

THE SWAMP SECRET.

A STORY OF THE FRONTIER.

By EBEN E. REXFORD.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

CONTINUED.

"One apiece for us, since Number Six has thrown up his hand," said Wayne. "That won't be so bad, after all, if we get them out of the swamp all right. It's a lucky thing that we hit upon the Big Swamp for a hiding-place. They have an idea, about here, that it's impossible to get a horse into the creek from the road till it got deep enough to take them into the swamp on a raft originated with him, didn't it? I wish he were going with us, but I suppose it was his fate to be shot, and fate's something none of us can get away from, I take it."

"It'll be beginning to grow light soon," said the other. "I think I'd better be on the move. You'll be here to-morrow night, then?"

"I'll be there by midnight if nothing happens," said Wayne. "Have everything packed and in readiness to leave as soon as I join you. Do you know where the settlers are making their perch to-night?"

"Some of them have gone up the creek," was the reply. "Our men took the horses into the thick woods at the edge of the marsh, up the road, and down stream, and across the road, and if the settlers come on any tracks it'll puzzle them to tell which way we went, for it's hard to tell which way tracks point in a marsh and running water. I hardly think they'll get on the right scent before we're safely out of the country, if we leave to-morrow night."

"Well, take care of yourself," said Wayne. "I'll be on hand by midnight, sure. Good night, Number Six."

"Good night, captain," responded the other.

Then they separated, one going back to the house, and the other into the woods.

Rhoda wondered if she was really awake. She could hardly credit the evidence of her senses.

"So Wayne's the leader of the gang of horse-thieves?" said she to herself, in a frightened whisper. "And I've found out the whole thing! Dear me! It scares me to think of it! I don't seem as if it could be possible! I must have dreamed it! Where can Nannie be all this time? I wish she could have been here and heard it all!"

"Rhoda!" came in a low whisper from a fence-corner, not far off.

"Rhoda!"

"Is that you, Nannie?" asked Rhoda, in a voice but little above a whisper.

"Yes," was the reply. "Have they gone?"

"Yes," answered Rhoda. "Oh, Nannie, did you hear what they said?"

"I only heard what they said when they were about to separate," answered Nannie. "I came near running right on to them, but I thought I heard some one talking, and stopped to make sure, just in time to keep from being discovered by them. What was it they talked about? Something about stealing horses, wasn't it? Tell me what it was, Rhoda—quick! I'm just dying to know."

Rhoda told what she had heard.

"Oh, Rhoda!" cried Nannie, with radiant eyes. "It was the luckiest thing in the world that I brought you home with me to-night! What you've heard will save Dick."

"That's true, isn't it?" cried Rhoda.

"I hadn't thought of that, I was so excited. It seems as if the hand of Providence was in it, doesn't it? I used Dick shamefully, just because he told me the singing-teacher was making a fool of me. He talked to me like a brother, and I got mad about it. Now I've a chance to help him out of his trouble, and also to get even with Mr. Wayne, and just to-night, at camp-meeting, I was wishing a chance to do that would come along. Only to think, Nannie, that I, of all persons, should be the one to find out who the horse thieves are, and how they got away with the horses they stole! It's just like a story, isn't it?"

"Rhoda, I'll tell you what we ought to do," said Nannie, with sudden conviction. "We ought to follow the men who're out hunting for the thieves, and put them on the right track. There's no man here to send but the minister, and he wouldn't know where to go if we sent him. If we can find the men, we can tell them what we have heard, and part of them can go into the Big Swamp, and some of them can come back and take care of Wayne. It won't do to tell any one what we've heard till we find the men and tell it to them, for if an inkling of it gets out, Wayne'll be sure to hear something, and before the men get back he'll be gone. The best thing we can do is to follow the men. It may be a long tramp for us, but I'm not afraid to undertake it."

little hut of boughs in an old tree-top. Here he had passed his nights, quite comfortably since his enforced exile from civilization.

As he went down the bank he fancied he heard a peculiar sound behind him. It was peculiar because of its irregularity. He stopped and listened.

He had heard something.

The sound was that of splashing waters.

Splash, splash, splash! The sound seemed to be coming nearer, as he listened.

"It can't be a cow," thought Dick. "It's too rapid for that. It can't be a deer, for he'd go faster and stiller."

He hid himself in a clump of willows and waited.

Splash, splash, splash. Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and presently he saw shadowy figures in the dim light which sifted through the branches of the trees overhanging the stream, which was here about fifteen feet wide and perhaps knee-deep.

"Horses, by all that's good!" exclaimed Dick. "Young fellow, there's mischief in the wind. I wonder if I've got on the track of the horse-thieves at last?"

By this time the horses were opposite the place where he was hidden.

He gave a great start of surprise, and could hardly repress the cry which rose to his lips.

For he recognized Nell and Dolly. He could not distinguish the features of the men who were riding the horses, the light through the branches being so dim.

He waited until they passed a few rods beyond his hiding-place. Then he left it and followed them cautiously down the bank of the stream.

The Big Swamp's borders were four or five miles from the road. As the land became lower the creek widened and deepened, and the banks gradually merged themselves into boggy flats. Thus, at the junction of the swamp with the hard-wood land on either side of the creek, there was nothing but miry soil, with water standing in every hole, and it was almost impossible for a man to make his way through the tangled growth of bushes over this treacherous semblance of terra firma.

The men stopped when the water deepened so that the horses' legs were hidden in it.

From behind a clump of immense willows growing in the bend of the stream one of them shoved out a raft constructed of light cedar logs.

With some trouble they succeeded in getting the horses upon it.

This done, they proceeded to pole it off down stream toward the heart of the Big Swamp.

"There isn't any use of my going any farther," thought Dick. "I know where the gang keeps itself, now, and I've found out how it gets there. It's a little strange that no one has ever thought of their wading down the creek till they reached deep water. But it isn't so very strange, after all, for nobody supposed it possible for them to get a horse into the Big Swamp in any manner."

He sat down on a fallen cypress and thought over what it was best to do.

"I think the best plan is to go directly to Mr. Boone's," he decided. "I guess I can get there without stretching my neck. It won't take long to get a squad of men on the trail. I see how it all is, now. Wayne is leader of the gang. He hunts up jobs, and lays the plans, and keeps the other fellows posted. What I found on the old cottonwood was his instruction to them after the stealing of Deacon Snyder's horses had been settled on. It's all as clear as daylight to me now. I hope we can catch them, horses and all. If we can, won't it be a proud day for me when I can stand up before all Brownsville and say: 'I'm the man you wanted to hang for a horse-thief. Now, what have you got to say about it?'"

About a mile from the road, a bluff jutted out from the south, forcing the creek to make an abrupt turn. Dick followed it around this point; and as he came to the open space on the other side of it, he found himself face to face in the dull gray light of breaking day with half a dozen men with Bill Green at their head.

There had been a difference of opinion on reaching the place where the creek crossed the road, and part of the men had gone up the creek as the horse-stealers had planned for them to do, and Bill's party had started toward the Big Swamp, on the correct supposition that the up-stream trail was a dodge to throw them off the scent.

"They went up there a ways, an' then come back in the water, an' a mile or two to the swamp they'll strike high lan' an' put for down b'low. They want to keep us a-doggin' round so 's they can gain time an' git a good start of us."

That was Bill's argument, and in part he reasoned correctly. On the strength of this belief he had come down the stream, inspecting the banks closely on either side, hoping to find where the horses had been out of the water and driven on toward some of the roads leading out of the settlement.

"That's him—that's Dick Brayton!" shouted Bill Green, who had been the first to recognize the man who appeared so suddenly before them.

"You're close on to the gang, now! Shoot him if he tries to run!"

Dick had no idea of running.

"You're just in time," he said. "I've discovered the secret of the horse-thieves."

"An' we've jest discovered one on 'em a second time," answered Bill, as, with a desperate courage which he wondered at even then and could never account for afterward, he knocked Dick's gun from his hands and grappled with him. Instantly others of

the party came to his assistance, and in a minute Dick was for the second time a prisoner.

"Don't let 'em give him a chance to git away ag'in," said one of the men. "String him up to this ol' tree, an' make sure of him this time."

"That's the talk!" cried Bill Green. "Ef we go to palaverin' with him some do the rest of the gang may come along, just we know, an' help him to give us the slip. I don't b'lieve in trials fer horse-thieves. Ef we hadn't waited for an afore, maybe Mr. Boone'd ben a span o' hosses ahead."

"See here, neighbors," said Dick, attempting to be calm. "I can prove to you that I am as innocent of what has been laid to me as any one of you is."

"Du it, then, an' be s'pry about it," said Bill. "We hain't no time to fool away."

"I have just tracked the horse-thieves, with Mr. Boone's horses, to the border of the Big Swamp," said Dick. "I was on my way to Mr. Boone's to let him know what I found out."

"That's a likely story," sneered Bill. "But I reckon 'twon't go down with us. What do you think about it, fellers?"

"We don't take no stock in it," responded Mr. Balcom.

Dick's explanation had fallen like good seed on stony ground.

"Hello, there's Perkins an' Speers," cried Bill, as two men appeared on the opposite side of the creek. "Come across, boys."

Bill met the men a little way from the group which surrounded Dick, and talked with them in low tones for a few minutes.

"Ye're right," Dick heard one of them say. "It's best to make short work of it. Ef ol' Boone or Porter come along afore it's done they'll want us to hold on an' give him a chance for a trial, an' I don't go in fer sich doin's, I don't. Hangin' what I go in for, an' I go in fer it now!"

"My idee," said Speers, concisely. "Here's the snuff that'll anser in place of 'suthin' better."

As he spoke he unwound a leather strap from about his waist. It was five or six feet long. Men often used these straps instead of suspenders, tying them or buckling them sufficiently tight to keep their trousers from slipping over their hips.

Bill took the strap and came back to the waiting group.

"I've talked with Speers an' Perkins an' they ain't in favor of waitin'," he said. "What d'ye say, men? Is it hang?"

"Hang it is!" was the reply from every man in the party.

"For God's sake don't murder a man in cold blood!" cried Dick, as pale as death. "I tell you I am innocent. If you'll take the trouble to search the Big Swamp you'll find that I've told you the truth. Search and find out whether I've been lying to you before you hang me."

"What's the use of foolin' with him?" cried Perkins. "We're only wastin' words an' time."

"Tie his han's," ordered Bill. "And in spite of his powerful struggles Dick's hands were tied, and the fatal strap fastened about his neck."

"For God's sake!" he began, but Perkins had thrown the strap over a limb, and two or three men had seized it, and he felt himself being lifted from his feet.

At that instant a wild, shrill cry, full of mortal terror, rang through the gray gloom of the morning, and caused them to relax their grasp. Turning in the direction whence it came, they saw Nannie and Rhoda coming swiftly toward them, with faces as white as those of the dead, and making wild gestures for them to release Dick.

Dick's good angel had brought them at the very nick of time. The men let go the strap, and his feet touched earth again.

"It wasn't he," cried Rhoda, panting for breath. "We've found out—who the thieves are—and the ring-leader's Wayne!"

Then she sank down on a log and burst into tears.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" cried Bill. "Don't you go to tryin' to fool us. Ef you do—"

"If we did I suppose you'd hang us," cried Nannie, indignantly. "Was that what you were going to say?"

"What is it that you've found out?" asked Perkins. "If you've anything to tell, tell it an' done with it."

Nannie drew a long breath and began.

What she had to tell the reader already knows.

[To be continued.]

Use for Scraps of Tin.

A two-horse load of tin clippings was being transferred to the rear basement of a prominent hotel. It had come from a can factory, and the narrow, curling strips had become so twisted and intertwined as to become a conglomerate mass that was moved with the greatest difficulty by two sturdy fellows with stable forks.

A bystander who was curious enough to enquire what use a swell hotel had for such truck was answered by an attaché of the house: "We use it for rats; I mean the big gray fellows with whiskers. The hotel rat is bigger, bolder and wiser than any other rat. He laughs at traps, fattens on poison, and the killing or chasing of dogs, cats and ferrets is his pet diversion. Even when energetic measures have rid us of the pests, they are with us again in augmented force within a day or two. They will tunnel through almost anything for incredible distances. It is their boring ability that has given us so much trouble hitherto. No matter how we close up their passage ways the routes were promptly reopened. Filling the holes with broken glass was considered a good scheme until we found that, with marvelous patience, they removed the glass piece by piece. But we think we've got them now. With this tangled up tin we construct a sort of abatis, covering all places where the beasts are likely to enter our cellars. They can't get through it. They can't chew it, and they can't carry it away as they do broken bottles, for when Mr. Rat takes hold of a single strip of the tin he finds it an inseparable part of a network weighing many pounds."—Philadelphia Record.

An English vicar in Sunderland has added to his scant income by practising dentistry. He has already pulled over 25,000 teeth.

THE REALM OF FASHION.

Medium-weight rough surface cloth in the popular Yale-blue, says May Manton, is here shown made into a Russian blouse wrap trimmed with as-



LADIES' AND MISSES' COSSACK BLOUSE.

trakan and black braid. With it is worn a hat of mottled cloth edge and banded with velvet and showing a bunch of quills at the left side. The blouse consists of fronts, backs, under-arm gorges and separate basque portions seamed to the fronts at the waist line. The sleeves are in coat shape, finished with epaulettes at the shoulders and with astrakhan binding and braid at the waists. At the neck is a high, flaring collar, and at the waist is worn a belt of handsome leather. The garment is lined throughout with plaid taffeta, the silk being cut precisely as is the cloth.

To make this blouse for a lady in the medium size will require two yards of fifty-four-inch material.

Party Dress for a Little Girl.

In spite of the fact that light-weight silks, such as China and India, are held correct for small girls wear,

the party came to his assistance, and in a minute Dick was for the second time a prisoner.

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fashion's simple vocabulary which can do them justice as regards any detailed description of their almost grotesque features. Both large and medium sized hats with feathers galore were worn in the evening, and the broad effect prevailed, being especially noticeable in the smaller shapes, where bows of velvet, curving leaves of jet and steel, and ostrich tips completed the regulation width. An occasional poke shape, almost disguised with its wealth of feathers, graced this assembly of head gear, and flower bonnets with a heavy twist of brilliant velvet for a foundation made brilliant spots of color here and there. Birds and spreading wings were the chief feature of hats worn in the morning, and there seems to be no limit to the size of the bird which can be perched on one of these new millinery concoctions.

An Old Fashion Revived.

Olive-shaped buttons covered with gilt, silver, black and colored silks, are one of the fancies in dress trimming and is an old-fashion revived. One pretty example of their use is in a collar band of white satin made in two narrow bands, with several rows of machine stitching for a finish, and put together with one row of little gold olives not much more than half an inch long and a little distance apart, forming an open insertion. This collar is shaped to flare out a little from the neck, but it is of the width and not at all a high collar.

Waist of Beige-Colored Faille.

In spite of the favor in which added basques are held the round waist holds its place, and by many women is preferred to any other style. The model shown is made of beige-colored faille, Francois with narrow Roman stripes and waist-band of Roman stripes and trimming of passementerie which repeats the coloring. The foundation is a fitted lining, showing the usual pieces and seams, but a single in place of double bust dart, and which closes at the centre-front. The outer portion is fitted by shoulder and under-arm

Live God With Oyster Sauce.

Take the centre part of the cod (about six pounds) from a live fish after it has been scaled and washed. Make four or five incisions across the back, cutting down an inch and a half deep. Dredge the fish plentifully with salt and let it stand two hours before using. Put it either in a long saucepan or a small fish kettle, provided with a grater. Cover with cold water, add a little salt and let the liquid come to a boil. Then at once remove it to the side of the fire so that it can quiver only. If the fish weighs six pounds it will take about an hour to cook. Drain it into a napkin, surround it with small sprigs of parsley, and serve an oyster sauce apart. For the sauce take a quart of the oyster juice and fish stock and thicken with butter and flour rubbed well together. Boil and stir until cooked, and then add oysters of medium size, according to quantity required.

Dainty Dishes For the Sick.

Curled Oysters—Cook oysters in their juice for about five minutes, adding a half teaspoonful of salt to a pint of oysters. Drain, dash on a little pepper and season with butter. Serve on toast that has been dipped in scalded milk, seasoned with salt and butter.

Fried Egg—Beat the white and yolk separately until very light, add a pinch of salt and stir together and fry in butter on a hot griddle; turn the egg over to brown on both sides.

Fruit with Whipped Cream—Put your fruit in a dish. Use any kind of berries, grapes, currants, tart mellow apples or melon, cut in small pieces, or peaches or plums paled in a dish and sift on sugar to sweeten them. Cover with whipped cream that has had a little sugar and vanilla extract added to it. Place a piece of the fruit on top of the cream.

Fruit Custard—Cover the bottom of the dish with fruit, such as berries, peaches or grapes. Pour over them a common custard with a little lemon extract and sugar enough to sweeten the berries added.

Creamed Rice—Cook your rice in milk until soft; when done stir in the white of an egg that has been beaten stiff, with sugar and salt to taste. Steam until the egg is cooked. Allow one egg to a cup of rice. Serve with thick cream and sugar.

Household Hints.

To whiten lace, stand in soapuds exposed to the rays of the sun.

To remove paint from window glass rub a little vinegar on the spots.

Bamboo furniture can be cleaned with a brush dipped in salt water.

A tablespoonful of kerosene oil added to the boiler when scalding clothes will help to whiten them.

To clean white silk lace, soak it in milk over night, and rinse in warm soapuds the next morning.

To blacken brown boots, cut a raw potato in halves, with which rub the blacking in well, and then polish.

Two bottles should be kept for a bottle fed baby. The one not in use should be filled with cold water and soda.

An excellent furniture polish is made by mixing turpentine with beeswax to the consistency of a thick cream.

To polish brown boots, there is no better preparation than melted beeswax, applied with a clean cloth and well rubbed in.

Grass stains may be removed from light summer frocks by damping the soiled part in a little alcohol and rubbing well until no trace of the green is left.

Few people know how useful oil of pepper is as a remedial agent. A little rubbed over a sensitive corn eliminates the soreness in a miraculous manner.

Two or three drops of oil of pepper mixed with an equal amount of sweet rubbed over baby's chest gives instant relief in case of a cold on the lungs or a cough.

If your window glass is lacking in brilliancy, clean it with a liquid made of methylated spirits of wine and whitening, which removes specks and gives the glass a high luster.

People who suffer with perspiring feet will find great relief if they wash the feet every night with warm vinegar and water for several minutes. Then dust over them a powder of one part salicylic acid to eight parts of talc powder.

Put one ounce of oxalic acid into one pint of water; one cup of this is enough for one bucket of water. Put your clothes into this water, stirring them all the while, and when you take them out rinse well. This mixture will not injure the finest fabric in the slightest degree.

Well Behaved Norwegians.

The Norwegians of all classes are the best-behaved people in Europe. It is often argued that an aristocracy is necessary to give by example a high tone to society; but Norway is almost the only country in Europe without an aristocracy, or any pretensions to one.

The Free Library of Philadelphia circulated 836,898 volumes during the first six months of the year, an increase of 166,000 as compared with the same period of last year.

Hats—well, there are no words in

HOUSEHOLD MATTERS.

Brown Beauty.

Peel and slice six large, juicy apples. Rub fine between the hands three cupfuls bread crumbs. Put one layer of bread crumbs and one layer of apples into a pudding dish, with two tablespoonfuls of sugar and half a teaspoonful of butter between each layer, making the top layer of fine crumbs, sugar and butter. Pour over this half a cup of boiling water. Put into slow oven; bake one hour. Serve with milk or pudding sauce.

Pickled Cauliflower.

For three good-sized heads of cauliflower use one-quarter of a pound of English mustard, two tablespoonfuls of mustard seed, one cupful of sugar, one-half gallon of vinegar, one-half ounce of tumeric and one gill of salad oil. Boil the cauliflower until tender and divide it into florets. Put the vinegar in a porcelain-lined kettle; mix the mustard and turmeric together; moisten with a little cold water; stir into hot vinegar and continue until it begins to thicken. Add the sugar, mustard seed and oil, and stir again. Pour this while hot over the cauliflower. When cool put away in glass or stone jars and it is ready to use.

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