

The Red Lock

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Author of "The Blue Moon"

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A Tale
of the
Flatwoods

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"How picturesquely that cabin nestles there in the pocket of the hills."
"A man named Belden, and his sister, lives there," the girl said, following the direction of his upraised arm. "They're Kentucky mountain folks that jst moved in—they say the sister's quite pretty."

The preacher seemed to be studying the place, with its wild wealth of nature about it, his eyes straying at length from the cabin to its tumbled setting of cliffs and down along the opposite bluffs, mantled with half-sprung leaves, abloom with haw and dogwood and wild apple, until, as he twisted around in the saddle, the whole beautiful panorama of the narrow valley had passed in review before him back to the winding road by which they had entered.

As the girl followed his roving eyes, a black dead limb at the top of Eagle Oak, towering high above the quickening foliage, came into view. She raised her arm and pointed up and away to the lofty landmark.

"That's where the big gray eagle's be'n comin' every summer—sence white men first come t' the Flatwoods, I guess. Look—jst over the top o' that scrub poplar, stickin' up agn'st that white cloud."

"I see it!" the man of books exclaimed, the simple gesture of pointing out to the distant landmark revealing the native grace that might still have been his but for the stooped and studious air that life had imposed upon him. "It stands out against the fluffy whiteness plain as a fagstaff."

"Nobody in the Flatwoods would think of harmin'—"
She stopped, with a low exclamation, for the woodsman had suddenly straightened in his saddle and had jerked his hand toward the cabin squatting against the bluffs up the hollow. The others followed the motion of his hand and sat staring.

Loze Belden's sister had appeared from behind the cabin and was running toward them. She had nearly reached the bushes that fringed what might be called the front of the yard, when Belden appeared in the open door. He threw up his hand and called out a word or two, which did not quite carry to the three riders.

The mountain girl stopped and hesitated; turned and went slowly back. Belden stood aside; she entered the door; Belden closed it.

Jack was watching the preacher. He saw his quick grip on the bridle rein; saw him stiffen in the saddle and glance uneasily about.

"Astounding! Quite extraordinary!" escaped him as the tense brief drama closed.

"Mercy!" Texie exclaimed, "I never knowed she was—crazy."
"She ain't," the woodsman muttered.

The preacher glanced around at him; threw up his head and exploded his blaree laugh. It was a queer moment for a laugh, and a queer laugh for the moment.

"Not bad philosophy, that," he said. "People are not always as crazy as they—act."

That the preacher was acting, the woodsman fully believed, but the acting was just a shade overdone—a circumstance that could hardly escape such a man as Jack Warhope, particularly after the chance clues that had first set his suspicions going. Why he was acting and what part, the woodsman was not missing any chances to find out.

The three riders sat for some time looking toward the cabin in the pocket. Texie and the preacher discussing the astonishing drama that had flared up for its tense moment in the elbow of the hills.

But the drama evidently had but one act, and that act was closed. It seemed to the woodsman, as he covertly watched the preacher, lolling with overdone awkwardness in his saddle, that he showed just a shade of relief that it was closed.

The sun, a red warrior on the homeward trail, had journeyed far down the palling fastnesses of the sky; had ducked behind a huge cloud bank piled like a breastworks across the west. Presently, finding a loop-hole in the turreted cumuli, he glared back at the pursuing shadows; hunched a shaft that fell spent and quivering upon Eagle run and shivered into glittering splinters upon the riffs.

Glum at the missed shaft, the red warrior took his eye from the loop-hole; drew farther back behind the massed fortifications; unstrung his bow. The pursuing shadows stole down the bluffs; dulled the water; dimmed the woods; waked the breeze and shook the wild apple twigs till the white blossoms snowed the grass—symbol of the hopes of men, that bloom, promise fruit, die.

The girl noticed the shadows. Her eyes left the cabin; glanced up and down the opposite bluff, where, under the brow of the wooded escarpment, objects were already beginning to dim.

The girl's roving glance stopped at a black walnut tree ten or fifteen yards away, where some frost-blasted walnuts of the season before still clung to a blighted limb. She swept

a finger toward them, dropped her hand to the revolver at her belt and looked around at the woodsman. He caught the challenge in her eye, grinned and nodded.

With a quickness and skill that showed her mastery of the weapon, she plucked the revolver from its holster, raised it and fired. The first bullet cut a twig close to a walnut, the second brought one down.

Every horse there had been trained to stand under gun-fire. Rex merely pointed his ears sharply forward and stood to his tracks, but, even with such a firm saddle under him, the preacher flinched so at the first shot that he almost lost his balance. The second brought an effusive exclamation from him.

The slow eyes of the woodsman livened.

"Good!" he cried. "Ther' ain't another girl in the Flatwoods can do that."

With a little wisp of a smile in her eyes she glanced around at him, and turned to the preacher.

"Now, Mr. Hopkins, you can try y'ur new six-gun."

The preacher almost set up a breeze in the little valley with the gestulations of his expressive hands; made a heavy draft on his ample stock of effusive exclamations, and finally fumbled the ivory-handled six-gun out of its holster.

He committed the blunder of cocking it with both thumbs—a bit of over-acting that did not escape the man backing Graylock in apparent stolidness.

After a deal of coaching from Texie, the preacher poked the revolver forward and pulled the trigger. There was nothing to indicate that the bullet even came near the target. He threw his head back and exploded his raucous laugh. Rex had stood firm under the shot; he shied at the laugh.

The preacher brought the horse back alongside of Brownie and fired again—the bullet smacked somewhere



"It's the Cabin of Dead Henry Spencer," She Said.

against the opposite bluff, but apparently did not even fan a walnut. He studied the revolver a moment, fixed his spectacles tighter on his nose, and settled seriously to the task; held the weapon in both hands, and aimed a long time—result the same.

Then the girl threw up her revolver and fired again. The bullet cut a nick in the rotted outer hull of a walnut, and she turned to the woodsman.

"Now, Jack, it's your turn."
"Aw, I couldn't hit one of 'em."
"Come on," she coaxed, "I ain't seen y' shoot none since—let's see—'way b'fore corn plantin'."

He looked at her curiously, and shifted in his saddle. The preacher had half turned and watched him narrowly.

Suddenly the revolver leaped from the woodsman's side and darted about over the blighted limb. Three shots rang out; three walnuts flew into fragments and crumbled down upon the leaves.

The preacher had straightened in the saddle and sat watching the wonderful marksmanship with an eye that suddenly kindled to flint and flame; but as the third walnut shattered to dust and crumbs, the stoop came back to his shoulders, the air of tired studiousness to his face.

The girl turned to the woodsman, her fine eyes alive.

"You could 'a' got three more!"
The light in the brown eyes kindled a response in the gray; a slow smile crawled across his bold features.

"It's ag'n the law o' woods t' be caught with an empty gun," he said, with a seriousness that set her wondering, as he felt for the powder flask and bullets in his pouch.

In the dusk of the evening, as they rode back to the village, the girl stopped her horse in front of the old cabin, deserted and gloomy, that squatted against the side-hill a few

yards back from the Eagle Hollow road—the uncanny hovel that the woodsman had gazed down upon from the top of the bluff that morning while watching the swallows dart in and out of its ruined chimney.

"That place is enough to give one the creeps," was the preacher's comment as he reined in Rex beside Brownie.

The girl turned in her saddle and sat for some time looking the place over—the gate now long unused, its hinges black with rust; the rank weeds and sprouts growing close up to the sagging door; the single small front window now yellow with clay that the rains had washed from between the logs; the rude clapboards of the roof warped, loosened, displaced—the crumbling remnants of what had once been a home, now desolate and forsaken under its somber canopy of trees.

"It's the cabin of dead Henry Spencer," she said, "where he murdered his wife and infant daughter with 'is ax one bitter cold night when 'e was drunk, and then wandered out and froze t' death in the snow."

"I've heard the story—from your—ah—brother—and so this is the place?"
"This is the place."
"But not all the story—"

He glanced around at her quizzically.

"No, not all"—she spoke slowly; her words half a question—"they say he—comes back."

The preacher's teeth gleamed white through his heavily bearded lips; his sarcastic exclamation point of a laugh jarred the silence of the placid valley.

"Why, Miss Texie, this is the Nineteenth century, not the Fourteenth."
"Yes,"—in red embarrassment—"but that's what they say."

He looked around at her again, with that same half-cynical expression that came so easily to his face, as he gathered up the reins.

With the mountain girl's hurried warning still fresh in his mind, the woodsman glanced covertly about him as they rode on—something he had been constantly doing since first entering the hollow. As he did so, the uncanny cabin happened to come again under his eyes. A slight mist that for the instant shook even his iron composure—a face at the window was peering at them through the clay-smudged pane.

The face ducked out of sight, and, without so much as a flick of the bridle rein—precisely as if he had seen nothing at all—the woodsman rode on. He glanced at the preacher, but apparently he had not seen the face. If he had he gave no sign.

CHAPTER XIV

The Scrape of a Match.

While grooming Graylock in his stall that evening Jack Warhope thought of the face that had appeared for its startling instant at the smudged window of Henry Spencer's unbowed cabin. As a matter of fact, he had been thinking of it ever since riding out of the jaws of the hollow.

He hung up the curry comb and stepped to the barn door. The sun glared red through a slit in the cloud-bank, and still cleared the trees on the distant foothills by a yard—enough for the purpose he contemplated.

A moment later he was climbing the rough path that led to the uplands. Pausing, to search critically the woods in every direction, he then stole away toward the ill-reputed cabin of the dead woodchopper.

The sun just edged the tree-tops when he came opposite the place. Down in the bottom of the hollow the shadows lay heavy, but the light still touched the uncanny hovel squatted against the hillside.

Stealing through the bushes and brambles, he crept up to the place under cover of the fallen oak, with its festoons of wild cucumber vines. Near the corner most densely hidden by the vines a clink had dropped out from between the logs, leaving a narrow crevice. Shading his eyes, he peeped within. The cabin was empty.

Hugging the wall closely, he crept around to the sagging door; softly pushed it open. His eyes lifted at what he saw—an old box on end near what had once been the fireplace, an empty whisky bottle on the box, with a lamp standing beside it ready to light; a blanket ready to hang over the smudged window.

The dusty floor was covered with tracks—man tracks—one man's. Stepping so as carefully to set his feet in the tracks, he entered the cabin and closed the door.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Macaws.

Macaws, a kind of parrot, native to South America, can break with their beaks nuts which resist attacks with a hammer.

Iceland Producing Wool.

Wool is an important agricultural export of Iceland, much of it being woven into blankets in America.

United States navy submarines now carry small seaplanes for scouting work.

Gay and Neutral Tones in Fashion

Green, Yellow, Red, Orange, Plain Colors on List for Spring.

Everywhere the radiance of spring is reflected in gay and neutral tones with white always predominating, says a fashion correspondent in the Portland-Oregonian. Greens, especially in soft moss and almond tones, carry the honors, with soft yellow a close second. Then there are the red and orange tints so numerous that there is a color for every one and a new one it will be, too. Plain colors, especially in pastel tints combined with white, are very chic just as bright colors were a season ago, but there is a new note expressed in Palm Beach coloring today. Ro-an stripes and plaids combine many colors in the one fabric and thereby offer a wide range for the designer's imaginative art, to say nothing of the possibilities for the wearer to establish her own individuality through her selection of accessories.

The Chinese influence is with us for another season. This is evidenced by the coloring "love apple red," not totally different from lacquer or the red, and the soft greens, might well be described as Chinese green. Distinctly Chinese designs are employed in patterning cretonnes for sport wear. Many parasols disclose these

Little Misses' Frock of Pale Blue Chiffon



Most dainty is this little dress of pale blue chiffon, trimmed with ruffles and tiny rosebuds.

popularity of white. White is present everywhere. It is sponsored by Paris as well as our American designers, who interpret so well the spirit of American womanhood.

As to fabric, the newest in the realm of silks is silk alpaca. It may be fashioned in coat and skirt tulle or a simple morning frock. Such a frock recently observed carried an unbroken line from shoulder to hem. The fullness at the waistline was adjusted by three darts at either side just under the arm, thereby eliminating the necessity of a belt. The modern boyish note was suggested in a vest of white alpaca. A Peter Pan collar and flare cuffs of this fabric bound in blue finished a long, tight, well-fitted sleeve.

Shorter Skirt Favored by Designers in Paris

From Paris come reports that skirts are noticeably shorter, but as yet American women have not taken up the new length. While very long skirts are not seen, it is quite apparent that women regulate the length of their skirts to conform to their type and lines.

In evening frocks, particularly those of the period type, skirts barely escape the insteps, but for any other purpose they are about eight inches from the floor.

The little cape either as part of a frock or as a separate wrap continues to hold its own, and in a new version it appears as an integral part of a bathing suit to be worn the coming summer.

These suits, by the way, are the last word in beach costumes and are wonderfully attractive. Made of mohair in shades of madonna blue, of soft gray green and of Chinese red, they have little round collars of fine white pique and fasten with white pearl buttons.

The tunic reaches just above the knees, allowing several inches of knickers to be seen. The long sleeves are finished with cuffs of pique and there is a short circular cape that fastens onto the sleeves with flat buttons.

A cape similar in style is a feature of the costume. Charming in its straight lines, it is developed in heavy white tussor with conventional motifs embroidered in myrtle green silk. The dress is beltless and fastens with loops and self-covered buttons.

a fabric has many uses and when made into the new straight-line blouse adds a smart touch to a plaited chiffon skirt. A scarf of this fabric forms part of the blouse, for scarfs have gained so in importance that one scarcely designs a frock without including this bit of throw carelessly about the throat. A monogram on one end of the throw may be the only note of ornament and it is usually black. There is something about these soft solid tones that invariably calls for a note of black, however small.

In woens, for they can never be overlooked, regardless of season, flannels, kadhans and crellans mark the world of sports. One-color effects follow the trend but very discreet color mixtures are prominent.

Novelty Fabrics Used for Coats and Capes

Novelty fabrics are employed in the development of youthful coats and capes modeled with flaring lines in side tie and button styles.

Striped, checked and solid colored fabrics are utilized in velours, in materials of the polaire and tweed type, in brushed weaves, and a variety of novelty fabrics.

Colored stitchings, leather appliques, fancy buttons, are among the trimming notes. Contrasting borders are frequently utilized, and checked fabrics that appear at the hem line set on in triangular godets of self or contrasting materials.

Leather trimmings are prominent among all the models displayed. A group of sport coats are presented in shadow plaids that come in pastel offerings.

Hats to match are featured with each coat.



Street Costume in Color Scheme of Red and White, With Underfrock Backed With Plaited Red Georgette.

prints, or Chinese handle and ferrule.

Printed silks most suggestive of spring are absolutely irresistible in their small, closely spaced, all-over 1880 motifs. The fabric itself is usually crepe and the backgrounds vary as to color. Daring floral designs both large and small, and detached motifs registering black and white, make striking contrasts and are undeniably chic.

All that has been said as to color cannot discount for one minute the

Corded Materials Are Again Given Approval

The twills of other seasons are being replaced by wool rep, and ribbed and corded materials are featured extensively in all fabrics. In combination with silk and artificial silk a surface is effected which adds richness to the simple untrimmed frock of today.

Such a tendency toward corded materials recalls the ottoman of our grandmother's best gown. The skill and technique of the textile designer and manufacturer today has made it possible to revive these rich materials with all the suppleness that fashion demands.

In the world of cottons, organdie has given way to her unstarched sister, batiste. Soft ecru tones in batiste and lace alternating around a bouffant skirt fashion a dance frock for the youthful, and a rosette of ribbon flowers in pastel tones with streamers of color drooping to the hem emphasizes the low waistline where skirt and bodice join.

All-over embroideries on a voile and crepe background are prominent and there is a feeling of the colonial spirit in the patterning, although in many instances the spirit of 1880 is evidenced, as in printed silks.

New Sport Fabric Looks Like Heavy Silk Crash

The new sport fabric, popular because of its texture as well as the shades in which it is produced, belongs rightfully to the eponge family. It looks a bit like heavy, rough, finished silk crash, and may be pure silk or combined with artificial silk. Such

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