

The Big Muskeg

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

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MOLLY SAVES WILTON.

SYNOPSIS.—Looking over Big Muskeg in the vicinity of the railroad, Joe Bostock, holder of the line, and his assistant, chief of engineers, are consulting the difficulties of the line. Bostock kills Bostock and Bostock's arm. Handicapped as he is, Carruthers determines to carry the body to a station of the Hamilton Bay company where one McDonald is the factor.

CHAPTER I—Continued.

The portage was firm ice, although it offered no foundation for a railroad bed. It ran between two openings in the low bluffs, and the store was visible from the farther shore.

The ice had been pierced through Wilton's fur hood and mackinaw as if they had been cotton. His feet seemed like foreign bodies attached to his legs, with which he could feel the numbness creeping by inches toward his body. And when at last he reached the portage he looked out with incredulity toward the opposite shore, seeing only a flickering line of shadows through the slit between his frozen eyelids.

Resolutely clapping the frozen form with his right arm, he stepped out upon the surface. The wind, which blew through the gap with hurricane violence at almost all times, had swept the ice as a brown giant sweep, in fitful gusts, across the ice, and firm, with whirling snowflakes round them. Wilton could progress only by inches, fighting the full blast of the gale, and seeing the line of his route only in fractions of seconds.

He saw the bluffs in front of him and the opposite shore beyond, and he fought furiously against the creeping numbness, knowing that each second counted for victory. It was perhaps a hundred feet when he had opened his eyes an instant. Eighty now—seventy, perhaps; one last effort to cross the portage.

Fifty feet! With all of will and consciousness that remained Wilton felt his face resolutely toward his landing place, and strode on into the bank of snow piled up by the wind beneath the shelter of the bluffs. His feet sank through the crackling surface, he struggled about in deep to the last lap of the way, and a sudden the ice broke under him and, twenty-five feet from the shore, the snare of Big Muskeg held him.

Instinctively he sought to gather purchase from the sides of the sink-hole into which he had fallen. The tourniquet-stick dragged through the yielding snow, the elbow of the arm that held Joe's body rested upon the ice. The instant he had gathered purchase by this means over the peaty slush that sucked at him beneath. Then, with a last cry that sounded above the roaring of the gale, he yanked his arm, clutching Joe's body to his own. Wilton went down.

CHAPTER II

The Impriet in the Snow. McDonald, the factor in charge of his bed in an upstairs room of the house whose lower story was the trading store, and looked out through the window over the swamp beneath. Two weeks since Molly had found him lying with closed eyes on the floor, with the flushed face and heavy breathing of apoplexy.

For two and twenty years McDonald had lived there, serving the company. Little had changed in his life-time. The chief change had been in himself, and since this had to be measured rather by loss of happiness than the steady progress of time. McDonald could count on the fingers of one hand the scale-marks of his life.

The little finger was his arrival at Toronto from Aberdeen, drawn to the New World by the promise of life in the service of the famous company. The third finger was Mary.

He had met her in Toronto, soon after his arrival in Canada, and she had been born in his own town. She had had no other home, and he knew vaguely that he had changed her in trouble that had come to him, for which she was not to blame. There had been a blackmailer's brawl, a knife-struck, a blow struck with a white-faced girl clinging to him, and then the silence of the stilet streets. Donald McDonald still had the scar of a tipping wound along his right forearm.

That had been their courtship. The next day McDonald had married her, and brought her to the trading post. Six months later he was in charge of it. They had had happy days during the year that passed before he had met her under the tamaracs, and after that Donald McDonald had lost all wish to return to Aberdeen or to pursue adventure farther.

When at last she entered the factor's room above the store, radiating youth and health, she saw with consternation that he was lying weakly on the pillow, and died heavily as on the day of the stroke.

"You're getting no worse, father!" she asked, sitting down beside him and resting his hand in hers.

"I'm no worse," said the factor, thickly. "You took the letter?"

"It will have tonight. But I wish you had let me write that you are ill. The company would bring you to Winnipeg. They can do wonders at the hospital there, and you'll soon recover, the use of your limbs."

Ever since his stroke the factor had dragged his right leg, and his right arm hung by his side. He hardly ever left his bed, and then only to sit, wrapped in his carbon robe, staring through the window at the portage.

"I'll go to Winnipeg," said McDonald. "I'll just stay here until I'm better. I'm thinking the dog Tossie will be bringing in their pelts next week. I'm thinking I'll not buy December skins this winter."

"There are less than the same. The fall was too late; they won't be purchasable till the middle of next month. How the dog Tossie will wait!"

"They'll get no debt," said McDonald. "See to it, Molly. But I suppose the squaw will get on the side of you and it takes a man to handle that. I'll have to get well; he continued, speaking with feverish energy.

"His mind, which had turned from one idea to another, running from its feet, now leaped upon them. "What'll you do, Molly?" he demanded roughly. "I was thinking of a man to handle that. I'll have to get well; he continued, speaking with feverish energy.

"I don't let me think of that, father," said Molly. "You must stay here. I'll have to get well; he continued, speaking with feverish energy.

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against Wilton—Molly was sure of that. She suspected that Bower had done some bad thing. She knew that, years before, he had secured his position with the company. As it happened, the company needed men for the service of the Hudson Bay company does not pick its employees out of the highways and byways.

Molly had known Tom Bower since childhood, although his visits to the trading post had occurred not often than once in two or three years. She had heard much of his disreputable life, and had verified it through the paper a day or two at the portage in October. Bower saw big game in prospect that the muskeg, and as a beginning he tried to rid himself of a possible rival—Wilton. Molly had spoken well of him, and Bower was a keen reader of mind.

When the storm of her father's rage had passed, the girl went down and stood miserably in the doorway. His muskeg was gone, and he was driving her the very corner of the muskeg. She looked out, her mind in a turmoil of thought.

Big Muskeg was at its best. The gale was driving the snow before it in clouds like spray, and the low howled through the gap in the bluffs. As the girl stood there she fancied that she heard a cry come across the frozen swamp.

She slipped on the holed out which she had left in the store, and went slowly toward the portage, his hand and feet were numb. He was a poor man, but he was a good man. He was a poor man, but he was a good man.

And somehow, breaking the rotten ice in front of her body as she moved, the girl slipped in getting Wilton to the shore. From that point, half dragging and half carrying him over the snow, she reached the store at last.

She tried the stiff hand from Joe's efforts. That was the hardest of her efforts. Molly left Joe's body upon the threshold and got Wilton into the room behind the store. She raised him on the floor and laid him down, his head upon the floor.

Her teeth were chattering from the deadly cold that gripped her, and her hands were numb, but she managed to strip off Wilton's socks, his hood, mackinaw and sweater. His face was not badly frozen, but his hands and feet were marble white.

Suddenly the girl saw the blood that discolored the sleeve of Wilton's shirt. She ripped the sleeve from the shoulder. She saw the wound, and she knew that it was a bullet, entering behind, had passed obliquely out, leaving a small but not dangerous wound. The blood had long since ceased to flow and clotting the wound in a congealed, frozen mass.

The danger from the frostbite was more immediate. Molly took snow from the threshold and began to rub his face, his feet and his fingers. For nearly an hour the girl persisted, never ceasing her ever so gentle rubbing, and the thawing dripping clothes about her. And at last the skin began to be suffused with an angry red.

When she washed away the clotting blood from the arm and nerved herself to the task that must be performed. At the Moose Lake mission she had nursed an Indian with a fractured leg, set by the superintendent, and his experience was all she had to go by. But the break was a simple one. She brought the edges of the home together, made splints from pieces of packing case and secured them tightly with cloth smeared with bear's fat. Then she heated some birch and poplar bark, and put it down Wilton's throat.

When she could do no more she took her clothes out of the room and changed into a pair of heavy drawers, separated by a thin partition of pine planks. She had just finished when she heard her father shouting down the stairs. He had been the first time he had left his bed. The girl ran to the door in fear.

"Bower got no further, for Wilton's fist shot out and landed fairly on his mouth."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IS NOT AN EASY OCCUPATION

Deep-Sea Diver May With Much Truth Be Said Constantly to "Walk With Death."

How does a deep-sea diver feel when he goes on his diving suit? Capt. C. A. W. Monckton tells us in "Some Experiences of a New Guinea Resident Magistrate" that the feeling is by no means pleasant.

The moment the face glass is screwed tight, he says, and the air pump begins to work, the diver feels that he has a grievance. As he descends the feeling becomes more positive until he is in a fury of rage against every general and particular against one person in particular. At the bottom he spends much of his time wondering how soon the dress can be taken off that he can enjoy the world again when he has the imaginary grievance. However, the moment the face glass is removed, and the diver breathes the ordinary air, the bad temper leaves him, and he wonders what caused his anger.

The diver's greatest danger is that of being drowned when he is on his way to the surface. After a time, it seems, the best of diving dresses becomes filled with water up to the knees and even to the thighs. However, even a diver who has water in his dress filled with water up to the knees and even to the thighs, how or accidentally allow his body to be completely horizontal, and if he does so the water after general and particular against one person in particular. At the bottom he spends much of his time wondering how soon the dress can be taken off that he can enjoy the world again when he has the imaginary grievance. However, the moment the face glass is removed, and the diver breathes the ordinary air, the bad temper leaves him, and he wonders what caused his anger.

A Little Imitator. A tiny girl of five taken to a sand-village show was much impressed with the ventriloquist. That evening while and the diver breathes the ordinary air, the bad temper leaves him, and he wonders what caused his anger.

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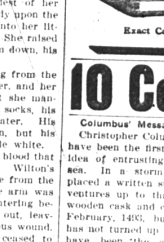
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When Baby Complains.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS a baby has of expressing any pain or irregularity or digression from its normal condition of health and happiness. A short sharp cry, a prolonged irritated cry. Restlessness, a constant turning of the head or of the whole body, fretful. In these and other ways a baby tells you there is something wrong. Most mothers know that a disordered stomach, or bowels that do not act naturally are the cause of most of baby's sufferings. A call for the doctor is a safe remedy such as Fletcher's Castoria.

Castoria has been used for baby's ailments for over 30 years and has merited the good will of the family physician in a measure not equaled by any other baby's medicine because of its harmlessness and the good results achieved. And remember this: Castoria is essentially a baby's remedy and not a cure-all for every member of the family. What might help you is too often dangerous when given to a babe.



Children Cry For Fletcher's CASTORIA

Let's Think It Over. There is such a thing as saying too much on any subject, and the "grand-stand" talker sooner or later becomes a bore. The truth is always welcome, and the truth reiterated and confirmed is more than welcome—it reaches your innermost soul.

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Masking under many names drugs that are injurious to the tender babe find their way into some households, but the light of experience soon casts them out. Are they cast out before it is too late? MOTHERS SHOULD READ THE BOOKLET THAT IS AROUND EVERY BOTTLE OF FLETCHER'S CASTORIA

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