

# The Free Traders

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

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WNU SERVICE

## "C. P."

SYNOPSIS.—Lee Anderson, Royal Canadian Mounted Police sergeant, is sent to Stony Range to arrest a man named Pelly for murder. He is also instructed to look after Jim Rathway, reputed head of the "Free Traders," illicit liquor runners. At Little Falls he finds Pelly is credited with having found a gold mine, and is missing. At the hotel appears a girl, obviously out of place in the rough surroundings. A half-breed, Pierre, and a companion, "Shorty," annoy the girl. Anderson interferes in her behalf. The girl sets out for Sliton Lake, which is also Anderson's objective. He overtakes her and the two men with whom he had trouble the night before. She is suspicious of him and the two men are hostile. Pierre and Shorty ride on Anderson and the girl following. In the hills the road is blown up before and behind the two, and Anderson, with his horse, is hurled down the mountain side, senseless. Recovering consciousness, Anderson finds the girl has disappeared, but he concludes she is alive and probably in the power of Pierre and Shorty. On foot he makes his way to Sliton Lake. There he finds his companion of the day before, and Rathway, with a girl, Estelle, a former sweetheart of Anderson's, who had abused his confidence and almost wrecked his life. Rathway strikes Estelle, and after a fight, Anderson, with Estelle's help, escapes with the girl. Anderson's companion's mind is clouded and she is suffering with a dislocated knee. Anderson sets the knee and makes the girl as comfortable as possible. He has a broken rib. The two plan to make their way to a Moravian mission, of which Father McGrath has charge. Their acquaintance ripens into love. He is convinced he has her name is Joyce Pelly. She is daughter of the man Anderson has been sent to arrest. Torn between her love for her father and her regard for Anderson, the girl practically drives him from her. In the forest Anderson stumbles upon the entrance to a gorge and is convinced he has located Pelly's mine. In the tunnel he is attacked by an unseen adversary, whom he takes to be Pelly. A knife thrust is turned aside by the girl's hair in his blouse. Escaping, he returns to the cabin, to find Joyce gone. He follows her trail to the mission of Father McGrath. The priest repulses him, but Joyce feels her love return and welcomes him. Her memory has been in a measure restored.

## CHAPTER XI—Continued

"He would not touch the hoard of gold which he claimed to possess—we had never believed in it—but he had made money by his fists. I was to be well educated. I spent three years at the convent, and then I went to a missionary training school, to study medicine, because it had always been my dream to teach the Indian and half-breed children in this district. And then—"

She stopped and looked at him doubtfully. Father McGrath strode toward them.

"He's gottin' round ye!" he cried. "I can see the softenin' in your face, Meees Pelly!"

"No, no, Father!" cried Joyce sharply. "Leave us a few minutes more!"

Father McGrath withdrew, muttering, after a doubtful glance at her.

"And then—and then—I can't remember, Lee," Joyce continued. "There's a blank, a terrible blank in my mind still. The next thing I remember I was riding north alone, to save my father, because that devil Rathway had betrayed him. But how was I to save him? That I don't know. I remember that I was half crazed with anxiety. I remember seeing you at a hotel, and those two dreadful men."

"And—they had some power over me, and I wanted you to help me, and dared not ask you—I didn't know what to do. Once, in my despair, I begged you to kill Rathway, to save my father. But how could that have saved him, when he was already betrayed?"

She looked at Lee in anguish. "Oh, I don't understand!" she cried. "If I could remember! It was something terrible, something that I could never go through again."

"Do you think," asked Lee, "that you had pledged yourself to marry Rathway in order to save your father's life?"

"I—I couldn't have. No, never, Lee!" She trembled. Lee stepped to her.

"Joyce, darling Joyce, nothing has changed. You are still mine."

"Lee, it can't be. My father stands between us—will always stand—"

"Joyce, I've been thinking of something on the way here tonight. We both wish to do what is best for your father. Let us work together. Marry me!"

"Lee, it can't be—not till—"

bling and half laughing, "this isn't one of Rathway's gang. I've tried to tell you—"

"Aye, and ye told me that ye wouldna see him, and noo ye'd have bussed him if I hadna stopped ye! Weel, I ken the pertinacity of the de'il's agents—"

"Listen to me, now!" said Lee, taking Father McGrath by the arm. And, ignoring the good priest's impulsive interruptions, he told him their story. Before he was half way through, Father McGrath was listening in profound, perplexed astonishment.

"Father, I want Joyce to marry me," cried Lee. "Once she is mine, we can face the future together, whatever it may bring forward. There is no real antagonism—"

Father McGrath shook his head in perplexity. "I canna understand it," he said. "I ken but little of what's been happening here. I'm a new man in the deestrict. It isna as if I'd known Mr. Pelly myself, you see. I canna imagine what Meees Pelly intended to do when she was coming up to see her father. Was it your intention to warn him, do you think?" he asked the girl. "Or was it something more?"

Joyce could not answer him, and Lee saw how it distressed her to try to remember. It was from that crux of the problem that the mind had withdrawn itself, refusing to remember.

"Ye were going to the Free Traders?" Father McGrath persisted.

"Oh, I don't know—I don't know!" cried Joyce in agony.

Father McGrath cleared his throat and delivered his deliberated opinion. "It's my opinion," he said, "that until we deescover Mr. Pelly, or learn that he's dead or awa' fra' the deestrict, it wadna be advisable for ye and Meees Pelly to marry unless her memory comes back to her. Mebbe I'm too conservativ, but a while ago she hated ye—"

"Father, I never hated him!" cried Joyce indignantly.

"And I'm no' in favor of these queer changes," said Father McGrath. Joyce sided with him. "Lee, dear-est, until one of those two things happens, we must just wait," she said. "But if you find my father—and I'm convinced now that it would be for the best—well, then, I—'ll marry you if you want me, Lee."

And this time there was no Father McGrath to interfere with them, for the good priest was patting the head of an Indian baby at the door of one of the huts.

And, late though the hour was, Lee declining the father's offer of hospitality for the night, set off for the log house again. He wanted to be alone with his singing heart in the silence.

He reached his destination some time in the small hours, and, careless of possible attack by the mysterious wanderer, flung himself down in one

of the rooms, and lay like a log until awakened by the sunlight streaming in.

Jumping up, completely rested and restored, he ran down to the river, plunged into the ice-cold waters, raced back over the frozen snow, and dressed.

Joyce was to remain at the mission until Lee knew definitely whether or not her father was in the district. Before leaving the night before, Lee had drawn the father into a talk, and had learned from him that she would not be in danger from the Free Traders. The father had been compelled, he said, much against his will, to come to an understanding with them, by which he undertook not to attempt to interfere with their operations provided his women and barns were left alone. The board of missions was a

power that the Free Traders were not anxious to tackle. Father McGrath, hating the necessity of making terms with Rathway, had felt nevertheless that he was doing the only thing possible under the circumstances, until the government made a move to wipe out the organization. He assured Lee that Rathway and his men would not dare to molest Joyce, and, furthermore, that he would protect her with his life if necessary.

Lee had thought best to say nothing to Joyce about his discovery of the mine, but he meant to make a thorough search of the gorge for Pelly. Failing him, he meant to discover his mysterious assailant, in the belief that he could provide him with the clue he needed.

He had no doubt that Pelly's gold mine lay in the chasm.

After having breakfasted he made his way to the rocky stone, and slipped quietly into the tunnel. Striking a match or two, and assuring himself that it was empty, he descended, and within a minute or two had reached the lower orifice, and found himself again clinging to the interior wall of the chasm.

Here the artificial excavation of the rams ended, but there was a fairly easy descent down the lower portion of the cliffs, which afforded plenty of hold for the hands and feet. Lee quickly scrambled down, and, swinging free of the bottom of the gorge, standing at the bottom of the gorge, whose inclining walls shut him off completely from the sight of any one above. Only by standing in the very center of the defile could he see the summit of the cliffs, with their dense covering of scrub.

The base of the chasm was a little wider than he had supposed, perhaps fifty paces across between wall and fifty paces across between a thin stream trickled over a sandy bed, issuing from one end of the chasm, where it burst out through the granite, carrying with it the debris of the alluvial land above—mud, gravel, and sand.

This sandy deposit, carried along by the stream, had been heaped up, probably in times of overflow, against the granite walls, and within the little limestone caves that studded their lower surfaces.

Looking about him, Lee saw that some two or three hundred yards from the place where he had emerged out of the face of the cliff, the gorge made a sharp bend, almost at right angle, and here the ground was strewn with a mass of fallen boulders, ranging from huge rocks to small debris. Above it was a gap in the lower section of the cliff, from which it had been detached.

Lee made his way in this direction. At once he came to the conclusion that dynamite had been the cause of this collapse of part of the surface of the granite wall, which, smooth as a steel lining, could have been disrupted by no natural force such as gravity.

And then he came upon something that confirmed the obvious deduction. It was a rotting wooden cradle.

Beside it lay a rusty pick. Not far away were two huge iron pans, their bottoms eaten out with rust, so that they resembled fretwork in steel. Under them were still the ashes and charred residue of the wood that had been used to thaw out the frozen earth.

All about among the fallen rocks were mounds, the residue from the pans after the extraction of the gold, now covered with tangles of dead vegetation.

There was no longer any doubt that this was Pelly's gold mine.

Before making further investigations here, Lee decided to explore the remainder of the chasm. It ran on beyond the bend for a quarter of a mile, and then came to an abrupt termination. Without any gradual lessening of the depth it simply ceased, the two cliff walls coming together, in the same way as they did near the rocky stone at the other end. The chasm was, in fact, simply an elongated crater.

Returning, Lee made his way to the cave formed by the explosion. If Pelly was in the district, there was hardly any doubt but that he would be hiding in that inaccessible spot, where he would be safe against discovery. It was not unlikely that he was in the cave itself at that moment.

Lee first examined the snow about the mouth of the cave for footprints, but he found no tracks except his own. Drawing his automatic, he advanced into the opening. The sand in the interior bore the marks of continued tramping, but there were no imprints with clear edges, and it was certain that no one had been there for a long time.

Unfortunately, Lee had brought no candle, but he advanced some distance within the cave, lighting his way with matches. However, it was a foregone conclusion that Pelly was not in there, for the sandy interior bore no fresh footprints as far as he went.

A faint, distant roaring, as of a waterfall, came to Lee's ears, and the air was fresh, as if the cave were connected with some opening in the mountain side. Lee resolved to explore it another day. But it was clear enough that Pelly was not in the chasm after

all. Another thing that led Lee to that conclusion was the fact that no mining operations had been carried on there for a considerable time—long enough for the pans to have rusted through.

If Pelly had taken refuge within the gorge, it was incredible that he would not have resumed operations.

And these seemed to have been interrupted unexpectedly, to judge from the exposure of the pans to wind and weather.

Perplexed and disappointed, Lee turned his thoughts toward the capture of the man who had attacked him in the tunnel. He could no doubt throw light on Pelly's whereabouts. Perhaps he was the assistant of whom Joyce had spoken.

Lee expected that he would be lurking in the tunnel, ready to renew his attack, but this time there should be no such fiasco as before.

Lee made his way back on the opposite side of the gorge. Here there was a thick growth of dwarfed scrub laurel, which had taken root in the soil brought down by the little stream, and bordered it, extending back from it toward the cliff in a sort of miniature jungle. Something protruding out of this growth arrested Lee's attention.

It was a wooden cross carved with the name HELENE PELLY, standing up above a low cairn of boulders.

Lee stood and looked, and vaguely mournful thoughts coursed through his mind. It was a sad and lonely burying place for Joyce's mother. Its existence there was in itself a testimony to the old man's mental condition—that he should have carried his wife's body through the tunnel to that place of his dreams. And yet it was certain that no prowling thing would ever violate that grave.

Lee went on, and a few steps further, stumbled against something else. It was the skeleton of a man, the bones protruding through the rents and tatters of the scarecrow clothes. The laurel tangles sprouted between the ribs. The bones were bleached white, the flesh had long since disappeared.

One bony hand still tightly clutched the handle of a large, old-fashioned revolver. The muzzle was choked with rust; there were rusted cartridges inside.

Disengaging it with difficulty from the fingers, Lee saw, on the less rusted portion of the handle which they had protected, the initials, C. P.

But he hardly needed that to know that his mission was at an end, and the last barrier between himself and Joyce overthrown.

The problem so inscrutable an hour before had been solved. All cause for antagonism between them had come to an end.

And Lee was conscious of a quiet satisfaction. It was the happiest solution, and though Joyce would grieve, she would come to see that it was the best. She would be glad, after the first shock, that her father would not have to face the ordeal which he had dreaded for so many years.

But as Lee looked down at the remains of the dead man, he became aware of a single fact. Nearly every bone on one side of the skeleton was broken—the skull, ribs, arm and leg bones, and pelvis.

Then Pelly had not died of a stroke or from a sudden attack of heart failure. He had fallen from the summit of the cliff above—perhaps he had been flung down, for the revolver which he had been clutching showed that he had either encountered or anticipated an enemy.

And, filled with a mixture of emotions—happiness for their future, grief for the news that he must break to Joyce, Lee made his way toward the tunnel.

But all at once he made the singular and unexpected discovery that he did not know where the entrance was.

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## CHAPTER XII

### Freed by a Lock of Hair

It seemed to him that it would be a simple matter enough to ascend the cliff again, and he had not taken the precaution to take notes of landmarks. Now, however, he discovered that the lower third of the granite wall was scored with hundreds of holes and fissures where the friable limestone had crumbled away, or had been washed out by the streams.

The entrance to the cliff tunnel was somewhere on that side of the chasm, some little distance from the bend—but where?

Lee stepped back to the brink of the stream and looked up, trying to locate the rocky stone or monoliths for a guide, but the upper incline of the cliff hid them from view.

It was high noon. Lee set himself to the task before him. He looked about him, trying to orientate himself. It would be necessary to ascend to a point about one-fourth the distance up the cliff in order to discover the ingress, which was no wider than any of numerous cavities in the wall.

Plenty of places along the chasm afforded access, and Lee grasped a projecting rock which seemed familiar, and began to ascend, digging his hands and feet into the holes, until he found

it impossible to proceed farther. Swinging to the right, he discovered a large cavity and thrust his arm in up to the shoulder.

A bitter disappointment awaited him, however, for at the end his hand encountered only a smooth surface of rock.

He tried again as he descended, thrusting his arms into all the likely crevices in the vain attempt to find the orifice.

He descended, selected another place and scrambled up the wall again, only to achieve the same negative result.

And when he reached the bottom of the cliff again, and looked up at the innumerable crevices, he realized that not only did he not know at which point to begin the ascent, but he did not know how high to climb before he reached the level of the tunnel entrance.

He looked up at the huge cliff, with its inward incline, and scored with its myriads of mocking mouths, and now a sort of fury took hold of him. Again and again he scrambled up and clung like a fly to the cliff's face; scrambled down, baffled, and then began once more.

It was now the middle of the afternoon, and he was no nearer a solution.



One Bony Hand Still Tightly Clutched the Handle of a Large, Old-fashioned Revolver.

He had accomplished nothing. He was becoming bewildered. It was necessary to proceed in a systematic way.

He now proceeded to mark off what he considered the possible boundaries within which the tunnel lay, by stamping down two birch sapplings. And again and yet again he essayed his task, always to recoil, beaten.

He was only half way from sapling to sapling, and it was beginning to grow dark. His hands were bleeding, his nails split to the quick. But it was the eerie nature of his efforts in the loneliness of the darkening gorge that was the most nerve-racking part of all. He was like some mythical hero of the classic world, tortured by ignominious things—like Sisyphus, condemned to roll his stone up the hills of Tartarus forever, only to have it bound down again before it reached the summit.

He had been toiling by moonlight for an infinity of time. He had covered all the space between the sapplings. He extended his radius; and now, in his desperation, he attacked the cliff as if it were a human enemy, bending on it with his fists in senseless fury.

Dawn, clear and gray, and bitter cold crept into the gorge and hid him still at his labors. The sun rose. Long rays of light streamed down into the chasm, in which Lee struggled like a madman, dust-white, disheveled, haggard, half-delirious from want of sleep and exhaustion.

He stopped, tried to collect himself. But to cease meant to yield to despair. Only by incessant labor could he keep up the pretense that he was about to find the tunnel. He felt at the end of his resources. One conclusion was being borne in upon him: he had worked his way far beyond the sapplings on either side; he must have passed the tunnel during the night.

One little orifice unexplored in the obscurity, and all his work had gone for nothing.

He would have to go back to the beginning and start over again.

But no human being could go through the test again.

There occurred to him an alternative, but so fantastic that he only played with it as a madman plays with a straw. The tunnel might be no longer there. It might have disappeared through a rock slide.

That seemed incredible—Lee put the thought from him; its very occurrence made him realize that his mind was beginning to wander.

And, lapping up some water from the stream, and sprinkling himself with it, he began again—at the farther sapling.

Evidently the question of Joyce's father is not to separate the lovers. Any guess as to what new danger threatens?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### A Question

It is equally hard to decide whether Mars is inhabited or outlaid.—Philadelphia Ledger.

## POINTS ON KEEPING WELL

DR. FREDERICK R. GREEN  
Editor of "HEALTH"

(By Western Newspaper Union.)

## POSTURE IN WOMEN'S WORK

HEALTH of workers is not only a question of what you do but also of how you do it. This is true not only of the housewife but also of the factory and shop workers. Especially in that kind of work now so common in the modern factory where each employee does hour after hour, all day long, exactly the same thing.

The specializing and division of work in the present-day factories make it possible for many women to do work requiring deftness and quickness and delicacy rather than strength. What is the effect, on the bodies and the health of women workers, of doing the same thing over and over, hour after hour, for months? The United States public health service has considered the subject of sufficient importance to make a special investigation.

Although positive proof is lacking it is generally agreed that any work which requires a cramped, constrained or awkward position may cause serious bodily injury.

Work which requires bending of the shoulders and drooping of the head, compresses and restricts the chest and so interferes with breathing. This may also force down the ribs and the diaphragm and so displace or cause pressure on the abdominal organs. As a result, there may be constipation, diarrhea, indigestion, headache and anemia.

Work which requires a sidewise, slouching position twists the body out of shape, compresses the lungs on one side and favors consumption. Work which requires constant bending forward also compresses both the abdomen and the chest and causes displacement and pressure on the lungs, heart and other organs.

These dangers may be avoided by planning and adjusting machines, work tables and seats so that the workers can stand erect in easy comfortable positions. This will result not only in greater comfort and less sickness to the employees but also in greatly increased output.

Where this is not possible or where any work has to be done in a cramped awkward position, then the employees should be shifted frequently from one kind of work to another. Comfortable and well adjusted chairs are also helpful. Alternating standing with sitting work, frequent rest periods and providing foot rests and back rests where needed will increase not only the comfort and health but also the output of women workers.

## HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

THERE are fads and fashions in disease, as there are in skirts. To day, blood pressure is "all the rage." To hear it discussed, you would think it was a newly discovered disease.

It isn't new and it isn't a disease. It is as old as life. In fact, when there is no blood pressure there is no life. It isn't a disease. A certain amount of blood pressure is necessary for life.

To talk about having "no blood pressure" is to adopt the professional slang of the ward nurse, who says that the patient has "no temperature." She doesn't mean that. If any one of us had "no temperature," we'd be too dead to get into a hospital. She means the patient has a normal temperature.

So when a doctor tells you that you have "no blood pressure," he doesn't mean that. He means that your blood pressure is normal.

What is normal blood pressure? Ah, that's the question. It's only a few years, comparatively, since we had instruments for measuring and recording blood pressure. Doctors, for ages, have known that, at some times and in some persons, the heartbeat was stronger and more accentuated than at other times and in other people. Persons with a strong full pulse were said to be "plethoric" and the heartbeat of what we now call high blood pressure was said to be "full or bounding." All the doctor had to judge by was his finger tips but he could make about as good an estimate as the present-day laboratory man can with his mercury manometer.

Blood pressure is the pressure inside the arteries. Just as the water pressure in a fire hose depends on the strength of the engine and the size of the hose, so the blood pressure depends on the force of the heart and the size of the arteries. These factors differ in different individuals. There is no absolutely normal figure. It varies with age, physical condition, work, nerve tension and a dozen other factors.

If you have a high-strung feeling, restlessness, nervousness and inability to sleep, frequent headaches and nose bleeds, perhaps dizziness and flushing of the face, have your doctor take your blood pressure in the same way he'd take your temperature. If your heart is working too hard, slow down. Find out what's wrong in your way of living and correct it. You don't want to run around with a high blood pressure any more than you do with a high temperature. But in either case there's a cause. Find it and remove it.