

## A TAVERN BRAWL.

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Coming in out of the piercing cold of a Canadian winter, the atmosphere in the low-ceilinged, underground bar of the Ignace Hotel seemed almost stifling. The bar was packed with a motley crowd of lumberjacks and railroaders, and most of them being Swedes, Russians and the like, it would not be described as a rose garden. What with the double-tracking of the C.P.R., the lumber and tie camps and the rock-cuts on the G.T.P. twenty-five miles north, there was a constant stream of men coming and going, and trade in the hotel was brisk. We four—out of a tie-camp for Christmas—were the only English-speaking patrons of the bar, and, following the precepts of the woods, we promptly proceeded to "liquor up."

After dinner, Billy Welch, an American, getting tired of just drinking, started two of the foreigners matching coins for drinks, and soon had them all doing it.

Rowley Green, a big Yorkshireman, and I, watched the fun with languid interest, between drinks. The fourth member of our party was an Irishman, named Pat Maguire, and true to his salt, had to go stirring up trouble. Mixing with the crowd, he eventually tapped a dish-faced Swede on the arm.

"The son uv a gun's chaytin' ye, bhoy," he declared, jerking a thumb at a huge, black-bearded Russian who was "matching" with the Swede. (He wasn't, but that didn't matter to Pat). Oley promptly hit the Russian on the nose and grabbed a handful of the other's face-fungus. Ivan retaliated with a bear-like hug and tried to swing Oley off his feet.

Meanwhile, Bill and Pat had started several more fights, and by the time they had wound their way through the crowd, to where Rowley and I were standing at the end of the bar, a general melee was taking place.

Although Ignace is a divisional point on the main line of the C.P.R., it is only a tiny hamlet, and there are no police nearer than Fort William or Kenora, a hundred and fifty miles away in either direction. In those days—that was the winter of 1906-07, and Christmas Eve—Western Canada was not quite as law-abiding as it is now, although there was little real crime. In complete defiance of the law, everyone carried a weapon of some sort, either on his belt or in his hip-pocket. Needless to say, we four all had guns. I could see things were likely to become serious, so immediately made plans for our safety.