

The Big Muskeg

By
VICTOR ROUSSEAU

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CHAPTER XIV

Wilton Rides Alone.

He ran down toward the swamp, followed by the party of engineers. The horses, released during the fire, were grazing along the edge; they were wary, however, and would not let themselves be approached. For some minutes the men made fruitless efforts to surround them.

However, Wilton managed to catch the mane of a big draught-beast which had been in the front row of the grading yokes and, despite its clumsy appearance, had taken the saddle and had a tolerable action.

But hardly had he made sure of it by a grasp on the mane and upper lip than the remainder, snorting and flourishing their heels, dashed through the corral and galloped full speed toward the lake.

"We'll be with you in a minute, Mr. Carruthers!" shouted one of the men as they went in pursuit.

But Wilton, without answering, had sprung on the beast's back and, leaning forward, caught the broken halter and guided it across the swamp. He had no doubt that the outlaws who had set the fire were responsible for Molly's abduction and, if the trail led up to Bowyer, as he was sure it would, God help Bowyer!

In a couple of minutes he had put on the saddle and tautened the girth, bridled the animal and was riding hard along the southward trail, unarmed.

Meanwhile the rest of the party spent a fruitless half-hour trying to catch horses. At length, after a consultation, they hurried back to the camp, collected a few more Canadians and Americans, and started out after Wilton, leaving a half-dozen to keep the workmen in check.

In the shack Tongway stared apathetically at Andersen, who sat with the revolver in his hand, keeping watch over his captive.

"You think I kill dat feller, eh?" he demanded after a while.

"I dunno, my friend," answered Andersen. "If you did, I guess you'll swing for it, all right."

"See here! Jim Hackett told me to come here an' tell de men dere's money in de safe, an' dey're fools to be worked like dogs and den he laid off because de company's busted. Dat's all I know. I tole dem to get der pay what was coming to dem."

"Pos-seebly," said Andersen. "You was a fool to do it, though. That story's for the police; it ain't for me. You can tell the inspector when he gets here."

"See here! You let me go!" yelled Tongway. "I didn't do nothin'. What for you arrest me?"

"Boss's orders," said Andersen, gruffly. "That'll be enough. Set down like a good feller, now."

"You lie! I tell you I didn't do dat!" screamed Tongway, sinking back into his chair and shuddering.

They watched each other for some time. It was beginning to grow light. Suddenly the tramp of horses was heard outside. Then Inspector Quain appeared at the door of the shack, accompanied by four mounted constables.

"Had considerable trouble, eh?" he said, dismounting and casting a glance about him at the burned-out buildings and the still burning sheds.

"That fire was set by enemies of the Mississipi," shouted one of the engineers. "And we've got one of the men in there!" He pointed toward the shack.

Quain turned to his men, who were awaiting the order to dismount. "Round up those men in their bunk-houses and keep the lot of 'em under guard!" he said, pointing toward the groups of laborers that had gathered about the horses.

The constables drove the Hunkies back toward their quarters. "Two of you'll be enough!" shouted Quain after them. "The other two—Beckett and James—will dismount and rest their horses. I'll want you chaps!"

"You've had some trouble," said Quain to Andersen.

"Why, this ain't trouble, inspector," answered the Swede. "You just look inside that room. I guess it ain't the worst, what I told you already."

Quain strode to the door of Wilton's bedroom, uttered a sharp exclamation and bent over the body of Jules. He came back quickly.

"Who killed that Indian?" he asked.

"Lee Chambers, I guess."

"Tell me what you know."

"Why, all I know is he done some crooked work on the trestling and beat it out of camp before Mr. Carruthers had time to fire him. Last night he came back after the fire, which I guess that feller there knows something about."

"I tell you I don't know nothin'!" yelled Tongway, who seemed in the extremity of panic.

"Mr. Carruthers said Mr. Chambers killed Jules there and got into the safe. I dunno no more than that. But—"

Suddenly, with a frenzied scream, Tongway leaped from his chair for the door again. Andersen was just quick enough. He caught him on the door-sill, and the two men struggled furiously. Tongway snatched Andersen's

revolver out of his hand. Andersen's hand closed on the outlaw's wrist.

Quain ran to grasp Tongway's arm, but, before he could hold it the struggle ended. For Tongway had got his finger on the trigger and was trying to bring the weapon in line with Andersen's head. Andersen swung the outlaw's arm around, and the bullet, discharged too late, passed through Tongway's left arm.

The spectators, who had gathered outside the shack, had come running in at the sound of the shot. Quain ordered them out and, taking off Tongway's coat, he cut the sleeve of his shirt away. One of the constables brought him his first-aid case and soon had the wound painted with iodine and bandaged.

"I'll not need you any further," said the inspector to Andersen. "You'll help keep the men in their bunk-houses, in case of trouble. Take three or four of your own men. I'm going after Carruthers, and I expect to be back by noon."

He called the second dismounted constable and they rode off at a swift pace toward the portage.

CHAPTER XV

Bowyer's Hour.

Bowyer looked the incarnation of insolence and triumph as he stood in the doorway, red-faced, red-haired, like some sleek fox that has put off its habitual cunning because it is at last secure from danger.

His vicious eyes fixed themselves upon the girl's face as she fastened back the hair that hung about her.

"That brute was rough with you," said Bowyer. "But I guess you gave him better than he gave you. I guess he got what he deserved. I told them you went to come to any harm. Well, McDonald, they didn't use you too rough, eh?"

"We were brought here by force and violence," said Molly defiantly. "Are we to be kept here in the same way?"

Suddenly Bowyer stepped forward and took her hands. "Molly—listen to me now," he said. "Listen quietly. I'm not going to hurt you. I love you. I've got to have you, Molly. But I want you to love me. Let's forget it all. What'd you say, Molly? Did you ever think of what I've got to offer you?"

She tried to draw her hands away, but he held them tightly, and, remembering her resolution, she stood with them passive in his own.

"What's your answer, Molly?" asked Bowyer.

"Never!" she cried. "You knew that! Did you think I was going to change because you had had me kidnapped and inflicted this outrage upon me?"

Bowyer turned toward the factor. "Maybe she'll obey you, McDonald," he said softly, and something in his tone arrested the girl's attention.

McDonald was gray with fear. He leaped up. "Molly, he means it!" he screamed. "We can't escape him."



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"Mr. Carruthers said Mr. Chambers killed Jules there and got into the safe. I dunno no more than that. But—"

"For years I've protected you from the law. Now I've done with you."

"You can tell me, Tom Bowyer!" cried Molly.

He swung toward her. "I'll tell you, then," he roared. "Your father's a murderer. He's been wanted by the police these twenty years or more, and he's still wanted. The police don't forget. I knew it from the first. He came to me and asked my help after he'd murdered a man in a common brawl. He wanted to give himself up. I told him not to. I got him his job at the portage, where he'd be secure. I've stood by him, been his friend, protected him. But I'll protect him no more."

He wheeled upon the factor. "Now speak to her again!" he shouted. "You're her father!" There was intense mockery in his tone. "She'll obey you. Ask her if she wants you to swing in the jail-yard at Yorkton while she's on her honeymoon with Will Carruthers!"

With a whimpering cry the factor dropped to his knees and hid his face in his hands. Molly let the rifle fall and shrank back against the wall. A cry broke from her lips.

"It isn't true, father!" she begged, fixing her eyes in terror upon the factor's. "Tell him it isn't true. You didn't kill that man who insulted my mother! And, if you did, you did it to protect her. Tell him it's a lie!"

The factor's whimpering moans were all her answer. They ceased, and for a full minute there was not the least sound in the room. Slowly Molly raised her head, and the look that had come into her eyes at last was one that Bowyer had seen in the eyes of many men and women before. He knew that the time of his triumph had come.

"Unless I marry you, Tom Bowyer," said Molly, "you will betray my father, who trusted you?"

"I'll give him up to justice," Bowyer shouted. "I'll fight with what weapons I've got. Wouldn't any man who was a man fight for what he wanted most of all in the world? If you don't give up, I swear he'll hang. You know what Canadian law is. I swear to you I'll have him hanged in Yorkton inside of six months if you don't agree to what I'm asking of you."

"And if I do agree?" asked Molly, shuddering.

The sudden glance of hope in the factor's eyes went to her heart. But McDonald, crushed under his servitude, had a flicker of manhood after all.

"Don't do it, Molly, lass!" he shouted. "I'll hang!" He turned to Bowyer. "I'll hang!" he shouted, and then his voice broke into a whimper.

"Shut up, you old fool!" said Bowyer, contemptuously. "If you agree, Molly," he said, "the past will all be forgotten. I swear it will. I love you, and I'll be true to you. I'll give you everything you want, and I'll make McDonald a home as long as he lives. D—n it! You look as if I was asking something awful of you! What's the matter with me? Ain't I good enough for you?"

She looked up, to see Bowyer's red face peering into her own. She shivered, as if with mortal cold.

"I'll marry you," she said.

The slow smile that spread over Bowyer's face was indescribable. He turned to McDonald. "Well, that's settled at last," he said, rubbing his hands together in gloating self-satisfaction. "Get to bed, McDonald! Molly and I will sit up a while and talk over the details of our honeymoon trip. That ain't your business. Maybe we'll do a little love-making on the side, too, but not too rough. I guess I know how to handle a girl!"

He strode toward the door and opened it. The factor stood stock-still for a moment. Then, at Bowyer's call, he stumbled toward it, and Bowyer led him across the passage into another room.

"You'll be comfortable in here, McDonald!" Bowyer shouted, slapping the old man on the back. "And don't you fear for Molly. I'll take mighty good care of her."

There followed his returning footsteps, and the sharp, sudden click of a key. Then came a furious rattling from within. Bowyer turned angrily. "Go to bed, you old fool!" he shouted. "Didn't I tell you I'd take care of her?"

The rattling ceased, but Molly heard the factor's feet shuffling as he stood irresolutely behind his door, listening. Bowyer came back and slammed the door behind him. He put his hand on Molly's shoulder.

"I'm glad that's all settled at last," he said. "G—d, you've led me a chase, Molly! Hardest I've ever had; but I knew I'd get you in the end."

"When do you wish me to marry you?" asked Molly in a whisper.

Bowyer threw back his head and laughed. "Now you're talking," he answered. "That's the point I was coming to. I'm a business man, and I'm used to paying what I have to for what I want. But I've been thinking that when two people are agreed on the same thing, and there's no way out of it, unless you want the old man to swing—why, it mightn't be neces-

sary for you and me to get married at all."

He slid his arm about her waist and bent his red face toward hers. For an instant the girl misunderstood. Then she leaped to her feet, her eyes blazing.

"Get out of my way, Tom Bowyer! If you try to stop me I'll murder you!" she screamed.

She ran round behind the divan, snatched up the empty rifle, and, as Bowyer followed her, brought down the stock with all her strength.

Had it struck his skull it would have knocked him unconscious. But in the nick of time he leaped aside, and it fell across the muscles of his neck and shoulders. With a howl of pain he wrenched the weapon from her hands. He beat her across the face again and again with his fists. He seized her by the hair, twining it in his hand, and, forcing her head back, put his hands over her mouth.

She tried with all the strength she possessed to pry his hands away; the red and swollen face that leered into her own seemed to fill all space, like a huge, evil sun. With all the strength that remained in her she tore at the red hand over her mouth, and bit into



He Seized Her by the Hair.

it until her assailant yelled with pain. His grasp on her throat loosened for an instant. She drew in a deep gasp of air. Then she saw that the door was open.

Hackett was in the room. He was shouting to Bowyer, who released the half-conscious girl, stood up, and yelled in answer. The outlaw was tugging frantically at his arm. There came the plunge of a heavy body against the door of the camp. Hackett sprang forward, and fell sprawling back under a terrific blow.

Wilton stood on the threshold.

CHAPTER XVI

Under Arrest.

Molly saw it all as if in a dream. The hideous presence of her assailant was still with her. Then she saw Hackett and Bowyer pull pistols from their pockets. And each act was extended in her mind and vision through an eternity, as if it would never end.

She sprang to the table, seized the oil lamp, and hurled it at their backs. It struck them fairly, sending them staggering before they had time to fire. Instantly the curtains before the windows were ablaze. A stream of burning oil shot across the floor to the divan, which began burning furiously, filling the room with smoke. Wilton and the two men closed.

There followed a furious struggle. The combatants rolled over and over, stumbling against the burning divan, knocking over the chairs, crashing into the walls. All the while McDonald hammered at the door and added his shouts to the uproar.

Molly darted across the passage and released him. "They're murdering Will!" she cried. But the old man, staggering out, only shouted distractedly. Molly ran back. Hackett had Wilton by the throat, and, as she entered the room, Bowyer wrenched himself free, raised his pistol, and brought the butt crashing down on Wilton's head. Wilton toppled back into the blazing oil.

Bowyer aimed, but Molly knocked up his arm, and the shot went wild. Bowyer turned upon Molly with a ghastly grin.

"D—n you!" he shouted, raising his pistol to strike her down. McDonald sprang between them. Hackett pulled at Bowyer and dragged him to the door. He whispered in his ear, and Bowyer cursed him. They clinched in the passage.

Molly was unconscious of what was transpiring. She had rushed to Wilton, and, grasping him by the shoulders, pulled him out of the flames. Seizing him in her arms, she began madly beating out the fire that was licking his clothes and hair. She tore off his blazing coat and with it extinguished them. Then, holding his head against her breast, she staggered toward the door through the thick smoke, McDonald at her side.

As she neared it Hackett leaped forward. He pushed the factor violently back and slammed it. An instant later there sounded the click of the key in the lock.

"The window! The window!" shouted the factor.

But that side of the room was a living wall of fire, and they seemed to be trapped hopelessly. The heat was becoming intolerable.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

BAGS OF PAISLEY

Late Style Accessory Is Made of Bits of Old Shawls.

Black Moire Most Satisfactory All Around Material; Beaded Models Have Passed Away.

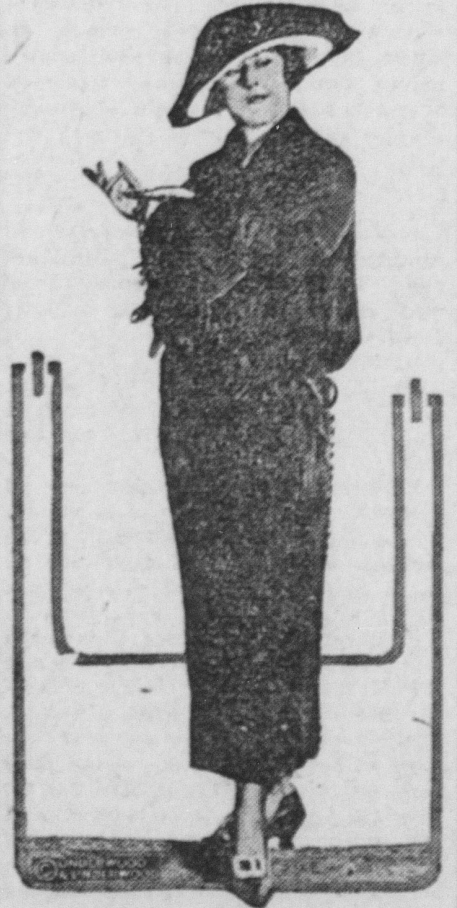
The little hand bags are so numerous that they confront one at every turn, and yet many of them are unbecomingly beautiful. One has to hunt and hunt before coming upon anything wholly pleasing and satisfactory. Either they are too beautiful to be efficient or they are too efficient to be classed among the beautiful. Is there anything worse than one of those bunched bags, crowded with too much material and looking like a badly wrapped bundle?

Some of the newer bags are made of Paisley—bits of the old shawls—and they are most satisfactory. They are lovely bits of color, to begin with, and then they are made so that they have spacious enough interiors to make them feasible carry-alls for the woman who must have some pocket in which to put the helpful appliances for her outdoor make-up. Some of these Paisley bags are beaded along the outlines of their patterns with rows of steel beads and the effect of that extra touch of work is a charming addition. There will be a steel beaded string with which to carry a bag of this sort and often a steel tassel or two is used for a finish at the point where the shape of the bag ends.

The black moire bags are perhaps the most satisfactory all around and they are chiefly notable for the frames upon which they are mounted and the ivory or jeweled clasps used to snap them together. The one big value of a black bag is that it goes with everything.

Beaded bags, unless they are extraordinarily handsome, have passed away as a strong asset to the toilets of a smart woman. Of course, there are those finely woven purses of beads without linings which are so extremely colorful that they will often be chosen to help out a costume just because of

COLLAR WHICH ENDS AT HIP



Showing a black trelaine coat dress which fastens on the left hip with an ornament in brilliant red. Dripping monkey fur calls attention to the tight sleeves and outlines the collar which ends at the left hip.

BIG SLEEVES AND MUCH FUR

Many Arm Coverings in Coats on Kimono Style; Some Set in With Square Armhole.

Simplicity of line, handsome materials and warm rich coloring are to mark this autumn's coats.

Fur trimmings will be lavishly used. In colors there are the standards, as usual, and a few novelties such as a new medium shade of gray. Burgundy will be seen, too, we are told.

Straight models will be liked, some with a little added fullness in shoulder plaits, which allow a slight flare at the foot.

One Russian blouse effect shows a novelty in the blousing being used only in the back, the fronts being cut double breasted. One side fastens over the other and is caught with a handsome steel clasp. A narrow belt draws the front of the coat in somewhat, giving a slightly fitted effect.

All coat sleeves are voluminous, many in kimono style, and some set in with a square armhole.

Metal embroidery, narrow braids in self shades, and stitching, will be seen a great deal this autumn, according to the trend of New York fashions.

WHITE COLLARS TO THE FORE

Neck Decorations Have Width to Spread Over Frock Almost to the Waistline.

Picturesque white collars are more and more to the fore. They roll around rather low necklines and have a great deal of width left to spread neatly over the frock almost to the

WINSOME TWO-PIECE OUTFIT



This two-piece costume is of dark blue silk-surfaced trelaine, using the wool surface outside and outlining the collar, cuffs and pocket details in a cherry red. The wide sleeves may be snugly buttoned around the wrist. The wrap-around skirt has a bloused waist of a brilliantly printed silk.

the shining touch which they are capable of adding. But the bead bag that was so prominent has faded away altogether, leaving in its place only the silken ones by which it is possible to add color to a gown.

OLD-STYLE TRIMMINGS BACK

Fine Soutaching, Braids, Buttons and Belts Again in Favor for Millady's Wear.

In trimmings, a marked revival of interest in the old-fashioned passermenterie motifs stands out as the chief note to signal. Fine soutaching and an extensive use of flat braids in plain and in fancy weaves is noted. Fancy metal braids, and metal run or metal bead braids figure among the novelties.

Buttons are used chiefly as ornaments. They are very large, in brilliant colors and are elaborately carved. Many lacquered buttons ornamented with gilt figures in Chinese designs are shown.

Braid buttons, fabric covered embroidered buttons and small, cut jet and steel buttons, are the chief types used for jackets.

Large, ornamental plaques in carved composition or in steel are used on tailored dresses.

Belts are used much less this season than during the preceding season.

Steel beaded leather belts appear as the chief novelties. The general trend is for belts which are simple and inconspicuous.—Dry Goods Economist.

Straight Hem Line.

Many of the skirts show a return to the straight hemline. One Polnet gown, however, makes a neat compromise between the even and uneven hem. A dress of citron crepe marocain, has a round, gathered skirt which ends in ten sharply pointed scallops. Since each of these scallops is the same length as the rest, a delightful unevenness is attained.

Longer Skirts.

Six or seven inches from the floor is the correct skirt length in Paris and American buyers predict that by fall that will be the standard here.

waistline. These and waistcoats will be features of the coming styles, so if you have any spare minutes, it behooves you to gather your needles and threads together and to spend your time embroidering sheer white stuffs so that you shall be ready to supplement your fall clothes with the sort of accessories that are being done. Any real lace that can be added is a touch that will have much in its favor, and if it is only a little rounded collar with a pair of cuffs to match, you will not be sorry, when the cooler days arrive, to be able to draw them forth to deck some new fall frock.

Cape for Autumn.

The smart little cape for autumn will be a separate garment, of velours or some serviceable fabric; it will be much in evidence with the one-piece street frock. But instead of fastening in front, as the earlier capes invariably fastened, the new hip-length model will fasten on one shoulder. There will be an armhole and a long slit and if one arm is slightly chilly it will be necessary only to reflect that the style at any rate is a jaunty one.

Lace Mitts.

Lace mitts are seen everywhere. They have a quaint charm and a certain early-day air that is quite irresistible. Likewise they come in the most fascinating lace patterns.

Pretty Red Frock.

A picturesque little frock for a small girl seen recently was of red cashmere, cross-stitched in black to form a great deal of width left to spread neatly over the frock almost to the