

CAMPBELL'S KINGDOM

HAMMOND INNES



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CAMPBELL'S KINGDOM

BY
HAMMOND INNES

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LONGMAN

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John Wyndham

PERSONS IN THE STORY

in the order in which you will meet them

BRUCE WETHERAL tells the story. He was an officer in the British Army during the war, but now works in an office.

MRS. BAIRD, owner of the house in London in which Bruce Wetheral lives.

MR. FOTHERGILL, a lawyer in London who acts for a Canadian firm of lawyers, Donald McCrae and Acheson, of Calgary.

ACHESON, the chief one of these Canadian lawyers.

ROGER FERGUS, an old friend of Bruce Wetheral's grandfather, Stuart Campbell. He is now seriously ill.

JEFF HART, a friend Bruce Wetheral makes in Canada.

JOHNNIE CARSTAIRS, a guide who takes visitors riding and camping in the Rocky Mountains.

MAX TREVEDIAN, a big, strong driver who works for his brother Peter Trevedian in Come Lucky.

MCCLELLAN, runs the Golden Calf Hotel in Come Lucky.

JAMES MCCLELLAN, his son. He built the cable hoist to Solomon's Judgment.

PAULINE, James McClellan's wife. She is half French.

BEN CREASY, is building the road from Come Lucky up to the foot of the cable hoist to Solomon's Judgment.

"BOY" BLADEN, a young airman who Roger Fergus, before he was shot down over Germany during the war.

PETER TREVEDIAN, Max's older brother, who runs the Trevedian Transport Company.

RUTH and SARAH GARRET, two little old unmarried sisters who live in an old-fashioned house in Come Lucky.

JEAN LUCAS, an English girl who helped the French resistance during the war, and lives in the Garret sisters' house.

HENRY FERGUS, Roger Fergus's son, and now in charge of his business.

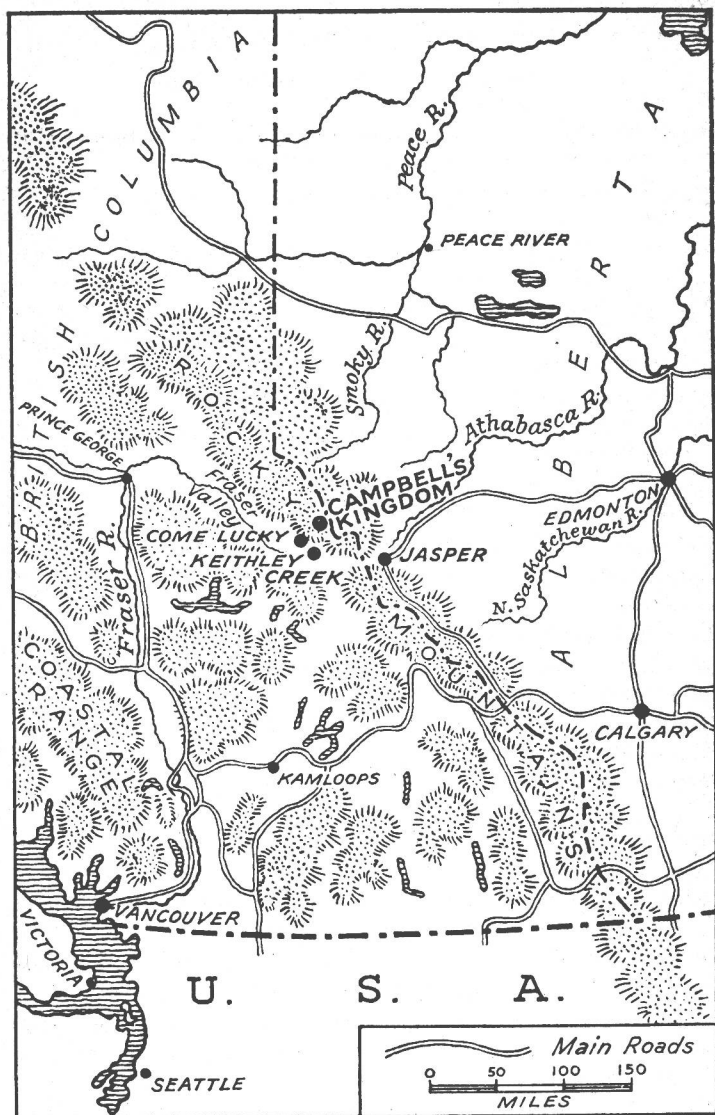
LOUIS WINNICK, an oil specialist, trusted by old Roger Fergus.

GARRY KEOGH, an engineer who uses his own machinery for getting oil.

BUTLER, an engineer in charge of the camp for the men who are building the dam at Solomon's Judgment.

BILL MANNION and DON LEGGERT, two young men who help Garry Keogh to drill for oil.

STEVE STRACHAN, a reporter who writes for the *Calgary Tribune*.



A MAP SHOWING THE PLACES IN THIS STORY
(all except two are real)

I HESITATED as I crossed the road, and paused to look up at the familiar face of Number Thirty-Two. For years I had been coming home from the office to this house, yet now I seemed to be looking at it for the first time. I had to remind myself that those windows on the first floor were my windows, that behind them were all my clothes and papers and books, all the things that made my home.

But there was no reality about it now. It was as though I was living in a dream. I suppose it was the shock of the news. I had only six more months to live.

I wondered what they would say at the office—or should I go on as though nothing had happened? I thought of all the years I had been leaving this house in the morning and returning to it at night—lonely, wasted years. Men who had served with me during the war were now in good positions. But for me the Army had been the big chance. Once out of it, I had done nothing. I needed to make some sense out of my life, and I needed to do it quickly. As I crossed the road, getting out my keys, I suddenly decided that I was not going to tell the office anything. I wasn't going to tell anybody. I'd just say I was taking a holiday, and quietly go away.

I went in and closed the door. Footsteps sounded in the darkness of the hall.

"Is that you, Mr. Wetheral?"

It was my landlady.

"Yes, Mrs. Baird."

"You're home early! Did they give you the afternoon off?"

"Yes."

"Well! There are two letters in your room—bills, by the look of them. And I put some flowers in there, as you have not been very well lately."

"That's very kind of you, Mrs. Baird."

"Oh, I nearly forgot! There was a gentleman to see you. He said it was very important. But he went on to the Law Courts about another matter."

"The Law Courts? Did he look like a lawyer?"

"Yes, he did. Shall I bring him straight up when he comes back? If you're not in trouble, perhaps it's some good news—one of your relatives dead, perhaps?"

"I'm settling my affairs," I said, and laughed as I went up to my rooms.

"Here's the lawyer man to see you again, Mr. Wetheral."

He was a lawyer all right; there was no mistaking the neat blue suit, the white collar, the dry manner.

"My name is Fothergill, of Anstey, Fothergill & Anstey, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Before I state my business it will be necessary for me to ask you a few personal questions. May I sit down?"

"Of course."

"Your full name please, Mr. Wetheral?"

"Bruce Campbell Wetheral."

"Date of birth?"

"July 20th, 1916."

"Are your parents alive?"

"No. Both dead."

"Your father's name, please?"

"Look," I said angrily, "What's all this leading to?"

"Please," he said, "Just a moment longer." His voice was dry and calm. "Your father's names?"

"John Henry Wetheral."

"An engineer?"

I agreed.

"What were your mother's names?"

"Eleanor Rebecca."

"And her other name?"

"Campbell."

"Did you know any of the Campbells, Mr. Wetheral?"

"Only my grandfather. I met him once."

"Where did you meet him?"

"Coming out of prison." Then I explained quickly—"He did five years in prison. He was a thief and a cheat. My mother and I met him when he came out. I was about nine at the time. We drove in a taxi straight from the prison to

catch the train which took him to a ship sailing for Canada." After all these years I could not keep the bitterness out of my voice. "Why do you want to know all this?" I demanded angrily.

"Just one more question." He seemed unmoved by my impatience. "You were in the Army during the war. Were you wounded at all?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"This is too much!" I cried, jumping to my feet. My fingers had gone straight to the old wound above my heart. "You come here looking into my affairs, asking me a lot of foolish questions, without even having the politeness. . . ."

"Please! Calm yourself, Mr. Wetheral. I was ordered to find a Bruce Campbell Wetheral and I was given certain information about him. I am now quite satisfied that you are the man I have been looking for."

"Well, now you have found me, what do you want?"

"If you will just be seated again for a moment. . . . We are acting for the firm of Donald McCrae & Acheson of Calgary in this matter. They are the lawyers named by your grandfather. Since you only met him once it will probably not matter much to you that he is dead. What does matter to you, however, is that you are the only person to whom he left anything." He placed some papers on the table between us. "That is a copy of his last wishes, together with an unopened letter written by him and addressed to you. The lawyers in Calgary have all the papers about the Campbell Oil Exploration Company. You now control this company. The company is almost dead. However, it owns some land in the Rocky Mountains, and Donald McCrae & Acheson advise selling this land and closing down the company." He brought some more papers out of his case. "Now here are the details of the land to be sold. . . ."

I was looking at him, hearing his voice talking on, and remembering only how I had hated my grandfather, how all my childhood had been made miserable by that man who had sat beside my mother in the taxi.

"You're sure my grandfather went back to Canada?" I

asked.

"Yes, yes—quite sure. He formed this company there in 1926. The other two directors were Roger Fergus and Luke Trevedian. Fergus was one of the big men in the Turner Valley oilfield and Trevedian owned a gold mine. Now, as I was saying, this company is really dead. The only capital it seems to have had was lent by Fergus, and the only work it has carried out appears to have been paid for by him. This included a survey¹ made. . . ."

"Do you mean my grandfather had no money when he returned to Canada?"

"Yes."

I leaned back, trying to get used to this sudden entirely new idea about my grandfather. "How did he die?" I asked.

"How?" He looked at the papers on the table. "It says here that he died of cold."

"Of cold?"

"Yes. He was living alone high up in the Rockies. Now, as for the company, it does not seem likely that you could. . . ."

"He must have been a very old man."

"He was seventy-nine. Now, this land that is owned by the company. The lawyers in Calgary tell me that they have been fortunate enough to find a buyer. In fact, they have an offer . . ." He stopped. "You're not listening to me, Mr. Wetheral."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I was just wondering what an old man of seventy-nine was doing, living alone in the Rocky Mountains."

"It appears that he grew a little mad as he grew old. His belief that there was oil up in the mountains became stronger. From 1930 onwards he lived up there in a log-house by himself. He was found there by a late hunting party. That was on the 22nd November, last year." He put the letter on the table beside me. "I will leave that with you and you can read it later. There is also a piece taken from a local paper. Now,

¹ Survey = When new country is being explored, a party can go out with special measuring instruments to make a survey of the land. From the figures they collect, maps can be made. Men looking for oil can even use electrical instruments to discover the shape of the rocks underground, and this can be shown on maps and plans.

about this land. There is apparently a plan to build a dam¹ across the valley and to use the water to make electricity. One of the mining companies. . . ."

I sat back and closed my eyes. So he had gone back! That was the thing that stuck in my mind. He had really believed there was oil there.

"Please, Mr. Wetheral! This is important. Most important."

"I'm sorry."

"We must have your signature to this paper at once. The company has another plan for getting power; if we delay much longer your land may become valueless. Your lawyers in Calgary say that the offer is generous and you should accept it at once. When all debts have been paid you should receive about nine or ten thousand dollars."

"How long will all this take?"

"I think about six months, if all goes well."

"Six months? That's just six months too long, Mr. Fothergill."

"How do you mean? I can promise you that we will do everything we can to . . ."

"Yes, of course," I said, "but in six months . . ." I stopped. Why should I try to explain? I leaned back and closed my eyes, trying to think it out clearly. The money wasn't any use to me. I had nobody to leave it to. "I'm not sure that I want to sell."

I opened my eyes and saw that he was looking at me in astonishment. "I don't think you quite understand, Mr. Wetheral. The lawyers inform us that the land itself is quite worthless. As I've already told you, it lies at over 7,000 feet in a most difficult part of the Rockies. For the greater part of the year it is covered in snow. . . ."

"Can I see that piece from the newspaper?" I asked him.

He handed it across to me. It was from the *Calgary Tribune* and dated "Jasper: 4th December. Stuart Campbell, one of the explorers of Turner Valley, and the man who first said 'There's oil in the Rocky Mountains', is dead. His body was found by a late hunting party led by Johnnie Carstairs,

¹ Dam=a wall built to keep back water.

the guide from Jasper. It was lying on the floor of the log-house Campbell built for himself 7,000 feet up in the Rockies. Campbell was a great character. Even those who lost money in his unlucky Rocky Mountain Oil Exploration Company and declared him a cheat and worse cannot help admiring a man who was so sure that he was right that he spent the last twenty-six years of his life trying to prove it. . . ."

I started to read it through again, but could only see a picture of a man standing in a law court in London. He had been arrested by the police as he went on to a ship at Southampton. Most of the company's money had vanished. That was the story, as I knew it. And then I thought of myself as a boy at that school, miserable because I had no football boots and my clothes were worn out and because my grandfather was a thief. I had never thought of defending him. I had accepted his guilt as I had accepted our poverty. They were part of the conditions of my life. And now . . . He had gone back! That was the unbelievable thing. He had gone back as though he were sure. . . .

"I don't think I'll sell," I said. I needed time to think this out, to get used to this new view of my grandfather.

"But, Mr. Wetheral. Really—in a matter of this sort we must be guided by the people on the spot. If Mr. Acheson advises . . ."

"I can't decide now. You must give me time to consider."

"You cannot expect this company to wait for ever for your answer. Mr. Acheson was most pressing. I must remind you that it is only the fact that most of the money was owed to a friend of Mr. Campbell's that has saved the company until now. It is your duty to consider this gentleman."

"I won't be hurried," I said angrily.

He got to his feet. "I will leave these papers with you, Mr. Wetheral. I think when you have had time to consider them—Perhaps you will telephone me, or better still, come and see me."

"I'll let you know what I decide," I said, and took him down to the front door.

Then I hurried eagerly back to my room. I wanted to read his letter. It was addressed in large, upright, rather childish

writing. Inside was a single sheet of paper; it was very direct and simple. No words were wasted. It was the letter of a man who had lived a lot of his life alone.

For my grandson.

'Campbell's Kingdom',

Come Lucky, B.C.

15th March, 1947.

Dear Bruce,

It is possible you may remember our one meeting, since it was a strange one. With your mother's death I became entirely cut off from you, but in the last few weeks I have been able to obtain some information about your progress and your record in the recent war. This leads me to believe that there is enough of the Campbell in you for me to hand on to you the aims, hopes and duties that through age and misfortune I have been unable to carry out.

After I came out of prison I returned to Canada to prove what I know to be true. With the help of kind friends I formed the Campbell Oil Exploration Company. All my property in this I leave to you, together with the land on which my bones will rest. If you are the man I hope you are, you will seize this opportunity, so that I may rest in peace and my life may be seen in the end to be right. May the Good Lord guide you and keep you in this work.

STUART MACAULAY CAMPBELL.

The record of my efforts to prove that there is oil up here, you will find with my Holy Book.

I read it through again, more slowly. Every word carried weight—and his honesty and simplicity shone through it like a clean wind out of the high mountains.

The other papers were dull after reading what my grandfather had written. There were his last wishes, giving "to my grandson, Bruce Campbell Wetheral, all my property, together with such debts, duties and hopes as I shall have at the time of my death", and it appointed Messrs. Donald McCrae & Acheson as lawyers. There was a letter from them explaining the plan to get electricity by building the dam, and

attached to it was a paper for me to sign agreeing to the sale of the land. "There is no question of obtaining a better offer. Indeed, you must agree that we have been fortunate in encouraging the company's interest in your land and we feel sure that you will understand the urgency of signing this paper if your gift is to have any value and if the debts referred to in your grandfather's last wishes are to be paid. Please deliver the paper when it is signed to Mr. Fothergill of Anstey, Fothergill & Anstey, who represent us in London."

Every line of their letter showed that they were certain that I would agree to sell. I threw it back on to the table, and as I did so I saw the piece from the newspaper lying on the floor where I had dropped it. I picked it up and continued reading from where I had stopped:

"He was a man of great energy, and he spent it all in trying to find oil. But people who knew him best, like Johnnie Carstairs and Jean Lucas, the young Englishwoman who for the last few years had looked after him during the summer months, declare that it was not the desire for riches that drove him on in his later years, but the desire to prove himself right and to make good the losses suffered by so many people who lent him money for his early attempts.

"Like so many of the earlier explorers, he was a God-fearing man and a great character. His words—'There's oil in the Rocky Mountains'—are often used by oil men about a piece of country not worth exploring for oil; but who knows? He always believed that there was only one way to prove whether there was oil, and that was to drill¹ for it. Some day perhaps he'll be proved right."

I put the paper down and sat staring at the wall. I had something to do now—a purpose in life. And somehow it lessened the shock of what Dr. Maclean-Hervey had told me. I got up and began to walk up and down the room. Failure and twenty-two years of loneliness had not destroyed his faith. His letter proved that. If I could go on from where he had

¹ To drill—to cut deep into the earth with a twisting tool. As the cutting tool goes deeper, more and more lengths of pipe are fitted to it. The oil-drilling machinery and its steel framework are called a "rig".

stopped. . . .

I realized with a shock that I had crossed the gap of 6,000 miles that separated me from Campbell's Kingdom and was imagining myself already up there. It was nonsensical! I'd no knowledge of oil, no money. And yet . . . The only other thing was to sign that paper. I went over to the table and picked it up. If I signed it, Fothergill said that I might get \$10,000 out of it in six months' time. It would pay for my funeral—that was about all the good it would be to me. To remain in London, an insurance clerk to the end, was impossible with this other possibility before me. I tore the paper up and threw the pieces on the floor. I would go to Canada! I would try to do what my grandfather had expected of me.

2

IT took me just a week to get out to Calgary. I remember feeling very tired, but this was mostly forgotten because of my excitement. I had arranged for a friend to look up the newspaper reports of my grandfather's trial, and to send an account of it to me when I could give him an address. The rest I left to chance.

I arrived at Calgary at 8.30 in the morning. Donald McCrae & Acheson had their offices in an old brick building amongst the offices of oil companies. There were photographs of the Turner Valley oil field on the walls of the staircase. From the offices came the sound of typewriters. Half way up the stairs I paused to get my breath back. The names of four companies were painted in black on the glass tops of their doors; one was Donald McCrae & Acheson, but it was the name on the door to the left that caught my eye, for it was the name of the man who had backed my grandfather. It was "The Roger Fergus Oil Development Company". The other two offices were occupied by "Louis Winnick, Oil Specialist", and "Henry Fergus, Business Representative". Newly painted in under this last name was "The Larsen Mining and Development Company Ltd".

A few minutes later a secretary showed me through into Acheson's office. He was a big man, with a smooth, rather

red face and round blue eyes. "Mr. Wetheral?" He rose to greet me, and his hand was soft and fat. "Glad to see you." He waved me to a chair. "Fothergill writes that for some reason you don't want to sell."

"No," I said, "Not until I've seen the place, anyway."

"There's been too much delay already. I quite understand your wanting to see the land before selling it, but in this case it's just not possible. Did Fothergill give you all the details?"

"Yes," I said, "But I wasn't able to get the position about mineral rights¹ clear, and——"

"Mineral rights!" He laughed. "I wouldn't worry about the mineral rights, if I were you." He leaned back and looked at me out of small, clear blue eyes. "It's oil you're thinking of, is it? I warned Fothergill to make it perfectly clear to you that there wasn't any oil. Did he give you my letter?"

"Yes," I said.

"And you are not satisfied? All right. Well let me tell you that Roger Fergus sent Bladen up to Campbell's Kingdom to make a survey last summer and Louis Winnick's report on his findings proves Campbell's ideas about oil up there to be a lot of nonsense." He reached forward and picked up some papers. "Here's a copy of that report." He pushed it across the desk in front of me. "Take it away and read it for yourself! But in any case, the mineral rights don't belong to you. They belong to Roger Fergus; they were taken in return for the money which Fergus lent to the company. Of course, they weren't worth anything. Roger Fergus knew that. He was just being kind to the old fellow when we arranged it that way so that it would look more businesslike."

He paused. His manner was like that of a business man, hard and forceful. I could feel him trying to rush me into selling.

"Is a report like this to be trusted absolutely?"

"It won't prove the presence of oil. But it can be trusted to show when land is not oil-bearing. In this case, when you read the report through you'll find that the rocks under the

¹ Mineral rights=Any minerals which lie beneath the land belong to whoever owns the "mineral rights".