

A Hayseed of the Kootenay.

Mike Gridbank and Dick Stubbs, the two most noted lumber sharks on the Coast, one day pitched camp about a mile from our saw mill in Upper Kootenay. They had evidently come to stay awhile as they were loaded up with about three weeks' provisions.

"Those guys are up to no good, I'll bet a season's cut," said Boss Milligan, the owner of our mill. It may be well to state here that the year before we had caught these very two staking a twenty five mile tract of prime timber belonging to us, and it will suffice to say that whatever monkey business they were up to now we entertained no apprehension on our own account. Boss Milligan, however, was the sort of a man who is not likely to lose anything through lack of caution and it was to this spirit that we were indebted for an account of the further movements of the two timber jumpers.

Although we were confident that they had profited by their previous experience and would likely let us alone in the future the Boss did not share our confidence. So he deputed Jack Williams, or Sharpie as he was known among us, to keep his eye on and report the whereabouts of our two visitors.

About a week later, when one evening we were sitting about the fire in the mill shanty wondering what had become of the two timber sharks, the door suddenly opened and Sharpie wearing a broad unusual grin stepped in. Although every man present was filled with curiosity not one showed by his expression that he was in the slightest degree interested; for your timber Jack is a very undemonstrative man and possesses a remarkable amount of Indian stoicism.

"Well those fellows were easy," ejaculated Sharpie, but ill repressing his desire to laugh. Boss Milligan now thought that he was entitled to a report and broke in with the monosyllabic query, "Who!" "Who! why who do you think it was, two indians from South America?" reproached Sharpie. "Well you might tell us about it anyway," grumbled the Boss. Sharpie gave him one look of scorn and proceeded :

"Well I followed these fellows over almost every square foot of timber land in Kootenay without getting an inkling of what they were up to, until one night I crept in on them while they were at supper and heard them bemoaning their sad fate

at finding every piece of likely timber protected; then I caught on right away; I gathered from their talk that they were employed by a Vancouver syndicate to snap up all the timber land they could lay their hands on by fair means or foul, trying at first of course to get all they could by foul. Their attempts at stealing effectually blocked, they were now going to try to buy for as low a price as possible.

"Well you all know old Jake of the beautiful patch." Here it may be well to tell who "Jake of the beautiful patch" was. His proper name was Jacob Thompson, and he had come to Kootenay some twenty years before and staked out a timber claim which, to use his own expression, was indeed a "beautiful patch". It consisted of tall stately pines apparently of immense value but unfortunately for Jake they were for the most part rotten in the heart and not worth the trouble of cutting

"Well," continued Sharpie "when these fellows saw the timber they took the bait immediately and when old Jake came around asked his price. Jake placed his price at seven thousand dollars, they affecting the horror of a Jew peddler and protesting that it was not really worth half that amount. He allowed them to beat him down a thousand dollars and no more, and realizing what a bargain they had cinched they closed with his offer. When Jake had his check for six thousand dollars safe in his pocket he told them of the real worthlessness of the property. At first they refused to believe, but when they investigated and found it to be true I began to fear for Jake's safety, for it would be difficult to find at that moment in all Canada two cheaper or sadder men."

When Sharpie had finished, the long suppressed merriment of the men broke out in a volume of sound that could be heard a mile away, and we all turned in jubilant in the knowledge that our old enemies had at length been outwitted.

The next morning after we began work in the mill two crestfallen men hove in sight. As they passed the mill the men greeted them with many a sarcastic comment, and when they turned and shook their fists at the camp a loud derisive shout broke out and pursued them until they were lost to sight among the trees.