

The Argonauts

FROM BUSHY'S MEMOIRS

LUG seemed to be greatly perturbed as he slowly paced the floor of his room on the Second Corridor. Some momentous problem was ruffling that, "Prone brow oppressive with its mind." He would stop occasionally and look over towards Dalton Hall or apply his ear to the keyhole and listen intently for a few moments. Then the nervous tread would begin again. At long last, however, his patience was rewarded. Stealthy footsteps were heard in the Corridor, the door opened softly and two figures sidled into the room. By the dim light of the shaded lamp the manly forms of Tidy and Pontiac could easily be recognized.

"Is the coast clear?" was Lug's whispered salutation as he closed the door with a precautionary glance at the Den.

"No," answered Pontiac, "there's a meeting of the Red & White staff in C—'s room and those two eagle-eyed prefects will soon be coming over. We can't leave before midnight."

Tidy acquiesced in this, remarking that self-control was a great virtue and that students should take every opportunity of practising it.

Lug would have drawn a personal application from this sage remark at any other time but he was now wholly occupied with the enterprise on hand, and producing a chart, interrupted Tidy's flow of eloquence.

"I was about to show you this map during recreation when you were assisted from my room by the Prefect of Discipline. Bones Mc—— got it from one of his Micmac friends when he was camping over at Rocky Point. They thought it was of no value but I have deciphered it. I know exactly where the gold is hidden. At the north-east corner of the old French Fort at Rocky Point is buried treasure enough to make us richer than Pluto."

They regarded the chart in silence for a few moments when Tidy's gratitude overflowed into words.

"It was indeed a total surprise to me, Lug, to be asked to accompany you on this expedition, but I can't say how delighted I am. I'm a little timid about undertaking it but I realize that if you want to get rich you must throw yourself into the maelstrom. When you break the ice, however, it's very easy."

A discussion now took place as to how each would dispose of his prospective wealth.

"For my part," said Lug, "I shall seek the opportunity of revenging myself on a certain "pater familias" in Charlottetown for the liberty he took with my person on a certain occasion. I thought of ignoring the girl at the Pastime Dance, but I think I'll hire the old man to stoke one of my furnaces in the mansion I intend to build in town."

"No such sordid motives are mine," said Tidy, "I shall devote my wealth to the uplift of humanity. After a tour of the world I'll come back and lecture at St. Dunstan's or else develop my musical talents, and with Tes—and O'M—will leave this country to delight music lovers."

Pontiac with a significant glance at Lug's trunk said that he would gladly give his share at that very moment for a chocolate bar.

Lug would have liked to ignore this hind but it was too palpably plain. He very reluctantly, therefore, opened his trunk and divided half a chocolate bar between his two accomplices. Carried high on this wave of generosity he was about to share with them a stick of Spearmint when the Town clock striking twelve reminded them that the hour was at hand. Lug replaced the stick of gum in the trunk, securely locked it and signified by a gesture that it was time for the party to move off.

They listened intently for a few moments to make sure that no one was moving, then filed noiselessly out of the window and down the fire-escape. A brief search procured the necessary implements and they were soon on their way. They were indeed a mysterious-looking trio as they trudged along Malpeque Road. Tidy was in the lead with his boot-box under his

arm, in a small corner of which was conveniently packed a large lunch. Pontiac came next with a shovel on his shoulder and looking the exact prototype of his historic namesake, while brought up the rear, carrying his pick with grace and ease and ease that would have done credit to Jiggs in his pre-pulent days.

On reaching Charlottetown they took a circuitous route to Pownal Wharf so as to avoid any home-coming Pastime dancers. They had some difficulty in securing a boat, but they finally borrowed one from a gentleman who was absent and were soon gliding softly over the water on their way to Rocky Point. Nothing could be heard for a time but a low gurgling sound as Tidy drank from a bottle of cold tea, and the splash of the oars as Pontiac dipped them one after the other into the water. Lugsat in the stern of the boat apparently engaged in deep thought. There was nothing about him to suggest that in a few short hours he would be a veritable Croesus. He would lift his head occasionally and cast an impatient glance at Tidy whose silvery notes rose and fell with the swelling cadences of that delightful old favorite, "Somebody's waiting for you, you, you."

During all this time Poor Pontiac laboured hard at the oars. He seemed repeatedly to misjudge the whereabouts of the water and would fan the air with one oar while with the other he appeared to be investigating the depth of the harbour. He couldn't understand the habit which the boat possessed of pointing in all directions other than their objective. Finally, however, by dint of perseverance and in spite of Tidy's advice, he managed to back into a little cove at Rocky Point.

Only a mile and a half now separated them from their treasure. Their hearts beat faster as the intervening distance grew less. Each was peering into the darkness to see who would be first to distinguish the outline of the old fort. Presently Pontiac who was in the lead uttered a war-whoop and the three involuntarily broke into a run.

It required but a moment to locate the exact spot and all three threw themselves into the work of digging, jostling one another in their feverish energy.

"I've struck it," shouted Dug as his pick resounded with a

metallic ring.

"Struck it? You've landed on my foot and ruined the only pair of boots I've got," roared Tidy as he danced about trying to hold up the injured foot with both hands.

Too eager to waste word of sympathy or apology, Lug wiped the pick on the grass and swung again. Soon the clay was flying in all directions and a deep cavity yawned, over which Tidy's hatless head protruded like a danger light on a broken bridge.

However, their patience diminished as the depth of the hole increased, until Lug discovered by examining the chart that he had mistaken the spot. He announced this discovery to the others first taking the precaution to get beyond reach of Pontiac's shovel.

"I'd like to dig a hole like that for you," said the latter as he straightened his back and scrambled up.

"Bis dat qui cito dat," quoted the philosophic Tidy. "Better luck next time," he translated with a patronizing glance at the others.

They tried the south-east corner now. Their store of energy was well-nigh exhausted but what of that? They dug and panted and sweated but no treasure. Then Lug lost patience, threw down his pick and started for home. With great difficulty, however, they persuaded him to try the south-west corner.

Work began again but much more slowly than before. Tidy from the wall of the fort where he sat swinging his legs extolled the virtue of perseverance, remarking wisely that success would eventually come to him who kept on trying. Lug's patience had almost reached the breaking point again, when his pick struck with a dull low thud. For a moment they hesitated then all dropped to their knees and began to claw away the earth with their hands.

"It's a chest," said Pontiac in a 'horse' whisper.

"A chest of gold," hissed Lug as they heaved it to the surface.

They stood for a moment feasting their eyes on the treasure and luxuriating in the realization of their dreams.

They were rich now—fabulously rich. In a few hours they would begin to live in earnest that life of leisure and luxury they so dearly desired and so courageously attained.

“Can we carry it home on our shoulders?” said Pontiac.

“No,” snapped the impatient Lug, “we’ll open it here and divide immediately.”

It was securely padlocked, and the stout box resisted all their onslaughts with the pick and shovel, until Tidy with a dexterous kick sent the clasp flying. Lug sprang forward and with trembling fingers prepared to raise the lid while the others leaned over him with burning eyes and panting breath. His eager fingers fumbled with the cover, gripped it and threw it open.

They stood petrified. What they beheld, at first conveyed nothing to their bewildered senses. Not the treasure they so confidently expected, but the skeleton of an Indian brave with his weapons of war beside him,

They stood silent for a few moments, then Lug and Tidy turned away and with drooping shoulders and lagging footsteps, directed their course homewards. Pontiac lingered behind, and a strange emotion seemed to agitate his spirit.

Urban going over to church that morning was surprised to see two clay-soiled, mud-bespattered figures skulk across the lawn, steal around the corner and sneak in the back door.

But over at Rocky Point in the dim gray light of the early morning, Pontiac sadly laid the last shovelful of clay on the grave of the warrior whose long, long sleep had been so rudely disturbed, muttering to himself the while, “Heap big chief! Heap big chief! Pale-faces no understand’.”

