

# The Red Lock

A Tale of the Flatwoods

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"The Blue Moon"

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CHAPTER X—Continued.

In the glowing embers another face began to form, slowly—a face handsome in spite of its forbidding beard, formidable spectacles and drawn, peering eyes. Every act of the eccentric preacher-schoolmaster, since the day the Milford stage dropped him in front of the post office, passed before his mind—every act, as far as known, had been scrupulously circum-spect.

Dreaming there by the dead embers of the fire, the woodsman found himself analyzing the preacher, in his careful way, from shiny boots to high hat. The ill-health excuse he had never believed, or rather, had set it down to an imaginary ailment—the man looked absolutely fit to enter a cross-country relay. He eliminated the elaborate frock coat, stiff neck stock, high hat and spectacles—divested of all oddities and accessories, there remained a tall and very capable man.

Then, there was the ivory-handled six-gun that happened to thud against the bottom of the skiff, and a pair of very deft hands feeling over the stacks of clothes—a circumstance that had to-tally escaped the other members of the seining party. Besides, there was the perfect agreement of the heel-prints on the dusty deck of the concealed houseboat—another circum-stance that he alone knew.

If he was a college professor and a minister what was he doing in the Flatwoods? If he was not, still, what was he doing in the Flatwoods?

As he pondered, suddenly the dark face that had flared up from the floor of the woods and glowered at him over the log, slid into his mind. So close it came upon the heels of his attempted analysis of the preacher that the two thoughts fused into one. The connection was startling. It brought him up out of his chair and left him staring through the open cabin door into the night.

Was there a connection? Might it be possible that Ken, crime-stained and low-fallen, had sneaked back to the Flatwoods, and the preacher, being a college friend, was trying to be-friend him—possibly save him? But no; there was the letter—it was abso-lutely genuine.

The woodsman straightened and stretched to rouse himself from the wild spell of the thought, to drag him-self back from the drift of it; felt the revolver at his hip; crossed the floor and stepped out into the yard.

The night was unruffled; the woods breathed softly in the pale starlight. Back in the hills a red fox was bark-ing; over in the bottoms a plover whistled his melancholy call; the lonesome wail of a timber wolf drifted down out of Eagle hollow.

But for the true woodsman the night has messages that other ears do not hear. As he stood in the yard sifting the sounds that rode the air, he sud-denly bent forward and stood keenly listening. The frogs in Eagle run, just below the bridge in front of Uncle Nick's, had abruptly stopped croaking, only to begin again after a moment, while the frogs farther down fell silent—somebody was walking along the bank of the little stream. Somebody—frogs do not stop croaking at the tread of cattle or other like animals.

It was near midnight. Why should anybody be prowling in so secluded a spot at such an hour? The alert and experienced woodsman could even gauge the speed of the prowler by the successive silences that fell as he moved down the stream. He was go-ing slowly—possibly creeping.

From the bridge at Uncle Nick's a foot-path led down the east bank of Eagle run and divided a short dis-tance below, one fork leading around the base of Black rock to the War-hope homestead, the other on down the stream, through a small pasture lot and into the park-like orchard and grounds of Simon Colin. It was along this fork of the path that the night prowler was apparently stealing.

The woodsman hurriedly closed the cabin door, ran across the corner of the fallow yard, and the next moment was creeping cautiously along the fork of the path that led around under the dense shadows at the base of Black rock.

The caution of Jack Warhope was seldom at fault. There was always the chance that the woodcraft of the man he followed was as fine as his own. He paid him the compliment of keeping back from the stream, out of earshot of the frogs, and silently took up the trail.

steps away, stood quiet as the breath of the night and waited.

With a final searching look in every direction, the man by the fence climbed cautiously over and stole down the creek bank into the little park. Jack crept up to the fence, crawled over and followed.

At Whispering spring the night prowler crouched down by the rustic seat, put his hands to his mouth and very cleverly imitated the quavering call of the screech owl. Jack seized the favorable moment, crept up as near as he deemed prudent and hid in the dense shadow of a clump of shrub-bery.

The night was so placid that dur-ing the intervals between the imita-tive calls the low murmur of Whis-pering spring fell distinct and clear upon the silence. A few steps away the red-roofed cottage bulked large in the gloom.

The man had already twice given his call and was about to give it a third time, when the parlor door at the front of the house rather noisily opened, and a man came down off the porch and across the yard. As he walked over the brink of the slight decline where the yard dipped to the creek, he passed in outline for a brief moment against the southern sky.

It was the preacher.

His glasses were off, the stoop gone from his shoulders and his step showed not a sign of mincing. He was partly dressed, partly in his night clothes—precisely as one who had wakened naturally from sleep and gone into the yard for some trifling purpose or other. There was a light spot at his hip which the watcher under the clump of shrubbery sur-mised to be the ivory handle of the six-gun that had thudded against the bottom of the skiff.

He went straight to the spring, took down the dipper and dipped himself a drink, making a deal of noise in the act—even an unnecessary amount of it, as it seemed to the critical ears under the shrubbery.

The drink over, he hung up the dip-per, with another clatter; sauntered past the man crouched by the rustic seat; snatched something that was reached out to him; hid it in the bosom of his shirt; whispered a very hurried word or two; stroled back up the yard; crossed the porch; re-en-tered the parlor door and locked it be-hind him.

The man crouching by the seat half-rose and slipped back the way he had come, the frogs, as before, falling silent as he came even with them and resuming their croak again after he had passed. Jack tried hard to make him out as he stole by, less than a dozen steps away, but he was so stooped and so shrouded in gloom that the effort was in vain.

And so they had come—and gone. A burden seemed to be lifted from the night. A clean breeze came down out of the cool della of the serene woods as if to sweep away the taint of their presence.

The woodsman lay a long time lis-tening, and reviewing the astonishing pantomime. Not a sound did he hear. He glanced up at the red-roofed cot-tage. From porch step to gable it lay as peaceful as its background of placid sky. It was hard to think that at that moment it might be standing at the danger-center of some intangible web of evil that was being woven about it.

He knew the lay of the house as well as he knew his own small cabin—along the south and fronting the road the seldom used parlor, with the spare bedroom opening off from it on the east; back of these the sit-ting-room, and the old banker's bed-room adjoining it, with the small room containing his safe opening off it on the west and extending some distance beyond the main wall; back of these rooms the dining-room and back of it the kitchen.

Front entrance to both parlor and sitting-room was from the wide porch, which filled up almost the entire jog between the parlor and the small room that served as office.

Mrs. Curry and Texie both slept up-stairs, the latter over the old banker's bedroom, the former over the office. There were no rooms above the parlor and spare bedroom, these, with the porch, being a later addition to the original building.

With every possible caution Jack slowly crawled up the yard, around back of the house, and under the partly open window of the parlor bed-room; lay listening for a guarded mo-ment; then rose, noiseless as the night, and peeped within.

A pheasant that happened to be hiding under the brush instantly flushed. It seemed as if the flurry of his wings fanned the whole woods alive. A fox squirrel bounced up out of the leaves and skurried away; a chipmunk dived into his den; a pair of blue jays set up their strident screech; a crow left the dead limb of an oak and went floundering along over the tree-tops squawking the news that the most dangerous animal in the world—a man—was loose in the woods.

With the heavy shotgun he carried—a present from the banker—Jack covered the pheasant as it glanced away until it blended with the dull gray of the trees and faded from sight. He dropped the butt of the gun to the leaves and stood listening to the beat of the swift wings, grow-ing fainter, finally ending abruptly, and he knew the bird had settled again to the brush.

"Well, ol' drummer," he chuckled, speaking half aloud—a habit the woods teach men—and throwing the shotgun lightly across his arm, "y'u didn't need 'r rush off without s' much as sayin' good morning. I could 'a' stopped y'u if I'd be'n a mind to. I had y'u right on the end of my trigger finger."

Though Jack Warhope was consid-ered a man of clumsy tongue, he could talk well enough to himself, or to the creatures of the woods. He even had a curiously sane and sensi-ble philosophy—a sort of romantic idealism—that outcropped at such times.

The woods—the true, the constant, the steadfast woods—the first in-stinct of unspoiled men with a heart-ache—the vastness, the all suffi-ciency, the immense Shekinah of the solitudes. With the gun lying across his arm he stepped cautiously to where the pheasant had flushed and peered about under the brush and bushes.

As his straining gaze searched with extreme minuteness every leaf, or glimpse of weed or bark or grass blade, gradually a grayish-brown spot, just where the bush of a fallen limb lay along the side of a crumbling log, began to take shape. He shifted his position for a better view—the gray-brown spot was gone.

He located it again, and as he looked, slowly there grew out of the blending colors of the copse the figure of a hen pheasant on the nest, so per-fectly harmonizing with the leaves and brush among which she hovered that only the very keenest eye could have spied her out at all. A moment he gazed, and slipped away as noise-lessly as he had come.

"Let 'er alone," he muttered wher at a safe distance. "Let 'er think I couldn't find 'er. She'll think if I couldn't the fox can't, and he's her greatest dread right now."

The trees were hardly leaved out enough yet to conceal a man walking carelessly through them, or fully keep back the sun from peeping down through the thick tangle of twigs and coaxing forth flower and grass blade from the quickening mold. The silver sheath of the hickory buds had al-ready burst and sprung wide apart the delicate green of the crinkled newborn leaves appearing in sharp contrast to the purple sheen lining the rent scales. The oaks had begun to thrust forth the tender tips of their new foliage, investing the wak-ing forest with a tint of faint gray-ish red, as if to the infant leaves some trace of the birth blush still clung.

Upon the floor of the woods spring had already spread a carpet of infinite color and design, new and bright and still unsoiled—here a fancy spangled pattern of spring beauties; there a pattern of solid green where the may-apples opened their umbrellas to the light, in readiness to shield the fragile flowers of white wax that were soon to hover beneath their shelter-ing folds; and, draped over all, a shimmering silver base, the gracious benediction of the skies.

The man stopped before a crab-apple tree, the buds of which were opened just enough to make one curi-ous to see more of the beautiful mystery folded teasingly away within the protecting scales. Already some bees, pioneers of their tribe, fussed about the aromatic clusters of peep-ing color, gathering statistics on the season's honey crop.

A breeze stirred the trees, as if the woods were taking a deeper breath. Jack lifted his shoulders and filled his lungs with the nectar-laden air. Warmed by the exuberance of life that rustled and quivered and thrilled around him there gushed up within him the Jubilate of a man wooed by the genial day into almost primal closeness to nature. He dropped the butt of the gun to the leaves, leaned lightly upon it and stood listening to the dull droning of the bees.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Prayer of the Trees.  
Upon a tree in Portugal a traveler read this appeal:  
Ye who pass by and would raise your hand against me, harken ere you harm me.  
I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights.  
The friendly shade screening you from the summer sun.  
And my fruits are refreshing draughts, quenching your thirst as you journey on.

I am the beam that holds your house; the board of your table; the bed you lie on, the timber that builds your boat.  
I am the handle of your hoe, your door, the wood of your cradle and coffin.  
Ye who pass me by listen to my prayer: Harm me not!

## Metallic Brocade for Evening Wear

### Winsome Fabric Reveals Sumptuousness When Worn at Night.

The metallic brocades are extremely smart this season, and they reveal their beauty and sumptuousness when worn at night. On the other hand, observes a fashion writer in the Cleve-land Plain Dealer, if one buys a frock with the idea of making use of it throughout the spring, one of filmy tulle or chiffon will give excellent serv-ice. Satin is making its appearance as an evening fabric, white being es-pecially good.

And speaking of colors, don't be afraid to buy an evening frock in some vivid shade such as rose, flame, jade green, gold, Japanese tangerine, am-ber, turquoise blue or silver. These are the colors which are in vogue both in brocades as well as in plain ma-terials.

As regards necklines, the bateau seems to have almost entirely disap-peared. Even when the frock presents this line across the front, the back may be cut in a deep V. The round neck is used for dinner gowns, and the square neck is also returning to favor. For the more extreme décolletage a single shoulder strap is often used, the other shoulder being bare or having only a rhinestone ornament or floral band, the front of the frock forming a diagonal effect.

It seems strange that the vogue for the Spanish or Chinese shawl which is so pronounced in New York as well as in the fashion centers of the old world, should not make itself felt everywhere. It plays such a prominent part abroad in matters sartorial that returning buyers prophesy a revival of the Span-ish influence both in modes and de-signs for the coming spring. In the East entire frocks are fashioned of

## Jade With Silver Lace, Features of This Dress



For the dance, this charming jade evening dress, trimmed charmingly with silver lace, should be the pride of any young woman.

## Hands and Nails May Be Kept in Condition

If a little sympathetic care and at-tention are given to the hands and nails at the end of a few months their condition will show a great improve-ment.

Cracked and split nails are often a sign of ill health. A nightly applica-tion of cold cream, however, often helps to overcome this condition.

The hands should be immersed in warm, soapy water for a few moments. Then with a soft piece of old linen or silk press back the cuticle of each nail, separately.

For 15 minutes soak tips of the fingers in soapy water. After taking care of the cuticle apply the polish, paste or powder. Powder should be moistened with cologne before apply-ing. Next, take a piece of coarse linen cloth and before the polish has a chance to dry rub the nails well. Then finish by about a ten minutes' rub-bing with a chamols buffer. This will give a brilliant polish.

Lemon juice will give the nails the much desired transparency besides be-ing a good preventive for growing cuti-cle. Lemon juice also is a splendid whitener for the hands and keeps the skin smooth. It is as cleansing, as soap and water. When household or other duties make the hands rough and dry lemon juice should be used instead of soap and water.

## Late Fashion Notes of Interest to All Women

"Hostess" gowns, which are really glorified negligees, are becoming even more glorious. They are made of hand-

these lovely embroidered silken shawls, the one-strap effect being used for the bodice with a diagonal draping line across the figure.

Gone is the huge squash-like coif-ure with which a few seasons ago we used to hide our ears. The fluffy out-standing bob is also passe, its place being taken by a close boyish cut which may be waved or worn plain. Even the matron who still clings to her uncut locks combs them close about her head in as boyish a manner as possible. Simple little bandeaux may be worn, or the hair is left unadorned. Extremely long earrings are in vogue, while bracelets and beads may be uti-lized in carrying out the color scheme of one's costume.

Match your feather fan with a van-ity bag is one of the very newest fads. These clever bags come in the guise of harem-clad ladies their silken gar-ments being trimmed with black silk net and black ostrich. Their net-edged sleeves serve as drawstrings while a loop of silk serves to attach them to one's fan. The colors are jade, or-chid, coral, blue and flame.

For street wear the dress-and-wrap costume is a distinct favorite with the designers, most frequently worked out with a cape, long or short, and often with straight rectangular scarfs that have slits for the hands.

## Very Smart Cape Dress Made of "Pompom" Silk



Showing a winsome cape dress, in which "pompom" silk, an attractive fabric, is done in a most interesting manner.

## The Three-Piece Suit

The question of how to appear to advantage upon all daytime occasions is answered by the three-piece suit. Extremely simple and smart in line when the coat is worn, it may take on a decidedly elaborate aspect when the coat is removed. Underneath is either a really beautiful one-piece frock or a costume blouse of strikingly handsome material. These blouses, by the way, have never been more exquisite. There is, for instance, a ravishingly lovely affair of pale silver cloth, sleeveless and with a rounded neckline.

## Wooden Jewelry Is Seen Now and Then with Frocks Embroidered in Czech or Russian Designs.

Choker necklaces of huge pearls are a renaissance of the choker neck or-naments so fashionable last season. The big choker pearls have come in as foils for the black velvet frock.

Egyptian allover embroidery is now seen on swanky little short-coated suits designed for winter resort wear. In some cases quaint little Egyptian faces peer out in the midst of lotus buds and ancient religious symbols.

Uncut emeralds in dull gold setting of an old-fashioned and heavy design were the jewels worn by one marvel-ously gowned woman at the opera. Her dress was of self-velvet in a shade that matched the misted green of her jewels.

There is a fad for rather small tar-tafeta wrist bags to be carried to the opera. These perishably dainty things in faint rose, lavender and pearl white are just large enough to hold fan, opera glasses, handkerchief and powder box. They are long and nar-row.

## Exquisite Earrings.

Exquisite earrings of rock crystal are mounted with filigree silver. The crystal in a large oblong piece, carved in an open-work design. The whole effect is delicate and fragila.

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