shoeless, our cavalcade closed up and came on, and so we had come, when the autumn had yellowed all the foliage back east in gentler climes, we crossed the shoulders of the Blue mountains, and came into the valley of the Walla Walla, and passed Doctor Whitman's Columbia to the valley of the Willamette, 300 miles yet further, where there was some sweet in peace. The flowers began to bloom in the wild meads, and the horses fattened on their native pastures.

Summer came on. The fields began to whiten with the ripening grain, grew uneasy, feeling myself only an alien in a land so able to feed itself. I now was much disposed to discuss means of getting back over the long trail to the eastward, to carry the news that Oregon was ours. It was at this time that John occurred a startling and decisive event.

I was on my way on a canoe voyage up the wide Columbia, not far above the point where it receives its great lower tributary, the Willamette, when all at once I heard the report of a cannon shot. I turned to see the cloud of blue smoke still hanging over the surface of the water. Slowly there swung into view an ocean-going vessel under steam and with military canvas. She made a gallant spectacle. But whose ship was she? I examined her colors anxiously enough. I caught the import of her ensign. She flew the British Union Jack!

England had won the race by seconds! Something of the sickness seemed to me familiar. I knew the sight of her short masts, the pitch of her smoke-stacks, the number of her guns. Yes, she was the Modeste of the English navy—the same ship which more than a year before I had seen at anchor off Montreal!

News travels fast in wild countries, and it took us little time to learn the destination of the Modeste. She came to anchor off Oregon City, and she lay below Fort Vancouver. At once, of course, her officers made formal calls upon Dr. McLaughlin, the factor at Fort Vancouver, and accepted head of the British elements thereabouts. Two weeks passed in rumors and counter rumors, and a vastly dangerous tension existed in all the American settlements, because word was spread that England had sent a ship to coast us. Then came to myself and certain others at Oregon City messengers from peace-loving Dr. McLaughlin, asking us to join him in a little celebration in honor of the arrival of her majesty's vessel.

Here at least was news; but it was news not wholly to my liking which I soon unearthed. The Modeste was but one ship of 18 guns, 400 tons, 84 men, 200 tons, she lay in Puget sound. The watch-dog of Great Britain were at our doors. This question of monopoly and the republic, was not yet settled, after all!

I pass the story of the banquet at Fort Vancouver, because it is unpleasant to recite the difficulties of a kindly host who finds himself with

Our Men Endured the Penalties of the Journey Without Comment.

start west from the Missouri until the following spring. We could only guess how events were going forward on our diplomacy.

The mild winter wore away, and I learned little. Spring came and still no word of any land expedition out of Canada. We and the Hudson's Bay folk got along in peace. The flowers began to bloom in the wild meads, and the horses fattened on their native pastures.

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Either tea or yerba mate is served in Chile at 4 p. m., not only in the home, but at clubs, restaurants in hotels, and many business houses. A cup and a bun or roll or small cake in the club or hotel cost from eight to twelve cents United States gold, while the business house serve it free rather than lose the clerks leave their work to go out for it.

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