

THE BIG MUSKEG

By
VICTOR ROUSSEAU

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"I'LL GO WITH YOU."

SYNOPSIS.—Looking over Big Muskeg, a seemingly impassable swamp in the path of the Mississippi railroad, Joe Bostock, balder of the line, and Wilton Carruthers, chief of engineers, are considering the difficulties. A rifle shot instantly kills Bostock and breaks Carruthers' arm. Carruthers tries to carry the body to a post of the Hudson's Bay company, where McDonald is the factor, McDonald's daughter, Molly, sees Carruthers struggling in the muskeg and drags him from the swamp, with his burden. Unaccountably, her father objects to her saving Carruthers. Weakened by his wound and exertions, Carruthers is disturbed by the appearance of Tom Bowyer, Bostock's business rival and personal enemy. Bowyer insults Molly, and Carruthers strikes him. Carruthers declares his love for Molly. She promises to be his wife. Carruthers has to reach the town of Clayton to attend a meeting at which Bostock's enemies plan to wrest control of the Mississippi from him. Molly determines to go with him.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

"When Joe's death came home to me I thought things over in there, and it seemed to me that the only thing possible for me would be to go before the shareholders and tell them frankly what lay behind the enterprise—I mean the clay lands and their development.

"Well, Molly, I've changed my mind. I won't tell them. I'll keep control for Kitty. And I'll advise the shareholders to proceed with the route we've planned. I'll take the responsibility. Big Muskeg can be crossed. It shall be.

"And I'll do more than that, Molly. I'll get the shareholders' authorization before they know Joe's death. If they knew that, it'd be all up with the line. Bowyer doesn't know. Nobody knows except ourselves.

"I've told you all this, Molly, because you have the right to know. And just as soon as we've won I shall be in a position to ask you to be my wife. Will you, dear?"

Molly turned and put her hands on his shoulders.

"Yes, Will," she answered. "And I hope with all my heart that you succeed in carrying out Joe's plans. And I believe you will. And I believe you will find a way to cross Big Muskeg. I see now that I must let you go, though I can't bear to. Will. But now I must say something. You know my father—"

"Doesn't altogether approve of me as a son-in-law, to put it mildly," answered Wilton. "I can't make out the reason for his dislike of me. The



"Yes, Will," She Answered.

first time I came here we struck up a friendship that looked as if it would be good for all time. Do you know what the trouble is, Molly?"

"I'm afraid Tom Bowyer has been influencing him against you. He has a strong power over father. He helped him in some way when he first came to this country."

"Then that's another score against our friend Bowyer," said Wilton.

"But I was going to say—you see, my father's mind has given way to some extent since his stroke, and I don't know, Will, dear, but I'm almost afraid he is never going to be the same man again. It started even before his attack—this feeling against you, and his morosefess. It began when Tom Bowyer was here last autumn. I'm afraid Bowyer slandered you to father. And I think it was my father's brooding over things that really caused his illness. So we'll just have to be patient. And I'm going to ask you, for the present, not to say anything about this to him."

Wilton promised, though with reluctance. He did not like the concentration. His mind, simple and direct, worked in straightforward ways. However, he had been too hard hit over Joe's

death to make room for a new trouble. And he could not have refused Molly.

CHAPTER IV

"In the King's Name!"

But he worried over the situation all night, and in the morning Molly saw with alarm that he was in a feverish condition. He should never have left his bed, and the journey seemed impossible.

"I've got to go, Molly," was all Wilton could say.

"Then," she said with sudden decision, "I shall go with you. You can't travel alone. Your men may be faithful enough, but it is my right to go. And you'll never get to the meeting without some one to take care of you on the way. That's my condition. Promise me—or else I'll lock the store door, Will, and I've got a padlock that even you couldn't force."

Molly seemed to be animated by a resolution as feverish as his own. Jules Halfhead had not fulfilled his intention of absenting himself, probably on account of the storm, which had made the security of the stores seem preferable to life in the forests. He was faithful to the factor, and had never deserted him in need. He could take care of him during the four or five days of her absence.

Wilton was forced to yield.

"But you must make sure that Jules will stay," she said.

"He'll understand. He'll stay," answered the girl. "He's never run away when I was gone to Moose Lake or Winnipeg."

Molly went up to the factor's room with the faint hope of reaching some understanding—of plumbing her father's feeling against Wilton and overcoming it.

"Mr. Carruthers is getting ready to go," she said. "He is very ill. He is too weak to travel alone, but he must take Joe Bostock's body back to Clayton."

"Oh, ay!" said the factor, sneering. "He needs care and attention during the journey. So I am going with him."

The factor sat up in bed, transfixing her with a look of fury. "You lass—you will go with Wilton Carruthers to Clayton!" he cried. "Ye winna come home, then! Mark me, now, I've done with you for aye! Molly, lass, ye winna go!" he pleaded, with a sudden change of tone. "Think of your good name in Clayton! I have nae renered ye to have ye desert me in my old age and sickness, Molly."

She turned quickly away to keep her tears from falling. "Jules can take care of you for a few days, father," she said. "It's not as if you were helpless. And his life is at stake."

"And mebbe he'll die if you don't stay with him when ye get to Clayton, eh, lass?" rasped out the factor in withering scorn.

That scorn nerved her; to his weakness she had almost yielded. She went down and dressed herself for the journey. She helped Wilton on with a mackinaw, and put a caribou robe in the sleigh. Then, while the men were harnessing the dogs, struck by a sudden thought, she stooped and began to examine the tracks of the snowshoes about the edge of the portage. They ran confusedly in all directions, for the marks had been made by seven different pairs—those of Bowyer and Chambers and their Indian; those of Wilton and his two half-breeds; those of the deaf-mute.

Of these Wilton's were blurred and almost indistinguishable, made by his dragging feet as she pulled him up from the swamp. But even had the vague purpose in Molly's mind been clear to her, there would have been no need to examine those. The rest were all similar in one respect—none had a broken string.

Wilton and Molly had arranged that he was to travel in the sleigh, to which a second had been attached, bearing Joe's body in a roughly made coffin constructed by the men. The dogs were harnessed, and they started.

It was a little more than fifty miles to Clayton. Traveling along the cleared road, the distance could be covered easily in two days. The dogs ran well, the weather was clear and fine, and Wilton felt well enough to walk a good deal. Their dinner was almost like a picnic. By evening the railhead had come into sight in the distance, the empty camp, the long sheds with the miscellany of supplies, the locomotive shops, and the great ballast pits beside the line.

As the dogs climbed the last hill there came yelping from the cleared way behind them. Looking back, they perceived a sled approaching. Two men walked beside it, and the dogs, sighting Wilton's, yelped in challenge, which was taken up in an outburst of answering growls.

The sled drew in toward them, and the men resolved themselves into a sergeant and a constable of the mounted police. Wilton had stopped his dogs, but the newcomers did not halt, and went on, with curt greetings, toward the cache.

A little surprised at their abruptness, Wilton let the sled precede his sleigh. As the dogs were eager for their meal, he sent Papillon ahead with them, and followed more leisurely with Molly. They arrived at the cache a few minutes after the half-breeds, to find the two policemen waiting for them, while the two men were unharnessing the dogs. Andersen, the old Swedish caretaker, was standing beside Joe's coffin with a stunned look on his face. The policemen were not of prepossessing appearance. The elder man, the sergeant, was about forty years of age. He had fair hair, drooping mustache, a slight cast in one eye, and an expression of sullen insolence. His companion, a short, stocky young fellow, looked hardly less surly and evidently ill at ease.

"Evening, Mr. Carruthers," said the sergeant brusquely. "I'm sergeant Peters, and this is Constable Myers. That's Joe Bostock's body you're bringing in, I guess."

Wilton was staggered. "Yes, it's Joe," he said, gulping. "How did you get the news?"

The policemen exchanged glances. Peters smiled scornfully under his long mustache. "It's known, all right.

"I never saw them before, sir," said the old man. "I guess they ain't from these parts, from the looks and the ways of 'em."

"There's a new lot come up from Yorkton lately. Maybe they shifted these to the Pas when they sent some of the Pas men on to Clayton," Wilton reflected. He turned to Molly. "Anyway, we'll start bright and early," he said. "I suppose we'll have to have those fellows' company as far as Clayton. But I wonder—" He paused. "I wonder whether Joe would forgive me for leaving him in the hands of strangers for a while, if it were for Kitty?" he mused.

The two policemen came in, looking surly and uncommunicative as ever. After a hurried meal, eaten almost in silence, Molly said good-night to Wilton and went into the caretaker's room. As the door closed behind her Wilton saw the two men look after her. The constable whispered something to the sergeant, and both chuckled.

Wilton's blood was boiling, but he controlled himself. This was for Kitty, and his debt to Joe.

The policemen prepared to lie down. Andersen was already snoring upon the floor. The half-breeds, however, had not come in, and Wilton, going to the stables, found them curled up among the huskies.

"You fellows had better come into the shack," he said, "unless you want to freeze."

Papillon refused. "Them d--n dogs will fight each other," he said, "if we don't stay here."

"Just as you like," said Wilton.

It was not unusual for rival teams of huskies to attack each other, but such antipathy generally developed from the first, and the dogs seemed contented enough. He went back to the shack and lay down, turning over in his mind what he was projecting, but he was utterly worn out, and fell asleep before he was aware of it.

When he opened his eyes it was already dawn. The policemen were dressed and standing outside the shack, conversing in low tones. Andersen was peeling potatoes for breakfast. Wilton heard Molly moving within the room, and his doubts fell from him. He had been upset by the surliness of the two men; he had had vague suspicions not justified in fact. He determined to put his proposal to them.

He walked over to the sergeant, who was just re-entering the shack with his companion.

"I suppose you fellows are thinking of starting at once, after breakfast," he suggested.

The sergeant looked him up and down. "That's about the size of it," he growled. "Got any objection?"

Wilton resolutely ignored the affront.

"I've got important business in Clayton, affecting Mr. Bostock's interests," he said. "It is very important that his death should not be known there until midday tomorrow."

The constable, who was leaning against the door-post, chewing the end of a twig, started slightly. Peters fixed Wilton with his crooked stare.

"Rather a nery thing to propose, Mr. Carruthers," he sneered.

"Maybe, but it's a business matter affecting Mr. Bostock's wife," said Wilton, loathing himself for making the request, but nerving himself to do so by the thought of Kitty. "If the news of his death reaches Clayton before the time I've mentioned, some people who are antagonistic to Mr. Bostock's interests will jump at the chance to turn it to account. It will mean a heavy loss to Mrs. Bostock. You've come a long way, and you could quite reasonably wait till afternoon on account of the dogs. That will bring you in before noon tomorrow. And—if you can see your way to it, you two won't be the losers."

The sergeant eyed him more insolently than ever. "So that's the program, is it?" he answered. "Well, keep your mind easy. The news won't be known in Clayton tonight, nor tomorrow either. We ain't going to Clayton."

"You're not, eh? Then where the devil are you going?" cried Wilton, nettled almost beyond endurance at the man's demenor.

"We're taking Joe Bostock's body back to the Pas," retorted the sergeant. "That's what we come here for."

"The Pas? This isn't in the Pas jurisdiction?"

"It ain't, eh? Perhaps it's in yours, then?"

"See here," cried Wilton in exasperation. "Clayton has its own police detachment, as you know perfectly well. Your route doesn't lie in this direction. Joe Bostock's home's there. He's going to be buried there. And his body isn't going to be dragged here and there about the country by a couple of fool policemen. I'll make things pretty warm for you if you try any game like that."

"Keep your hands up, both of you. Give me the revolver, Molly!"

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The KITCHEN CABINET

Copyright, 1922, Western Newspaper Union. If you're feelin' kind o' lonesome, if you're apt to be forgetful of the Blessin's owned by you. Then it's time you want to doctorin' for each little burn and smart. Give yourself a little doctorin' in the region of the heart.—Keech.

DISHERS FOR THE CAMPER

These are good filling dishes, and not hard to prepare or at all complicated as to materials:



Plymouth Succotash.—Take two cupsfuls of corned beef stock, two cupsfuls of chicken stock, one cupful of diced chicken, two cupsfuls of sweet corn, one and one-half cupsfuls of diced potato, the same of diced turnip and dry lima beans. Soak the beans over night and cook two hours, add stock and beans and cook slowly, then add the vegetables and seasoning one hour before serving.

Cornish Pasty.—Cut a pound of round of beef in one-half inch dice, slice potatoes and two or three onions. Make a rich biscuit dough and line a deep pastry tin; put in a layer of the meat, cover over all, leaving vents for the steam to escape. Bake until the vegetables are tender—two hours or less. When done, wrap the pasty in a cloth and set out to steam for ten minutes. This softens the crust and seasons it. Serve cut up like pie. The moisture in the fresh meat and vegetables will be sufficient.

Rice and Egg Dish.—Take one-half cupful of rice, wash and drain, add a tablespoonful of butter with the rice in a saucepan and fry until yellow; add water and cook until tender, then add a little milk, seasonings and three eggs; stir until the eggs are scrambled and serve hot. This makes a dish which extends the egg, and one which is wholesome.

Suet Pudding.—To one quart of boiling milk add one-half cupful of cornmeal, one-half teaspoonful of salt; stir until scalded, add another quart of milk, two beaten eggs, a cupful of sugar, a cupful or less of raisins and one-half cupful of chopped suet, mixed with 1/2 tablespoonful or two of flour. Bake in a slow oven for three hours, stirring occasionally for the first half of the cooking.

"Just as the purest gold needs a little alloy to harden it and make it practical for use, so the person with the most brilliant mind needs common sense in order to succeed."

DELECTABLE DISHERS

For a nice occasion the following dessert is one especially good to serve:



Corenado Bavarian Cream.—Soak two ounces of gelatin in cold water. Take one quart of the ripe strawberries, crush and mix with one pound of powdered sugar. Beat three cupsful of double cream until stiff. Add the dissolved gelatin to the crushed fruit, then stir until the mixture begins to set. Mix lightly with the whipped cream; fill the molds and set on ice to harden. When ready to serve, dip the molds in hot water an instant and mold. Decorate with whipped cream and sliced ripe berries.

Scotch Shortbread.—Weigh two pounds of brand flour, one pound of butter and one and one-half pounds of sugar. Sift the flour, and set the pan in the oven until it is slightly warm, using a spoon to stir and expose it to the heat. Cream the butter until it is white and will keep its shape when lifted with a spoon; then add the sugar gradually, beating until the whole is well mixed. Using the hands, mix the butter, sugar and flour together, squeezing and kneading until the ingredients are well mixed. The better the mixing the shorter the bread. Lay the dough on a moulding board, very lightly floured, and press out the mixture with the palms of the hands into a sheet one-half inch thick. Do not use the rolling pin or add any more flour. Heat a sharp knife and cut the dough in squares oblong or triangular. Bake in a moderate oven until a golden brown. Some prefer to bake the bread in a sheet, pricking it well with a fork.

Ciabbered Milk.—Set away a pan of milk rich with cream to sour and thicken. Chill and serve with scraped maple sugar or brown sugar and grated nutmeg. This is not only good but exceedingly wholesome.

Cherry Betty.—Take fresh ripe cherries and well buttered crumbs, put a layer with sugar alternating until the baking dish is full. Bake until the cherries are well done. Serve with hard sauce.

Apple Salad.—Take two cupsfuls of diced apples, one cupful of diced celery and one-fourth cupful of pecan meats, mix with a highly-seasoned mayonnaise and serve on lettuce.

Mint Jelly.—Prepare apple or plum jelly and, when cooling, add a bunch of mint. When pouring into the glasses, a few drops of peppermint may be added to enhance the flavor.

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A Spelling Lesson.

Once upon a time there was a stubborn student who refused to learn to spell.

But always the teacher pleaded with the student and often said: "You will suffer some great inconvenience, if not actual tragedy, sometime, by reason of this refusal of yours to study orthography!"

Yet still the student was obdurate, and said "blah."

One day, after the obdurate student had grown to manhood, he poisoned himself eating oysters in "Orgust."

And when the teacher, who had now grown old and toothless teaching orthography, heard this, she said: "Uh, huh! I told him so!"—From Life.

Cuticura Soothes Itching Scalp. On retreating gently rub spots of dandruff and itching with Cuticura Ointment. Next morning shampoo with Cuticura Soap and hot water. Make them your everyday toilet preparations and have a clear skin and soft, white hands.—Advertisement.

Wise Bird.

Grandfather was a patient in a hospital. In the yard stood a tree, and in this tree was a robin's nest. The sparrows seemed to take great delight in seeing how miserable they could make things for Mrs. Robin by diving and pecking until she would leave the nest.

One morning when grandpa was looking out the window he saw a twig fastened with a string just above the nest on which was suspended a card, the top spot of diamonds. The breeze kept the card whirling back and forth frightening the sparrows away. Mrs. Robin went ahead with her work and hatched her brood unmolested.

Why buy many bottles of other Vermifuges, when one bottle of Dr. Peery's "Dead Shot" will act surely and promptly? It costs only 50 cents and if it fails we refund your money. 372 Pearl St., New York City.—Advertisement.

"Lost" Department.

Act one and the only one is set in the "lost and found" department of the Indianapolis street railway.

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Attendant answers, "Well—this is the 'lost' department."

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)