

Bradford's P-Luck

By Allan Hawkwood

“**Y**E'RE an obstinate, stubborn, wayward brute of a lad,” said old man Garvin, with a grin, as he drew on his mittens and picked up his dog whip. “Will ye, who talk of good luck, listen to one word, with me blessing, John Bradford?”

“More than one, and gladly,” replied young Bradford. “Fire away!”

“It's this, lad. There ain't no such thing as luck—it's luck with a 'p' in front of it, Ye'll not last, I warn ye—no man could; they'll drive ye out afore ye get a trap line set—”

“They will not,” broke in Bradford, his brown eyes hard. “You've helped me buy that trap line, and buy it honestly. It belongs to me, and I'm able to work it.”

“Ye're not,” repeated old Garvin doggedly. “But mind this, John, my lad. Put a 'p' in front o' your luck, and if ye stick it out three weeks, ye'll do a man's work. Good-by to ye, and we'll look to see ye at Fort Churchill for Christmas.”

“You'll not,” said Bradford. But there was regret in his eyes, as they rested on the rugged features of his old friend and guide.

The two were standing outside the gate of Fort Steadfast, and old man Garvin was on his way back to Fort Churchill and civilization. They had come up together two weeks previously, and now John Bradford was about to face the long winter alone—and with it, a sterner struggle than he dreamed of, despite Garvin's warnings.

“For the last time, lad, will ye let me stay?” pleaded Garvin suddenly.

“No,” said Bradford. “I'm no baby. You've got me started right, I've bought my trap line, and I'm going to stand alone. These half-breeds can't frighten me.”

Admiration dwelt in the old-timer's faded eyes.

“All right, then. But mind—even if ye have bought that felley's trap line, ye'll have trouble. These 'breeds don't like outsiders coming in. Pluck be with ye, lad, and good-by till Christmas.”

“Good-by—until next spring!”

“Perhaps he was right,” thought Bradford, gazing after his friend. “But if I can't handle my own end—I'll not whine! And they can't freeze me out!”

Yet, despite the steady confidence in his eyes and the firm purpose stamped in his strong, cleanly-built features, he knew well that he faced a

conflict.

Up here on the White Loon River all the long leagues of barren lands had been parceled out among the Indians and half-breeds for generations back. Bradford had bought the trap line, which covered the unwritten, but legal, right to all trapping in its bounds, of an old man named Peter Napoleon, and the Hudson's Bay Company factor had witnessed the sale.

This gave Bradford absolute right to handle that trap line, which covered a stretch of country fifty miles in length. But Peter Napoleon had nephews, and one nephew, in especial, named Tin-cup Jean.

Tin-cup Jean had been heard to say that Peter Napoleon had no right to sell his trap line to a white boy; that no intruders in the White Loon country were wanted, and that such intruders would be sent packing without ceremony. All of which had disturbed old man Garvin, but had not ruffled Bradford in the least.

Bradford had lived most of his life in Minnesota, had done a good deal of hunting and trapping, and knew how to take care of himself. Though he was but eighteen, the young American was quite justified in his self-confidence.

He had been in northwestern Canada for a year. Having made some money by guiding fishing parties that summer, he had struck for Fort Churchill, in the north, where Garvin, an old family friend, was working as storekeeper. Garvin had, with many protests, brought him up to Fort Steadfast, and had there helped him in getting rightly started.

Bradford, gazing off at the dark speck on the snow, shook off the uneasiness that gripped him on the departure of his friend.

“Bosh!” Then he laughed inwardly, and turned to the gates of the post. “These Indians up here aren't going to hurt me! Now for my dogs, and I'm off to Lac du Chien and my trap line!”

He entered the gates, for Steadfast was an old fort, built within a stockade. Just outside the store, Bradford had left his dog team and ready-loaded sled, since he was departing at once for his trapping grounds.

As he turned, however, he checked himself abruptly. A glance showed him what was going on—and the scene brought a sparkle of anger to his brown eyes. With a sudden cry of rage, he sprang

forward, baring his clenched fists of their mittens.

II.

Standing outside the store of the fort, heavy dog whip in hand, was a tall, dark half-breed, clothed in a red capote, or blanket coat. Crouching in the new-fallen snow, a trickle of blood freezing on her cheek, was a frightened squaw. Both were Woods Crees.

The young American had seen that blow struck. Now he saw the half-breed raise the whip again, an expression of snarling rage stamped on his cruel face. It was this sight which had wakened Bradford to such quick anger.

The 'breed had not seen him. Quick as a flash, John Bradford leaped forward and seized the heavy hide whip, tearing it from the grasp of the surprised half-breed.

"How dare you strike a woman, you coward?" he cried hotly.

As the Cree's eyes fell on Bradford, his swarthy hand flew to his knife.

But it rested there. The half-breed knew that the butt of his dog whip was heavily weighted, and in the face of the young American he saw a readiness to use that heavy butt.

Bradford, looking into the man's venomous gaze, felt as though an icy blast had struck him. Yet no sign of that feeling was revealed in his features, and his eyes held steady.

"Mebbeso you want for scrap, huh?" demanded the Cree belligerently.

"No," returned Bradford. "I don't want to fight. But I've a good notion to give you a taste of your own whip, my friend! I suppose you think you're a heap big chief to be beating up a squaw like this, eh? You coward!"

Without immediate response, the half-breed turned, stirred the crouching squaw with his foot, and snapped out a word in Cree. She arose, drew her shawl over her head, and started out between the open gates toward the river.

Hand still on knife, the Cree looked at Bradford with such malignant hatred that the young American gripped the dog whip more tightly.

"I'm know you," said the half-breed, his voice thick with rage. "You's be de feller what come here to make for steal ol' Pete 'Poleon's trap line—"

"That's a lie, and I think you know it," interrupted Bradford evenly. "I bought that trap line, and I mean to run it."

"I'm tell you dis!" said the Cree passionately. "Dis be Injun country! You white man keep 'way! You stay, mebbeso you get hurt!"

"My greasy-haired friend, you're away off on some points," exclaimed Bradford. "This is open country. I've bought that trap line from Lac du Chien to Lonesome River—"

"By gar, you's be de big t'ief!" cried the other, shaking with anger. "I'm tell you dis, me! You go 'way from here quick. You stay, mebbeso you get hurt, mebbeso you lose dem traps, mebbeso—"

Bradford smiled, and there was such anger in his smile that the excited Cree fell silent.

"I'm tell you this, me," said the young American with calm mockery, "I don't like to be called a thief, understand? You take this message to your red friends: *Keep off my trap line!* I know your customs up here. If you find anyone monkeying with your traps, you shoot, and shoot to kill. I'll do the same thing—savvy? I mean it."

Bradford did not mean it at all, but he looked as though he meant it very much. The Cree, astonished for the moment, only swept into a blacker rage.

"Den you watch out!" the Cree shouted menacingly. "I'm going make for kill you, some day! I'm going make for kill you, white boy—"

"Here, what's all this?" interrupted a harsh voice.

Bradford turned. The H.B.C. factor had opened the door of the store, and was standing on the steps, regarding them sourly.

"Get out of here," he said to the Cree, who obeyed the peremptory orders with a final black look at the young American. "Mr. Bradford, will you step inside?"

"Certainly, sir," responded Bradford, who well knew what autocratic power the factor wielded in this wilderness outpost.

Entering the store, he threw back his thicket capote, and turned with a smile.

"I suppose you heard our discussion, eh? That fellow was beating a woman with this whip, and I interfered."

"You should have minded your own business," growled the factor, inspecting him keenly.

"Eh? Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am, lad," said the other more kindly. "You must never interfere between these people—leave them alone, absolutely. But another thing. Do you know who that fellow out there

was?"

"No," returned Bradford, wondering.

"Tin-cup Jean."

With that, the American understood the furious rage of the half-breed.

"I didn't know it," he said slowly. "Still, it makes no difference. Garvin warned me that I'd have trouble."

"You will," said the factor, his face grave. "But let me tell you something. From what I can find out, this man Tin-cup Jean has taken up the general dislike of all outsiders into his own personal handling. Overcome him, and you'll have no trouble with the others."

"You mean," asked Bradford, "that he is a sort of—of champion?"

"In a sense, yes. You'll have to best him, and do it thoroughly. If you do it, you'll have won your place. Understand? And if you find him robbing your traps—shoot."

Bradford flushed a little, remembering his own recent words.

"That was a bluff," he admitted. "I don't intend to—"

"I said, shoot!" broke in the factor keenly. "Up here, it's a criminal offense to tamper with another man's traps. Now get along, Mr. Bradford—and luck be with you!"

Bradford smiled, shook hands, and departed. But, as he marshaled his dogs and hauled around his loaded sled, he reflected that luck, preceded by a "p," was certainly going to be with him.

Yet, he did not intend to shoot Tin-cup Jean, or anyone else—if he could help it.

III.

Two hundred miles from Fort Steadfast, as the crow flies, but nearer four hundred as the dog sled goes, lies Lac du Chien. Following White Loon River onward for fifty miles north, one comes to Lonesome River, a tributary.

From Lac du Chien to Lonesome River was the trap line now owned by John Bradford—provided he could hold it.

On the west, White Loon River was his boundary; thirty miles to the east, the Dog Hills. It was a good trap line, possessing every manner of game and every kind of country, from hills to swamps and muskegs. Of any human life it was quite bare.

Leaving Lac du Chien, Bradford lashed his team up the frozen White Loon in the midst of a driving snow, and, after fifteen miles of it, came to a halt. Here, in his own fur kingdom, he fed his dogs, lashed down his sled against their depredations, and rolled up with them under a snowdrift to sleep out the storm.

Here, too, he made his permanent camp on awakening, deciding to build a cabin later, when he had found himself. Aside from the stock supplies on his sled, he was now dependent on his own resources for absolutely everything he needed. Any man he met could be accounted an enemy, in fact if not in actual deed.

During two long, crowded weeks the young American labored as every man must labor who would bring a toll of fur from the Northland. With his camp as a base, he went north along the White Loon to Lonesome River; went up Lonesome to the Dog Hills; circled around, and came back to camp. Then he went south to Lac du Chien, circling back as before.

After him he left a line of traps, snares, and deadfalls. Each one had to be made, set, and baited with utmost care. He had to study out mink runs and otter slides. He had to keep each trap hidden, and free from contamination of human touch. He had to keep in his head the location of each and every snare he set.

In that first journey, he saw that he had been in luck, and he understood more clearly why Tin-cup Jean had been so furious. Old Pete Napoleon had been too old to cover much ground in late years, and fur was there in plenty. It was a rich trapping field.

This trap line set out, Bradford rested two days, then started for Lonesome River to follow his line. For a week he worked harder than his dogs, rebaiting and resetting traps, skinning his take, getting better acquainted with the lay of the land. By the time he returned to camp, he was overcome with amazement and joy.

That first trip had netted him a sled load of mink, otter, fox, and beaver pelts. Moreover, he had located two of the tiny, discolored air holes in snow banks which tokened that bears slept underneath, and had found a muskeg swarming with muskrat lodges.

"By thunder!" he ejaculated, as he conned his take, "if this keeps up all winter, I'll make a fortune! Now to see what's doing toward Lac du

Chien—ought to be rich.”

And it was rich—for one day’s journey.

On the second morning he came to a long swamp which extended clear to Lac du Chien. Here he had seen plenty of “sign,” and had counted on reaping an abundant harvest, for marten, gray fox, and lynx were here in large numbers, and he had shot one magnificent dark mink.

Oddly enough, however, he found not a catch all that morning.

Toward noon he took a beaver from a well-hidden trap—and was promptly puzzled. That trap was one of a dozen which he had set in the vicinity of a large beaver village, but none of the others had been sprung.

He examined them carefully. They seemed to be exactly as he had set them. At length he concluded that he might not have given the beavers time to get caught, and so proceeded on to the lake.

To his growing consternation, he discovered that, with the exception of a few muskrat sets, every trap had failed. That evening he visited what he had considered a certain “take”—one of his few steel traps, carefully staked just beneath a newly made otter slide. It was exactly as he had left it.

As he circled around the lake shore into the hills on his way back to camp, Bradford grew more puzzled with every hour. There was no lack of game—indeed, he shot a lynx and two timber wolves in one morning; why, therefore, did his traps fail?

He had set them cunningly, and knew that his judgment was not at fault. But his marten scent had drawn no martens; his snares and deadfalls had drawn no victims.

The American had by no means forgotten the threats of Tin-cup Jean, but as he wended his discouraged way into camp after five days of fruitless work, he knew that he could lay no blame at any man’s door for his failure. His traps had not been touched, it seemed certain, nor had his baits been removed, nor had the traps been robbed.

“We’ll see what the north line shows up,” he thought grimly, and started out the next morning for Lonesome River.

He was amazed to find the same thing repeated there. This northern line, which had yielded so rich a haul on the first trip, now produced a solitary mink and two fishers. It was incredible!

Weary, discouraged, perplexed, Bradford plodded on doggedly. On the third morning of this

hopeless round, when starting up Lonesome from White Loon River, he visited a very neatly set mink trap, beside a large log on the shore. It was untouched, but, at the very edge of the ice, ten feet away, the youth saw a flat indentation in the untrodden snow.

He sat down and studied that indentation, frowning. It looked exactly as though a long pole had stood there, butt down. To Bradford’s eye the thing was not caused by any animal or other forest procedure.

Presently he went over to the ice and examined it. After some search he found scratches on the smooth surface. Yet, he reasoned, why should a pole be laid here, one end on the ice and the other end—

Ah! The other end!

Swiftly he ran to that mink trap by the log. He pulled it to pieces slowly, carefully examining every twig and line; suddenly he leaned over, sniffing. From a bit of brush ascended the faint, pungent odor of—violet perfume!

Bradford drew back, white with anger, and stared at the trap. He saw it all, at last. Someone had dogged his steps, watching every trap; someone had approached those traps with infinite cunning, leaving no trace of his approach; someone had carefully left a drop of cheap store perfume at every trap.

It was cunning—cunning! No animal, smelling that perfume in winter, but would immediately shun the proffered bait. And, except for chance or quick suspicion, Bradford would never have discovered why his traps had failed.

Silently, the young American went to his sled and took his rifle from its moosehide cover. He filled the magazine with the soft-nosed thirty-thirty cartridges.

“I think,” he muttered grimly, “that this perfume business is going to stop!”

And he set out to trail down Tin-cup Jean.

IV.

Half-breeds are cunning men. Tin-cup Jean was no exception. He knew that by traveling on wind-blown ice, and by following the woods trail which John Bradford had broken, he would leave few signs of his going. He knew that a touch of rank perfume on a trap would keep any game away from the bait. He knew that, as a woodsman, he was far

superior to John Bradford, and he despised the young American.

The trouble with cunning men is that they are usually too cunning.

Tin-cup Jean, his dark-red capote like a great splotch of blood on the white landscape, moved through the woods at splendid, silent speed. He knew the location of almost every one of Bradford's traps, and spoiled each one very cunningly. He did not care if Bradford saw him, because, ostensibly, he was doing no wrong. The fool of an American would never guess about that perfume! If he met Bradford, he would smile and scowl and pass on. He had robbed no traps, and if he did not interfere with another man's trap line, the country was open to him.

Presently this American boy would be discouraged; would get down on his luck. Tin-cup Jean knew that woodsmen are great believers in luck, and he knew nothing whatever about luck as spelled with a "p."

And when this American had grown discouraged and had gone back to Fort Churchill, he, Tin-cup Jean, would take possession of his uncle's former trap line, and no one would object. It was all in the family! Of course, though, he must be careful not to be caught spoiling a trap. To this end, he gauged his trips by those of Bradford, keeping a day ahead of the latter. In this he overreached himself at the very start, for the perfume on that mink trap had been just fresh enough for the young American's nostrils to detect it. But this, naturally, Tin-cup Jean could not know. Nor could he know that John Bradford was ranging those miles of wood and stream, rifle under arm and grim resolve driving him ever forward, careless of eating or sleeping.

So Tin-cup Jean went his way craftily, and eventually came to one of those places where Bradford had detected the air holes of a bear. And here fate caught him.

It chanced that Bradford, knowing that the snows were newly fallen and that a bear may sometimes be disturbed in his retreat and so venture forth, had set the one large trap which he carried, and had set it in this wise:

Near one of the bear holes he had first set a noose for lynx or rabbit. This noose had caught a rabbit on the first setting, and Bradford had let the body alone. Two feet from this, and close to the bear hole, he had set his large steel trap, partly in

the hope that it would catch a prowling wolverine, baited by the dead rabbit, and partly in hope that the bear would emerge. This trap he had covered completely with smoothed-over snow, and had staked it down.

Tin-cup Jean knew nothing of the larger trap, and, upon his arrival, was puzzled by the frozen rabbit. At length he concluded that Bradford had missed the spot on his first visit, so he calmly appropriated the frozen body for his supper, and decided to camp. He was quite aware of the bear in the snow bank, and he wanted that bear himself. How to get it without actual robbery was the question, for the bear belonged to Bradford, nominally. So Tin-cup Jean set his cunning brain to work and evolved a splendid scheme that same night.

He was a day ahead of the American boy. Good! Next morning, then, he would build his fire on top of the bear—cutting off the animal's supply of air, and rousing up the naturally angry beast. Upon that, he would shoot the bear and carry off the skin.

Bradford would come. Perhaps he could come while Tin-cup Jean was skinning the bear. Good! Any man could see with half an eye that Tin-cup Jean had unwittingly aroused the hibernating brute, had been attacked, and had slain in self-defense. Of course, the boy would know better—but would have no proof. That was the delicious part of it, to Tin-cup's notion!

So, when he had slept well, the half-breed got up, and very carefully covered his first embers with snow, hiding all trace of that fire. Then, with his rifle ready to hand, he built another fire, directly on the air hole of the sleeping bear. That done, he filled his pipe and sat down to await events, delighted with his cunning scheme.

An hour passed, and then the snow bank began to shake. Tin-cup Jean knocked out his pipe and leisurely uncased his rifle. Surely, no one could blame him for this act, which would be sheer self-defense! He was not hunting on another man's ground!

The snow bank quivered and uprose with a cloud of frosty snow spume. The fire embers flew asunder with a loud hiss, and, amid the stinging snow-cloud appeared the huge, ungainly figure of a bear.

"Pardon for taking your life, my brother," murmured Tin-cup Jean as he drew a careful bead,

for he was superstitious. "The Great Spirit knows that I need your warm fur!"

His rifle cracked. The bear spun around, but did not go down, and lunged forward with one low growl. Tin-cup Jean saw that he had missed a vital spot, and hurriedly threw out the bolt of his rifle.

The cartridge jammed!

The ensuing events came with whirlwind swiftness. The bear, whose paws were not yet soft with the long winter sucking, came plunging at Tin-cup with a claw sweep that would have disemboweled an ox.

In an agony of fear, the half-breed leaped to one side. Another swift leap—and he came down with both feet close to that rabbit snare. There was a whirl of snow—a snap—and the big No. 9 trap had him fast.

In that first horrible instant, the quick brain of the Cree told him the whole story. He worked frantically at his rifle, and freed the cartridge. With the angry bear a scant six feet away, he fired, and fired again. The brute sank down, dead!

Wondering that his legs had not been broken by the shock of the trap jaws, and with an agony of pain swirling over him, Tin-cup Jean flung away his rifle and bent down to loosen those steel jaws. Then he straightened suddenly.

"Hands up, please!" had said a quiet voice.

Tin-cup Jean looked over his shoulder into the haggard but resolute face of John Bradford. He also looked into the muzzle of Bradford's rifle, and his hands went up.

"I've been watching you for about an hour," said the young American coolly. "You have a vial of perfume in your pocket. Toss it here!"

Tin-cup Jean mumbled something in Cree, but the pain of the trap conquered him. He took a small flask from his capote pocket, and threw it to Bradford.

"All right," said the latter, picking up the flask and Tin-cup's rifle. "Now loosen that trap. We have a little journey ahead of us—and you'll march in front."

He did not think to relieve the half-breed of his long skinning knife, and for that omission he was destined to pay dear.

V.

After a continuous tramp of fourteen hours, Tin-cup Jean limped into Bradford's camp. Behind him

trudged John Bradford with his sled.

"Here's a first-aid packet," said the young American, when he had started a fire. "Bind up your legs."

The Cree obeyed sullenly. That steel-jawed trap had bruised him badly, but had wrought no lasting injury.

Meantime, Bradford was busy writing with pencil and paper. When he had finished, he held up the paper and read aloud as follows:

"I, Tin-cup Jean, hereby admit that I tried to spoil the trap line of John Bradford by putting perfume on his traps. I admit that John Bradford followed me and caught me. I admit that he caught me killing a bear on his grounds."

Tin-cup Jean glowered in savage hatred, but Bradford only smiled sweetly.

"Now sign this," ordered the American, holding out the paper and pencil. "Then you may go free. Otherwise, I'll take you to Fort Steadfast for punishment."

Still silent, the half-breed obeyed. Bradford did not fail to observe the glum deviltry in the man's face, but he folded the signed paper and put it in his pocket with a nod.

He knew, and the Cree knew, that were the writing made public, all the Northland would laugh at the joke on Tin-cup Jean. Bradford was confident that he had practically conquered his greatest enemy, by the fear of ridicule.

"Now," he said quietly, "we'll make some tea before you go. And understand, Tin-cup, I hold no hard feelings against you. So far as I am concerned, we're friends from now on."

The half-breed only bent over the bandages on his legs, without response. But his cruel eyes watched Bradford ceaselessly.

What followed came with amazing swiftness.

The American tossed some frozen whitefish to his dogs. As he did so, Tin-cup Jean made a rapid motion—and his long skinning knife was transferred from its sheath to the sleeve of his red capote, ready for instant use.

"You make for give me grub?" inquired the Cree, speaking for the first time since Bradford had captured him.

"Sure," came the cheerful answer. "We'll have grub, then we'll shake hands and call our accounts square, eh?"

While speaking, the young American leaned over the fire, setting his copper kettle in

adjustment. The Cree's shifting eyes measured the distance between them. A stealthy movement, and the knife gleamed in his hand. He caught his breath suddenly.

Then, with one low cry of hatred, he drove the weapon, at Bradford's shoulder blades. It was the blow of a pitiless half-breed, deadly and venomous.

But Bradford had heard that sibilant catch of the breath—it had warned him. As the blow fell he had straightened up; true, the keen knife ripped through capote and shirt and flesh beneath, but it gave no more than a glancing, ugly wound.

It was no time for words. Bradford staggered, swung around, and his fist smacked into the Cree's jaw. Tin-cup went reeling across the tent, and then began a savage battle in those close quarters—knife against fists. The rifles were covered, and there was no time to get at them.

Bradford, with conflict forced upon him, became a surprisingly active person, and there was an astonishing force to his blows. Yet he had little chance to land another fair drive, for the half-breed was as lithe and active as a cat.

In and out, in and out sprang Tin-cup Jean, snarling like a maddened animal, his knife lunging again and again at the American youth.

There was stark murder in the cruel, merciless face of the half-breed, and Bradford had all he could do to evade the deadly lunges of that naming steel. Again and again he felt his fists drive home into the half-breed's grinning mask of a face, but Tin-cup only snarled again and renewed the attack.

A stab of pain in his left arm—Bradford's face went white, for the knife had ripped across his wrist, and blood lay crimson on his hand. Desperately, he stepped into Tin-cup's rush, knocked up the knife hand, and sent his right crashing into the man's mouth.

It was a good blow, and the Cree staggered back. But in the same instant Bradford's foot caught in his blankets. Unprepared, he tripped and plunged headlong to the floor.

Tin-cup leaped forward with a savage cry of exultation.

The American saw that he was powerless to save himself. There was no pity in the half-breed's maddened leap. With horror closing on his soul, Bradford reached out in desperation—and his fingers gripped his hand ax, its blade guarded by a steel protector.

As Tin-cup leaped at him, Bradford flung the

weapon with all his force, trying only to gain time in which to roll clear of that descending knife.

The hand ax flew truer than he had dared hope, and its heavy head caught the half-breed squarely between the eyes, and halted him abruptly. With a choking cry, Tin-cup Jean threw out his arms. The knife dropped from his hand. Then he staggered, and fell senseless.

"Pray Heaven, I didn't kill him!" gasped the American, struggling up.

He leaned over the unconscious man and, to his relief, found that Tin-cup was no more than stunned.

Panting, weak with the reaction of that terrible battle, Bradford seized a thong and bound the man hand and foot. Then, catching up the first-aid packet, he examined his wounds. That on his wrist was bleeding badly, but was not dangerous.

Along his back was a six-inch slash. Fortunately, it had done no more than break the skin. With a little prayer of gratitude, Bradford bound it up clumsily. Then he stood looking down at his captive.

"For rank treachery, you take the cake!" he said slowly. "By all the canons of wilderness law, you deserve to be turned out to freeze or starve. By cracky! it was lucky that I found that ax under my hand!"

At that he laughed suddenly, and rescued the copper kettle, which had been upset.

"I don't know about luck, either," he reflected. "I've a hunch that Providence had a whole lot to do with it. Well, Mr. Tin-cup Jean, I'm going to have some tea and biscuits, and then I'm going to sleep. When I wake up, you can go home—hungry!"

Wearily, Bradford crouched over his fire, but strong happiness was surging through him. He knew that he had conquered Tin-cup Jean beyond all doubt, this time. He had established his right to his trap line; he had won his spurs among these people, and in that signed confession he had a weapon of ridicule which would stand him in good stead.

So, well satisfied, he drank his tea, ate some food, and rolled up in his blankets. He quite forgot what old man Garvin had said about luck; instead, he fell asleep, with a prayer in his heart, thanking God that he had neither killed nor been killed.

Yet, old man Garvin had been dead right about the way to spell luck!