

# ON PARADISE PEAKS

## By CHARLES COLLINS

### Illustrated by ERNEST FUHR

#### A Blithesome Tale of Love and Action



He began to feel lyric and exalted.

The conventional playthings of mill-  
 maids did not amuse old man  
 Angus. He had worked with the big  
 gun in his time, and now he would  
 spend with the open hand. But he  
 wanted space for the golden sowing;  
 he wanted to be monarch of all he  
 surveyed.

So he engaged a geologic age for  
 his landscape gardener and bought  
 himself a Titan's share of the Rocky  
 Mountains. The water from eternal  
 snows had gnawed canons; tornadoes  
 had turned sculptor; forests had  
 painted bleak slopes with the bless-  
 ing of green—in order that old man  
 Angus might have his plaything.

Paradise Peaks he called it, having  
 a fancy for alteration.  
 The Manor, set deep in the lodge-  
 pole pine and aspen groves of Clear-  
 water Valley, was the heart of the  
 place.

There old man Angus  
 through the sweet, thrilling months of  
 the mountain summer played grand  
 host to his guests.  
 He supplied all accessories to ad-  
 venture, from trout-flies to guns that  
 would slay an elephant. The fifteen  
 hunting lodges, scattered over Para-  
 dise Peaks, each had its arsenal, its  
 library, its store of liquors, its string  
 of horses and its guides at the dis-  
 posal of guests.

Old man Angus had a plaything that  
 cannot be matched on this continent.  
 He also had a daughter. There the  
 story really begins.

Columbine, aged twenty, had been  
 everywhere and seen everything—  
 Angus's money had taken care of all  
 that; but her soul belonged to her  
 native West, and she remained simple,  
 wholesome and feminine.

Of course this Columbine had her  
 Pierrot—in plural. That summer there  
 were two of them. One was strongly  
 favored by Angus as future son-in-  
 law. Chandler was what society re-  
 porters call an "eligible bachelor,"  
 which means that he was nearer forty  
 than thirty. His career had been de-  
 voted exclusively to the sporting  
 achievements of the unnecessarily  
 rich.

The other Pierrot who had followed  
 Columbine to her mountain habitat  
 fitted into the natural environment,  
 for he was a poet. Columbine had  
 discovered him at the University of  
 Chicago where she had dabbled in the  
 Pierian spring as a special student in  
 English literature the winter before,  
 and when a few dancing parties at  
 the Quadrangle Club had warmed  
 a casual classroom acquaintance into  
 something more lively she had invited  
 him out to Papa's principality for a  
 summer's airing. She had been timid  
 in making the suggestion for he, being  
 a faculty man with some exalted  
 title moved on a higher academic  
 plane than she could ever hope to  
 reach.

Ghent could not specify his choice  
 of wild creature for killing, and Mr.  
 Chandler saw fit to talk in a large  
 manner about the snow-leopards he  
 had shot in the Himalayas, the sum-  
 mer of 1914, with his friend Lieuten-  
 ant-Colonel Apmadoc Jones of the  
 Bengal Lancers. The war had ended  
 big-game shooting, Mr. Chandler con-  
 tinued, but it was beginning again  
 with the coming of peace, and a man  
 who wanted adventure could now go  
 out and have some sport.

Ghent then knew that his instinct  
 to hate Mr. Chandler was a just and  
 true emotion.

The talk of guns and kills ran  
 around the table until Ghent wanted  
 to shriek. He managed to silence the  
 banker at his elbow who was telling  
 of his great massacre of ducks last  
 November on the Bear River marshes  
 in Utah.

"I find as I grow older," said Ghent,  
 with a world-weary air, "that the  
 pleasure of hunting, for its own sake  
 dies out. I have come to believe that  
 a man has a right to kill each day  
 only enough for that day's food."

The man who had spoken of seven-  
 teen dozen ducks in one morning's  
 bag thought of eating them all within  
 three meals, and considered himself  
 snubbed as a game-hog.

Then Columbine began to talk of  
 books to Ghent. Kenneth Angus, Col-  
 umbine's brother, a few years older  
 who had been wrapped in moody  
 silence, pricked up his ears and joined  
 in their conversation intelligently.  
 Kenneth, who had been blighted in  
 love while at Yale, was in the habit  
 of wandering from one hunting-  
 lodge to another, with only an old guide  
 for companion.

After dinner Columbine took Ghent  
 out to a corner of the veranda to see  
 what she called her demi-tasse view.  
 He began to feel lyric and exalted.  
 Was it because a poem was coming  
 on—or because Columbine, in a pla-  
 tonic sort of way, was letting him  
 hold her hand?

With heavy feet that gave satisfac-  
 tory warning Angus and Mr. Chandler  
 bore down along the long veranda  
 toward them.  
 Chandler had sensed a foe in Ghent.  
 He did not rate him as a rival, but  
 as an annoyance? So he adroitly  
 proceeded to poison the wells of this  
 wayfarer.  
 "Ah, Mr. Ghent," he asked in his  
 most clubby fashion, "are you getting  
 an inspiration for a poem from the  
 sunset?"  
 Angus, in whose code poets were a  
 third and lamentable sex, grunted at  
 this, and Ghent knew that he had been  
 betrayed.

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Ghent fired from the saddle. The yellow streak collapsed. "That's shootin!" shouted Rip.

man regularly stationed at Snowdrift  
 and Kenneth's familiar party were to  
 be conscripted into the party on ar-  
 rival.

Ghent made no moan and for the  
 first fifteen miles he satisfied himself  
 and old Rip as a gay cavalier. So Mr.  
 Chandler sprang another plot to ruin  
 him.

The elder Angus was taking things  
 easily and lagging behind. The two  
 huntsmen, also being men of years,  
 struggled along to keep him company.  
 Old Rip kept within view. Mr. Chan-  
 dler was persistently riding with Col-  
 umbine, and as Eagle was showing a  
 bright and eager spirit Ghent found  
 himself leading the parade.

Suddenly there was a clatter of  
 hoofs behind him, and Mr. Chandler  
 appeared alongside. Eagle jumped  
 out, and Chandler gave his horse a  
 cut of the quirt. Chandler's bay was  
 thrusting his nose ahead of Eagle's  
 blue muzzle; Eagle resented this, and  
 so did Ghent. He spurred.

It became a wild gallop for half a  
 mile. Chandler was using leather like  
 a jockey, but Ghent merely spoke  
 sweet words of cheer to Eagle and  
 gave him his head.

The road ran along the high shoul-  
 der of a hill. Its disappearing turn  
 down a steep slope was close ahead.  
 Chandler shouted a warning at Ghent  
 and checked the charging gallop of his

accident."  
 Columbine silenced her father with a  
 look, but the situation was sirained  
 Then Rip, who was dining with  
 them—for democracy prevailed at the  
 hunting lodges—spoke up. He told  
 the story and took the blame upon  
 himself, ending with:  
 "Anyway it was a good shot. He  
 really killed the buck, but the fool doe  
 got in the way."  
 Angus didn't believe a word of it,  
 and told Rip so.

Ghent was crushed, in spite of Col-  
 umbine's looks of sympathy. He won-  
 dered how soon it would be before he  
 could catch a train for Denver.  
 "Never mind," said Columbine  
 softly. "Tomorrow you shall go out  
 and get a buck bigger than Mr.  
 Chandler's."  
 "I'm through with killing deer," he  
 answered. "I can't stand the look in  
 their eyes when they die."  
 Mr. Chandler was in great form for  
 the rest of the evening. He could not  
 let the topic of Ghent's doe rest.

Some good came out of Mr. Chan-  
 dler's jocularity. Angus was thereby  
 restored to the cheerful frame of mind.  
 Even Columbine seemed to regard  
 Chandler's comic muse with favor, for  
 she told him that she knew where the  
 biggest buck on Paradise Peaks had  
 his stamping ground, and that to-  
 morrow they would go out together—  
 without a guide—and get him. He had  
 the finest antlers she had ever seen,  
 she said.

This suggestion caused Angus to  
 beam upon them, and sent Mr. Chan-  
 dler to bed almost ready to announce  
 his engagement. Ghent's feelings may  
 be indicated by the fact that he spent  
 half the night sitting up with Kenneth  
 in a discussion of Baudelaire, with  
 benedictions to the most modern ex-  
 awake to find the lodge deserted ex-  
 cept for himself and Kenneth, also a  
 tardy riser. The latter was inclined  
 to grumble because his guide and  
 factotum had been commandeered  
 again by the hunters, but he lent a  
 willing hand to the improvisation of a  
 breakfast. Then he had an inspira-  
 tion.

"Now that the deer-shooters are out  
 of the way, and Sis has gone off with  
 the ineffable Chandler," he said, "let's  
 you and me go sight-seeing like a  
 couple of plain literary guys. I'll  
 show you the prettiest mountain lake  
 in the world."  
 Ghent was a dweller by the Great  
 Lakes, and his heart leaped up at the  
 thought of the sight of open water.  
 "There's a shack on the lake with  
 some cooking-tools in it," continued  
 Kenneth, "and we'll find some trout-  
 tackle too. And there's a boat."

From the top of a forested rise they  
 caught their first view of the lake.  
 Ghent caught his breath with pure  
 delight.  
 "That's right, don't say a word,"  
 Kenneth remarked and they descend-  
 ed reverently to the shores of Blue  
 Flower Lake.  
 About noon-time as their boat  
 moved slowly toward the cabin, Ken-  
 neth in the stern, began to groan in  
 his best hermit's fashion.  
 "Look who's here!" he said, point-  
 ing "This means four for lunch."  
 Glancing over his shoulder, Ghent  
 saw Columbine and Chandler riding  
 down the hillside trail toward the  
 cabin.

"What luck?" Columbine called out  
 to him.  
 "For me, none at all," he answered  
 blithely. "I've tried all the well-  
 recommended trout-flies,—the Pink  
 Tarantula, the Red-headed Chautau-  
 and the Prime Minister's Delight,—  
 but the trout seem to regard them  
 with suspicion. Kenneth, however,  
 has been catching them two and three  
 at a time."  
 "On worms!" Kenneth bellowed  
 shamelessly.  
 "Good! We'll have trout for a cam-  
 fire luncheon. Won't that be nice,  
 Mr. Chandler?"  
 "It would be nicer if Chandler had  
 to clean the fish," Kenneth declared  
 to the distant hills.  
 Ghent cleaned the fish; Kenneth  
 made the fire and peeled the potatoes;  
 Columbine was chief cook, and Mr.  
 Chandler offered suggestions. But it  
 was a successful luncheon.

"Where's that prehistoric buck you  
 went out to get?" Kenneth wanted to  
 know of Columbine and Chandler.  
 "Oh, we're trailing him," Columbine  
 answered evasively.  
 "Did you think he came down here  
 to take his daily bath?"  
 Mr. Chandler averred that they cer-  
 tainly had seen the hoof-prints of an  
 extremely large deer. Columbine  
 changed the subject.  
 The lazy hour after luncheon was  
 one of deep and quiet contentment.  
 "I should like a swim," said Ghent  
 sleepily.  
 Chandler spoke almost lyrically of  
 the joys of surf-riding at Honolulu  
 and Ghent was tempted in his youth.  
 "How wide is this lake?" he asked  
 Columbine.  
 "From here to that point, almost a  
 mile."  
 "Mr. Chandler, I will swim you from  
 here to that point."  
 Kenneth, without opening his eyes,  
 applauded.  
 "Fine! Sis can withdraw into the  
 shrubbery while you peel. I'll row  
 across with you and carry the clothes.  
 Go on! I bet five dollars on Chandler  
 the human duck. He has webbed  
 feet."  
 Chandler gave him to understand  
 that he regarded the challenge in-  
 delicate.  
 "Then I'll swim it alone if Miss  
 Angus will act on Kenneth's sugges-  
 tion and retire."  
 "Of course I will," Columbine an-  
 swered. "There's a trail around the  
 lake to that point; Mr. Chandler and  
 I will ride around. Kenneth can es-  
 cort you in the boat, with your  
 clothes."  
 "Roderick Ghent, the human polar  
 bear, is now to perform," Kenneth  
 chanted like a circus ringmaster

"Scoot, Sis."  
 Ghent took the water with a high-  
 speed trudgeon-crawl stroke. Kenneth  
 served as a convoy and life-guard in  
 the boat, whooping merrily. The dis-  
 tance meant nothing to Ghent, for he  
 had competed in water marathons. To  
 his surprise, he found that the water  
 was not cold enough to sap his  
 strength, and he changed to a slow,  
 easy breast-stroke that brought him  
 to the chosen landing-place unfa-  
 tigated.

A fire was blazing on the shore, but  
 Columbine and Chandler were gone.  
 Spiked on a twig of pine beside the  
 blaze was a note for Ghent, which  
 read:  
 "Good boy! I was sure you could  
 make it. I wouldn't have let you start  
 if I hadn't known that the lake was  
 fed by warm springs. See what a nice  
 fire I built for you to toast yourself  
 by. Mr. Chandler was so pleased to  
 gather the wood."  
 C.  
 P.S. Follow us up Deerskin Canyon.  
 I hope for some fun. Kenneth knows  
 the way. We will ride slow.

Ghent showed the note to Kenneth.  
 "Sis has something up her sleeve,"  
 he said after studying it. "We'll row  
 back, get the horses and follow. Well,  
 I guess Chandler will have to admit  
 you're champion in water-sports and  
 pastimes. Say, how did you get that  
 scar on your shoulder?"  
 "Where do you think I was a few  
 years ago?" asked Ghent as he pulled  
 out his shirt.

Kenneth reflected, "Army?"  
 Ghent nodded. "Argonne."  
 Kenneth broke into a cheer.  
 "This will be a great laugh on dad  
 and Chandler. That accounts for your  
 lucky shot at the coyote. I'm think-  
 ing."  
 "Yes, I had a sharpshooter's medal.  
 And the cough that worried Chandler  
 is a souvenir of boche gas."  
 "Corporal Ghent, the pacifist sniper,  
 I salute you!" Kenneth gloated. "Are  
 you ready sergeant? Let's go."  
 "Deep in a forested canyon, about an  
 hour later, they heard two shots, not  
 far ahead.

"Chandler has potted the demon  
 buck, I fear," said Kenneth.  
 "He gave a cowboy's yell, which  
 revealed a faint and apparently femi-  
 nine answer."  
 "That's Sis. Something's doing."  
 A little farther on, they could hear  
 laughter, long and unrestrained.  
 "Sis is in hysterics," Kenneth sug-  
 gested flippantly.  
 "When they caught sight of her, she  
 seemed to be doing a war-dance."  
 "Come on! Quick!" she called out.  
 "See what Chandler has killed!"  
 Kenneth looked, and also started to  
 laugh. He threw himself off his  
 horse, and howled with a madman's  
 glee.

"Have you both lost your minds?"  
 Ghent demanded.  
 "Look at Chandler," gurgled Ken-  
 neth.  
 Ghent glanced at his rival, who  
 stood in morose silence, rifle in hand,  
 beside something that looked big  
 enough to be a dead steer.  
 "He has killed Dad's bull elk," ex-  
 plained Columbine weakly.  
 "He has slain the sacred bull!"  
 Kenneth chimed in. "Shun him. He  
 is anathema!"  
 It was indeed, a magnificent elk,  
 nobly antlered.

Then Columbine and Kenneth be-  
 gan, in strophe and antistrophe:  
 "Father paid two thousand dollars  
 for that bull elk!"  
 "It was the elk of all elks, destined  
 to perpetuate his species!"  
 "The sacred bull bore a charmed  
 life!"  
 "No one was allowed to harm that  
 elk!"  
 "All the guides had extra-special  
 orders to keep hunters away!"  
 They kept up this sort of thing until  
 Mr. Chandler walked over to his horse  
 and rode off toward the trail.  
 "Better follow him, Kenneth," sug-  
 gested Columbine. "He may not be  
 able to find the way back to camp—  
 and he's not speaking to me just now.  
 Mr. Ghent and I will come along when  
 I have recovered."  
 Kenneth mounted briskly.  
 "I'll comfort him," he remarked,  
 "I'll ask him if he doesn't want to  
 bring the head into camp as a sou-  
 venir—Adios, amigos!"  
 Ghent merely smiled in a beautif-  
 ul way and was silent. Finally he turned  
 to Columbine and said tenderly:  
 "You little fiend!"  
 "Yes, Columbine did it," she replied.  
 "Columbine did it with her little  
 hatchet! She cannot tell a lie. She  
 led Mr. Chandler up to the sacred  
 bull, and never warned him."  
 "It was hard on the elk. Why did  
 you do it?"

"Because he was so mean to you  
 about shooting that doe. Because Dad  
 seems to be bent on my marrying  
 him, and he bores me to death. Be-  
 cause Mr. Chandler is—oh, well, I  
 must not be catty."  
 "And what am I?"  
 "You are—just you."  
 He told her very gravely what she  
 was to him, and she listened with  
 happiness in her eyes.  
 After a long time they arose to take  
 the home trail, but she stopped before  
 she reached her horse and went back  
 to the glade where the elk had fallen.  
 She stroked the bull's cold, hairy  
 muzzle lightly and whispered:  
 "Poor old thing! Please forgive  
 me." She turned to Ghent.  
 "We won't tell Father right away.  
 We'll wait until I prepare him for it  
 by asking him to get you appointed  
 head of the English Department at  
 the State university. He's on the  
 board of trustees."  
 Angus's wedding-present to his  
 daughter was of small value but great  
 importance. It was nothing but an  
 elk's head, superbly mounted.

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