

THE RED LANE

By HOLMAN DAY
A Romance of the Border

Author of "King Spruce," "The Ramrodders," "The Skipper and the Skipped," etc.

READ THIS FIRST

Vetal Beauieu keeps an inn on the Maine-Canadian border and caters to smugglers. His daughter, Evangeline, educated in a convent, returns home unexpectedly, rebelling against the nature of his business, refuses to marry the man, David Roi, a smuggler, whom her father has chosen for her, and leaves home. Norman Aldrich, a "Yankee" customs officer, meets Evangeline, falls in love with her, and they become engaged. Roi finds Evangeline at Aldrich, demands that she return home with him, and when she refuses, he intriques with Louis Blais, an attorney of Attegat, to assist him in capturing her. Beauieu and Roi start for Attegat, pick up Louis Blais and kidnap Evangeline. Aldrich finds them, and a desperate battle takes place. Next day Aldrich sets out to find Beauieu.

THEN READ THIS

Blais had given him a hint that they who had been witnesses and actors in the affair did not intend to talk. Aldrich had not expected that the "stand-off" had created a situation which, as he had told the priest, was intolerable. Also, as he had informed the priest, he was not sure what he would say to Vetal Beauieu. He understood the prejudice of the man to their deaths. But there was the story of Bessie Macpherson! He should demand of Beauieu that the story be investigated. And he had decided that if Vetal Beauieu did not take a father's proper attitude after that in this matter of the protection of a good daughter, he would know what to say in behalf of the love of Norman Aldrich for Evangeline Beauieu.

Thus he pondered as he rode on, determined to hunt up Vetal Beauieu for a talk, man to man.

He drew one comforting inference from the return of Attorney Blais to Attegat, unaccompanied. The band of conspirators had broken up. It was plain that they had no heart for further violent measures at that time. That Blais would serve them as a spy and adviser, that Roi was still determined to prevail—of those facts Aldrich was assured by his apprehensions. This was not true; it was sullen delay. He felt that he had all the more reason for insisting on an interview with Vetal Beauieu. He must impress on that obstinate parent that this was not a case of compelling a girl to obey a father's promise and command; it was willful wrecking of innocence and happiness. As he reflected on the matter, as he remembered what the fiddler had told him, he could not believe that Vetal Beauieu would persist in his determination in regard to the unspeakable Roi. Vetal Beauieu, in spite of his grudges, his temper, his jealous ignorance, was Evangeline's father! The thought that he was such, and must have real affection for her under all his turbulent emotions, encouraged Aldrich as he journeyed and pondered. The man must listen to him! Sense and reason and regard for decency must prevail when a man is a father!

At last he came out of the narrow lane and was on the broad Canadian highway.

Here and there, now at a forge, now of some wayside toller, he asked for news of Vetal Beauieu. He got no information. If Vetal had gone toward the south by the broad highway he had passed in the night or had passed unobserved. But the men whom he asked eyed him with curiosity and gossiped after he had passed on. Was not this one of the customs men without his uniform? What was Vetal Beauieu of Monarda doing in the north country, and why was an officer on his trail?

Aldrich explored side-roads. He asked questions with assiduity; the apprehension that he was leaving Beauieu behind, that the father was between him and the girl for whose sake he had taken the road, disquieted him. He searched with care. He wanted to feel sure that Beauieu was ahead.

But he got no information until he arrived at Cyr's tavern. Aldrich had ridden widely, had searched deviously. The twilight shrouded the big hill when he came at last to Cyr's tavern. That had been the rendezvous! He looked eagerly at the wayfarers who were smoking in the big room. Beauieu was not there. Roi was not in sight. To be sure, he had scarcely expected that Roi and Vetal would hurry back to this place; but they had met there to plot—they might be there to wait for further opportunity.

Felix Cyr—Bullhead Cyr—shaggy and lowering, sat behind the little counter under which he kept his stock of liquors.

Aldrich had given his weary horse into the hands of the stable boy. Cyr scowled, recognizing a foe when Aldrich crossed the room.

"It is late, but may I have supper, sir?"

"Maybe you can go and hunt up a maid and coax her to unlock the cupboard if you have money and a glib tongue," said the landlord brusquely. The officer leaned over the counter and put an inquiry in a low tone. Cyr belloyed a reply which took all in the room into his confidence.

"No, M'ser Vetal Beauieu of Monarda is not at my house this night." It was insulting disregard of a guest's desire to keep his affairs from the ears of others.

this retort, looking at the men in the room with an air which suggested that Felix Cyr desired to show that he would never demean himself by holding secret conference with a customs man.

Aldrich straightened.

"I do not go around exposing the private business of M'ser Beauieu and myself to all listeners, sir. I asked you a square question as politely as I could. I'd like a straight answer."

"My friend Vetal Beauieu has gone away from here and is very busy minding his own business. It is a good plan. It pays me; maybe you can make it pay you."

Friend Beauieu had been realizing on his bills of sale

Aldrich turned away from the counter. His nerves were not in the best condition. The preceding hours of the night and the day had been too full of tribulation. He was afraid that if he remained longer at the counter, looking at Cyr, he would leap over it and cuff that puffy, scowling face.

"I don't know as there's any great secret about Vetal Beauieu," remarked one of the men in the room, a bearded giant who sat on the end of the "deacon seat" near the grimy wall of the room. "I met him a dozen miles or so below here today when I was driving up."

"I thank you," said the officer. "Can you tell me whether he was on his way home to Monarda?"

"I reckon your friend Beauieu was headed for the hive," returned the bearded man, with a sneer in his laugh. "He had collected his honey. He was leading three horses behind his buckboard, and a half-dozen cows were ahead of him. On the buckboard he had hens and shot in crates. I got it from the people along the way that Friend Beauieu had been realizing on his bills of sale," he went on for the benefit of his listeners. "He came down on folks who owed him, and he was in a state of mind where there was no arguing with him. If a man couldn't pay, he took what there was in sight—even down to the children's pet pantams. If a man who owed him didn't have collateral in sight, Vetal left word that he would send an officer with an execution running against the body. He certainly was in a fine condition to do collecting without fear or favor. I'm glad I wasn't owing him anything. I would have to walk. He would have had my team away from me."

Aldrich believed he understood what had provoked Vetal Beauieu's rage against humanity in general. Helpless

victims had been atoning vicariously because Vetal Beauieu could not expend the frenzy of his fury on the man who had stirred all the gall of his unstable temperament.

"I don't know what the nature of your business with him may be," continued the informant, ironically. "I believe I just heard you drop a gentle hint that no one had better ask you. But if it is anything that can wait, you'd better wait. You tackle him now and you'll have to talk business between and punches."

Aldrich went away thoughtfully to hunt up a maid who could be bribed to furnish him with food. He was waning, but his determination growing bitterly strong.

The repetition of this grief and rage proved unendurable at last. The young man was sure that Vetal was headed for Monarda with his spoil. He had had a day's start, and even though he would journey slowly, leading his horses and driving his cows, he must be near home, so Aldrich decided. He gave his horse loose rein and asked no more questions. He took the shortest route to Monarda clearing.

But it was late in the day when he arrived there. He had been forced to linger here and there by the wayside

prudence in forcing such a contretemps. Then he took fresh hold on his determination, thought upon the woe of Evangeline, beset by her fears of further violence, and settled himself down on the bench to wait.

The padlock showed that Vetal was not within. A little spider furnished further proof. He had spun in the corner of the door and was crouched in the center of his web.

The night drew on. The stars winked above the spruces, and the chill from Hagus swamp came creeping across the clearing.

Aldrich realized that he was hungry. He strode to the barn and rapped on the tie-up door.

"I do not sell drink," snarled the dwarf from within. "I have no key."

"All I want is milk," declared the young man. "I will give you a half-dollar for a tinfal with a bit of your bread."

After a time the man shoved the bread and milk through the half-open door, snatched his coin, and slammed the portal savagely.

When the officer had eaten the frugal meal he smoked his pipe and trudged up and down in front of the door, his thoughts busy with the protests, the arguments, and appeals he would employ with Evangeline's father. The reflection that Roi might accompany Vetal did not intimidate Aldrich in his new spirit. His rifle was on his back, his soul was in arms, and he had demonstrated that he proposed to fight them according to their own code.

Furthermore, that they would go as far as actual violence when he faced them in a situation where the presence of the girl did not complicate matters, he did not credit. That other attack on him at Beauieu's Place had been fomented by desperation, and the agent was a drink-drunk man. It had been an attack from ambush, and such deeds were rare on the border. If Roi came, so much the better! He would charge the scoundrel with his betrayal of Bessie Macpherson, and would challenge him to a duel in the presence of Vetal Beauieu. So he tramped to and fro and pulled savagely at his pipe and waited. Now and then there was the sound of wheels on the road. But they who appeared did not stop. Even the straggling customers of the place seemed to know that the doors were shut and that Beauieu was away.

At the corner of the house he studied his watch by the light of the stars. Nearly 10 o'clock.

While he pondered with watch in hand he heard the husky lowing of cattle down the road to the east. His man must be approaching. He waited in the shadows of the low building.

Cows came first. They dragged themselves wearily and complained with deep-throated mutterings. There was only one man on the loaded buckboard. Horses jostled behind it at the length of halter ropes. Aldrich mounted and rode forth to meet the wagon.

It was not Vetal Beauieu, this driver. He was a young fellow, and he stuttered, and his tone quavered when he replied to the officer's sharp questioning.

He admitted that he was Beauieu's man after he had incoherently denied that he was. He owned up that he was bringing Beauieu's buckboard home, and that the cows were Beauieu's; but this information was wrung from him piecemeal.

"Look here, my man," said Aldrich, suspecting that he understood what this reticence signified. "I am not trying to prove a smuggling case against you."

"But you are an officer, I know you. You do not wear your cap, but I know you."

"I am attending to my personal business now. I am not on duty. I want to find your master."

"I don't know where he is."

"But where did you leave him? Why did you come on alone?"

"He was tired. He stayed to rest. He will come tomorrow; yes, I think he will come tomorrow."

gates to hear men curse and women lament.

The windows of Beauieu's Place were shuttered and barred. The big door was padlocked.

A cripple, a mishapen man with crooked legs and shoulders hunched to his ears, hobbled from the barn, a pitchfork in his hands.

"No, he is not at home yet," said the man, in the peevish tones of the dwarf, when Aldrich asked a question. "I cannot sell you drink. I have no key to the house. I live in the barn."

He hopped in out of sight with the celerity of a trapdoor spider and slammed the tie-up door behind him.

The young man allowed his horse to crop the short grass of the yard and sat down to wait. There was a bench just outside the door.

Thrushes lifted their twilight songs in the trees near by; there were bird-calls in the deep woods that sounded like the tinkle of silver bells. The horse reaped his mouthful of grass with mellow renderings of the tender stalks and stamped away the flies. All these sounds only accentuated the peaceful hush.

But it seemed to Aldrich that there was something ominous in the silence of this place which was usually so noisy. Waiting outside the door of a friend's house when it is empty gives one a wistful sense of gloom; the vacant shell of an enemy's castle is more portentous. And the young man was straining his ears to catch the sound of Vetal Beauieu's buckboard wheels.

He had hoped to meet up with Beauieu in the open—out among men where the presence of others would impress constraint upon both, compelling them to speak quietly so that others might not hear, to act with discretion so that onlookers might not quote. The thought occurred to Aldrich that this meeting on Beauieu's own ground might be a collision rather than a conference. He questioned his

prudence in forcing such a contretemps. Then he took fresh hold on his determination, thought upon the woe of Evangeline, beset by her fears of further violence, and settled himself down on the bench to wait.

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DREAMLAND ADVENTURES—By Daddy

"THE CAPTIVE QUEEN"

Queen Flora is imprisoned in a fountain, the source of which is guarded by a rattlesnake. The rattler is lassoed by Billy Belgium and is carried into the air by the birds.

THE END OF COUNT WEEDY

PEGGY and Billy were started into laughter at the strange sight of the rattlesnake sailing through the air at the end of the long rope held by the birds.

"Ha, ha!" cried Peggy exultingly. "Now Count Weedy's dragon is a really truly flying serpent."

The rattlesnake didn't like aviation a bit. It squirmed and twisted and wriggled until finally it worked itself out of the noose. Then down it came tumbling to earth, landing some distance away.

"Oh, maybe it will come back," cried Peggy.

"Never fear," shrilled General Swallow, dropping the rope at Billy's feet. "Mr. Hatter fell into a pippen and you know what pigs do to snakes." Peggy shook her head and looked questioning at Billy. He laughed as he answered: "Pigs eat 'em."

While this was going on Prince Bonnie Blue Bell was struggling with the water key, trying to shut off the pipe leading to the fountain. But he could not turn it. Peggy and Billy ran to his assistance. As they did so Count Weedy pelted them with balls of burrs, which stung their faces and got tangled in their clothes and hair.

"Throw the burrs back at him," whispered Billy to Peggy. She did so, and in a minute she was having a hot burr ball fight, much like a snow ball battle. As Peggy fought she heard a quick whisper—she was Billy's rope again. It settled over the shoulders of Count Weedy. A sharp pull jerked the ugly elf from the top of the bluff, tumbling him into the pond. As he rose to the surface, spluttering and splashing, he rose farther than he thought he was going to, for he went right up into the air just as the rattlesnake had done, dangling at the end of the rope which was carried in swift flight by dozens of birds. In another minute Count Weedy was only a speck in the distance. What became of him the birds never told, but the rope was brought safely back to Peggy's home the next day.

When Billy threw his strength into turning the water key there were quick results. Something gave way, around which a tiny stream caught him for an instant in the face, then with a hiss and a gurgle the flow of water into the fountain stopped and the jets which had been juggling Queen Flora and holding her captive down gently to the top of the fountain.

Remarkably fast time, Prince Bonnie Blue Bell swam the pond, clambered



In another minute Count Weedy was only a speck in the distance

up the wet stones, and knelt beside his queen.

"Are you safe?" he cried anxiously. "Yes, thanks to you, my beloved prince!" sighed the queen, and there was a look in her thro and an answering look in Prince Bonnie Blue Bell's eyes, that made Peggy conclude promptly that there would soon be a royal wedding among the Wild Flowers of Elvenland.

With Billy and the Birds aiding, Queen Flora was soon brought safely to earth.

"The wild flowers—when will you dance the wild flowers in life as that we may sing our spring song!" cried the Birds.

"I have danced all I can today," sighed Queen Flora. "But gladsome spring need not be delayed another minute on that account. I'll rub the bottom of my magic slippers on the feet of Prince Bonnie Blue Bell, Peggy, Billy, and even you Birds, and you can dance for me. Whenever your feet touch, wild flowers will come forth."

So it happened. While Prince Bonnie Blue Bell carried the queen home, Peggy, Billy and the Birds danced gaily over the hills, through the woods, and across the meadows. And behind them, wherever their feet touched, sprang forth delicate blooms, hepatica, violets, wind flowers, crocuses, and all the early blossoms of spring.

Then again burst out the joyful song of the birds, a song which for days thereafter they sang each morning beneath Peggy's window, bringing her to happy wakelines:

"Cheer up! Cheer up! Oh, gaily sing. Welcome, welcome to a mysterious spring."

In next week's story a gentleman knight comes to the rescue of Peggy when she is in danger because of an uprising in Birdland.

BRUNO DUKE

Solver of Business Problems
By HAROLD WHITEHEAD
Author of "The Business Career of Peter Flint," etc.

THE PROBLEM OF THE RETURNED FURNITURE

Order That Made for Speed and Accuracy

When I left Emmet's little office and went to the big shipping room, I was surprised at the air of orderliness and cleanliness everywhere. It was white lines on the floor separated the space into sections, and each section was numbered. I found out that each team had a number and that its goods were placed in its special section.

Whenever a team returned, its next load was all ready for it. A small book contained all the shipping instructions, so that the teamster had to bother no one. This plan saved the wages of one man who had been transferred to the store.

Another thing that surprised me was that all the delivery men were in uniform—a dark-blue uniform, without any frills or trimmings, but one which seemed to make the men look neat and set a thousand times more businesslike.

My old teammate Jim came in while I was looking around and I hardly knew him. He no longer lounged into the room as formerly, but briskly walked to his box for delivery instructions on at a few things that were in his section.

He stopped short when he saw me and, after a moment's gazing, said: "Gosh, ain't you the fellow what was on my team for a week?"

"Yes," I said, and we shook hands. "Surprise are you, Jim?" Emmet puffed. "You need be, too, for this is Mr. Peter Flint, the co-worker of Bruno Duke—you owe it to him that you are doing so much better than you ever did before."

"Will you let me help you this trip?" I asked Jim.

He gave me a quick glance. "Not so's you'd notice it—you ain't got no uniform; but you can come along as a—inspector."

And that's what I did. On that trip I realized how carefully the whole plan of keeping the goods afloat had been worked out by Duke.

We drove up to a house and Jim stopped the team. Then, without tumbling a thing on the team, he rang the bell. When the door was opened he said:

"I've brought the things from Hazelbrook's. Will you please show me where you want them put?"

He disappeared into the house and quickly returned. Then Jim came to the store, opened a box under the driver's seat and took out a pair of spotless white cotton gloves.

He put them on and then carried in the goods. Carried in? "Encouraged in the fact that Duke had been so careful in such care to avoid bumping or scratching the furniture against doorposts and other furniture, but I had not unobtrusively followed him and observed him place the article—it was a small imitation mahogany chair with

arms—on the floor. Then, from his back trouser pocket, he drew a clean folded linen duster, which he shook open and proceeded to carefully polish up that cheap chair.

"Where's the chair to stand, ma'am?" he then asked.

"Anywhere for now," said the woman. "Put it against that wall."

He did so, handling the chair with care. Then he drew off and gave the chair an admiring half shake of his head and, after getting the woman's signature, started to leave.

An old hall clock chimed five, at which Jim asked if it was right.

"No, the silly old thing," laughed the woman; "that clock never did keep good time."

We climbed on the team, and before starting Jim wrote on his card: "The living room carpet's wore out and the stand clock's bum." Rogers, who was in charge of other places