

# The Men that God Forgot

## (Nine Men and Lonely)

by George Albert Leddy

*I've listened to your stories, men, now I have one for you;  
I'll tell it as I heard it, and I really believe it's true.  
You see, I worked a line of traps, beyond the Bighorn Range;  
And nothing ever happened much, things stayed about the same;*

*Until one night while coming down, the rough and rugged trail;  
I saw two men a-making camp, whereby there hangs this tale.  
I lingered in the shadows, and I listened to each word;  
And in that fire's gentle glow—well, this is what I heard:*

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I guess that old stub's dry enough, to kindle-up a flame;  
We've traveled hard today, old Pal, and back and legs are lame.  
We'll camp beneath this ragged cliff, 'twill shelter-off the wind;  
With good-luck, by tomorrow night, we'll reach the Rivers Bend.

The Rivers Bend, no doubt, has changed a lot in seven years;  
In seven years, the old town's not the only thing that's changed.  
The hardship, toil, and agonies that dries the eyes of tears;  
And makes a man a morsel, where the giant mountains range.

Just sit beside the fire, Pal, and let me do the work;  
You're older much than I, you know, that's why we're going in.  
We're two-of-nine, that's one a year, that we have left behind;  
And tonight, as ne'er before, I seem to see it all again.

The night we danced, and drank the health, of every Maiden fair;  
At the Mad Dog, by the Rivers Bend, where life was wild and gay.  
Again, I hear that cry of "Gold!" go ringing through the air.  
Ere morning light, like hungry wolves, we're on our lonesome way.

O'er trackless trail, o'er hill through dale, by cliff through rocky shoal;  
A God-made man, a living thing; all nine were then as one.  
One mind, one thought, one lust, one craze, one life cast-off for Gold;  
And all before the cruel trail had hardly yet begun.

But once when 'North of 83', and 69 below;  
Our Huskies howled their lonesomeness, to a silence vast and deep;  
And blankets rolled, and men inside, lay covered o'er with snow;  
The youngest member of our gang, awoke me from my sleep.

He says to me, "Old Chap," says he, "I want to say farewell;  
The cold has got me going, and my spirit's fairly broke;  
And tonight it is a gamble, to win Heaven or get Hell."  
And before I got my arms loose—the little gun had spoke.

So we buried him beneath the snow, made scarlet by his blood;  
And marked the grave "A Weakling," and then were on our way.  
But we soon had lost a second, a healthy burley cad;  
Who'd had rather die than labor—so he shot his life away.

And so with that I drew my gun, and cried, "Hands up you fools;  
I'll kill the man who winks an eye, until I tell him to;  
From now on, I'll take charge of all those little six-hole-tools!"  
And just one man objected, and I guess he wanted to.

So we wrote these words plain in the snow, above the Arctic graves:  
"The Objector" and "The Coward," and with scorn we passed them by.  
And the world behind seemed slipping back, like mist before the sun;  
And the Northern Lights, like human blood, were flooding through the sky.

Then six bold men with faces stern, through land that's sterner still;  
Did mush the Huskies o'er the trackless snow.  
And Bad Bill cursed and beat the brutes, who strove to do his will;  
And I said, "Someday they'll get you, Bill," and I knowed it would be so.

And sure enough, one bitter night, while in my blankets rolled;  
I dreamed I heard Bill's voice, he seemed to pray.  
When I awoke, the lead-dog's jaws were dripping crimson gore;  
And there lay Bill—his throat all chewed away.

So we killed the snarling red-eyed beast; we dared not let it live.  
"The Tormentor" and "The Killer," we buried 'neath the snow.  
A lone Wolf howled beyond the ridge, perhaps he'd caught the scent.  
We didn't wait, we didn't want to know.

Well, through the snow five sad men toil; they'd prayed had they known how.

It seems my lips did form a little prayer;  
And I raised my eyes to Heaven, and I knew that God had heard;  
and was angry—for His wrath was written there.

The night skies wreathed in scarlet flame, in crimson, gold, and green;  
Then faded pale, in sickening yellow hue;  
Then rippled back like opals pure, as crystal diamonds gleamed;  
Within a wreath of pearls, the sky was blue.

Without the wreath, the sky appeared a garden filled with love;  
The flowers bloomed, and love was everywhere.  
Our eyes were wild, our hearts stood still; within that spot of blue,  
His sacred face was plainly outlined there.

The face was sad, and filled our hearts with love, and fear, and strength;  
The hate that's felt by lonely men had changed to something new.  
Five lonely men united by some unknown power, held;  
Now onward, ever onward toiled, like brothers tried and true.

At last, we reach the chasm where the mountains split apart;  
Like the jaws of some great monster, but the Moose had entered in.  
And we wander down the winding trail, to the waters clear and clean;  
And the stream is lined with Gold—that gleamed and gleamed!

Five pair of eyes were staring wide, five weary brains were dazed;  
Five weary hearts, forgotten men, five weary men amazed;  
Five millionaires, five fortunes each, fortune and wealth unknown;  
Buried there, in that worldly grave—a world, and all their own.

Five lonely years, five hearts grown sad, long for the days of old;  
Long for the Inn by the Rivers Bend, staked with a wealth of Gold.  
Loaded the sleigh, well on their way, huskies are young no more;  
Men that are wan, losing their brawn, heartsick and bodily sore.

Sun was so bright, one lost his sight—froze as he sat on the sleigh;  
One lost his mind, lingered behind—jumped from a cliff by the way.  
Hungry and cold, loaded with gold, three millionaires mush sure-but-slow;  
Till the dogs gave it up, and pup after pup, would stumble and die in the snow.

And through the long night, when the skies were alight,  
with flashes that blinked and seared;  
And the last dog was dead, and we dragged our own sled,  
and we cursed, and we prayed, and we jeered.

But we fought on, we three: just Jim, you and me—the saddest of all was Jim;  
He fought so to live that the Gold he might give, to the Lad who was waiting for him.  
He still saw the Lad as the youngster who had, said good-bye on that night long ago;  
And his eyes filled with joy as he talked of the boy, as we tended him there in the snow.

He says, “Pals, old friends, I have come to the end of my trail, and I’m happy to rest;  
But promise you’ll find that youngster of mine, and tell him his Dad did his best.”  
Well, his face looked so grand as I clasped the weak hand, a Pal who’d been true to the end;  
And I vowed then and there, that the wealth we would share, with the Lad who was waiting for him.

Then we all sort’o prayed, or an effort we made, but I guess God knew that we tried;  
I guess Jim knew it too, for I’m saying to you—’twas a smile on his face when he died.

I guess that old stub’s dry enough, it sure burns with a will;  
It seems to speak a welcome, Pal, to all we’re loving still.  
I guess we’ll drink tomorrow night, ‘though the Gold is left behind;  
There’ll be a couple on-the-house—I guess the Boss won’t mind;  
“And then we’ll get a grubstake, Pal, and mush back without fail;  
And gather up that bloody Gold, we strew along the trail.

Why don’t you speak to me, old Pal?  
“Why, you are dead!”—*he cried.*  
“Ah, yes, the picture’s in the sky;  
I’m coming, too!”—*he died.*

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*Well, now that ends my story, men, ‘cept I went back next-day;  
And brought them in to Rivers Bend, and had the Parson pray.  
They’re sleeping in the churchyard now, a marble marks the spot;  
The two-of-nine that came back home—the Men that God Forgot.*

*You wonder when I tell this tale, my eyes are wet with tears;  
You wonder why I’ve not forgot, through all these fleeting years.  
If all the others had come back, I’d do the same for them.  
The truth, perhaps you’ve guessed it, men—I am the son of Jim.*

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