

WOODEN SPOIL

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

(Copyright, 1914, by George H. Dunn Co.)

TWO ANGRY BLUE EYES AND FLUSHED CHEEKS

Synopsis.—Hilary Askew, young American, comes into possession of the timber and other rights on a considerable section of wooded land in Quebec—the Rosny seigniory. Lamartine, his uncle's lawyer, tells him the property is of little value. He visits it, and finds Morris, the manager, away. From Lefe Connell, mill foreman, Askew learns his uncle has been systematically robbed. He sees trouble on all sides. Nevertheless, he refuses to sell out and decides to manage his property himself. Incidentally he catches sight of Selma Rosny's beautiful daughter, the center of a raceably plot.

CHAPTER II.

Lefe Connell Explains.

After breakfast the next morning Hilary hired Monsieur Tremblay's buggy and started out with Lefe, with the intention of covering a portion of the limits and seeing the operations of the jobbers; he also meant to keep his eyes open as to the nature of the timber.

The buggy surmounted a hill, and another hill appeared in the distance. Here and there, scattered along the roadside, were solitary cabins, with little patches of cultivated ground about them.

"And on the right of the road is the Ste. Marie territory," asked Hilary. "Yep, Mr. Askew. The two runs neck and neck back into the mountains. We turn off presently. We haven't touched this district yet."

Hilary noted the first-growth spruce along the banks. "Why don't we cut this, anyway, if the rest is mainly fir?" he asked. "There's enough lumber here to fill our dam instead of the Ste. Marie company's logs."

Lefe answered volubly, but did not meet Hilary's eyes. "You see, Mr. Askew," he began to explain, "it's this way. There's a good deal of fir on our property, and what pine and spruce there is a smallish. There was a big fire over this district fifteen years or so ago. Now Mr. Morris calculates that if we go slow for a while and give the trees a chance to grow, they'll be worth twice as much in a few years. We're developing the property slowly, Mr. Askew."

Hilary's hand fell on Lefe's shoulder. "Connell," he said, "I brought you up here with me to learn the truth from you. You're going to sign on again on October first, and it's me you're going to sign with, not Mr. Morris. Now tell me the facts about all this."

Lefe stammered and hung his head like a schoolboy caught in wrongdoing. But Hilary's hand was gripping his shoulder, and at last Lefe raised his head and looked straight at Hilary.

"If I thought you'd stick here," he said, "I guess I'd back you to the limit. But you'll never stand for St. Boniface. Mr. Askew. They're so infernally slow here, they ain't got human ways, sir. And they're crooked. I thought, when I heard you was coming, you'd be like Mr. Morris—I mean, wise to the game—but you ain't. I guess most business is crooked everywhere, but here it's crooked all through. You'll be selling out to Mr. Brouseau in a month's time, and that'll be my finish."

"You're dead wrong, Connell," answered Hilary. "I like the looks of this country, and I'm here to stay. Now suppose you forget about Mr. Brouseau for a while and consider yourself to be what you are, my paid employee. And you can count on my standing by you."

He held his hand out. For a moment Lefe Connell's keen gray eyes met his searching inquiry; then he took Hilary's hand and wrung it. "I believe you mean what you say, Mr. Askew," he returned. "And you can reckon on me so far as my duty goes."

man of great muscular power. The two looked up as the buggy approached, and the short man scowled. "This is Mr. Leblanc," said Lefe. "Mr. Leblanc, this is Mr. Askew, the owner."

Leblanc put out his hand limply, but Hilary, nettled by his manner, did not take it. "Mr. Leblanc is clearing a camp for his next year's lease," continued Lefe. "But the lease is not signed" asked Hilary.

"It will be signed in October," answered Leblanc. "I have arranged with Monsieur Morris."

"You'll make your arrangements with me in future," said Hilary. "If the price is satisfactory, you can have this tract."

Leblanc stared at him insolently with his good eye, the other fixing a tree on Hilary's right. "I work for Mr. Morris. I make arrangements with him," he answered.

"See here, Leblanc, you didn't catch who this gentleman is," said Lefe. "This is Mr. Askew, the nephew of the late Mr. Askew. He has come into the property. He's boss. You get me, don't you, Leblanc?"

Leblanc shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, yes, I understand," he answered, and turning without another word, walked back toward the lumbermen, accompanied by the short man, who was chuckling maliciously at Hilary's discomfiture.

Hilary flushed, but Lefe laid his hand on his wrist, closing the fingers about it with a viselike grip. "Steady, Mr. Askew. Don't let those fellows get you riled," he said. "If you're coming into this game it means steady work. You've got to hold back and hold back, until you've got things ready."

They re-entered the buggy and, turning the horse, drove back. Presently Hilary cooled down. "Who was the little man?" he asked.

"That's Pierre something-or-other. Black Pierre, he's called. He's Brouseau's chief crook. He's a troublesome man, Mr. Hilary. He'll bear watching."

"We'll fire him first thing," said Hilary. "Why, he ain't hired by us," answered Lefe.

"Then what in thunder is he doing on my concession, talking to the chief jobber?"

"Well, there ain't no law against it," said Lefe, with a humorous look on his face. "I guess them two are pretty thick together."

"You see, Mr. Askew, it's this way," he went on. "If you're going to clear up this mess, it ain't a bit of good going for the little fellows. They're the tail that Brouseau wags. Once you get Brouseau's hand out of your pie, the others follow him. When Pierre sees there ain't no more pickings out of the St. Boniface land he'll go back to the smuggling business."

"Bragging-smuggling?" "Why, he's the bad man of Ste. Marie. He runs cargoes of gin and brandy ashore from the south coast, and there's never been a revenue officer in this district within human memory, nor would one dare to show his face here. Say, I'll take you through Ste. Marie on the way back to the mill."

"I didn't mean that, Mr. Askew. It's that, God knows; but what I meant by hell was a place where everybody's a law to himself with nothing to restrain him. A place where everybody does what he wants to do. That's my idea of hell, sir."

The road wound along the shore. Presently St. Boniface came into sight. "I think I'll go into the office, Connell," said Hilary.

"I guess you'll have to break it open, then," said Lefe. "Mr. Morris took the keys with him."

"When's he coming back?" "We were expecting him on the boat this afternoon."

Hilary considered for a moment. "I'll wait till tomorrow then," he said. "Hello, Monsieur Baptiste!"

The little sceler and timekeeper was hurrying toward the buggy. "Monsieur Hilary," he gasped. "Monsieur Askew, yesterday I did not know who you were."

"That's all right, Baptiste," answered Hilary. "Just remember that I'm running things here now, that's all. And, by the way, that order about trespassers and visitors is at an end. There's going to be nothing done here that will be afraid of people finding out. Got it?"

Jean-Marie Baptiste evidently had got it, for he looked almost terrified. He touched his hat and withdrew with a sort of shuffling bow.

"You certainly do have the knack of putting things across, Mr. Askew," said Lefe admiringly. "I guess you're ready to go back to the hotel. Wait. There's old Dupont, the captain of the lumber schooner. I guess you'll want to meet him?"

"I suppose so," said Hilary. Dupont came toward the rig, accompanied by the timekeeper. The captain was a tall old man of about sixty years, with a gray beard, a weather-beaten face, and pale gray eyes that seemed to burn with some consuming fire. His look, as he turned it on Hilary, was so searching, and so inscrutable, and so momentarily hostile, that Hilary felt uncomfortable. There was a history behind that penetrating stare—a history and a hate.

But after a moment's examination of Hilary's face a film seemed to come over the old man's eyes. Whatever the reason for his strange gaze, Dupont was satisfied. He stood by Lefe, and Jean-Baptiste translated.

"The captain says the schooner's full," he said. "He wants to start for Quebec on tonight's tide."

"Tell him to speak to Mr. Askew here," answered Lefe. "Say that Mr. Askew's in charge."

The timekeeper translated back into the French. A smile flickered upon Dupont's face. He shook his head and answered: "He says he's got to have Mr. Morris' orders," said Baptiste.

Lefe turned to Hilary, who took up the conversation. "Ask him if he doesn't understand what I am here for," he suggested.

Dupont was impregnable in his position. He had lumber from both concessions, and Mr. Morris was in charge of both. What orders had been left with reference to his freight?

Lefe was pleased and surprised at the way Hilary took it. But Hilary had learned a good deal during that morning. "That sounds reasonable," he said. "Give him Mr. Morris' orders, Connell, whatever they are." And when the matter had been settled, he added: "You were dead right, Connell. We've got to settle with the big fellows first."

lop for Monsieur Tremblay's stables. But before the final descent was reached Hilary was laughing. Somehow the girl's hostility seemed to add a zest to the game.

"I don't know that I'll be so very diplomatic with Brouseau after all," said Hilary, as he drew rein at the stable entrance.

CHAPTER III.

Hilary Talks Business.

Hilary was smoking on the porch the next morning, formulating his plans, when he heard the bell on the side of the telephone box begin to ring clangorously. Then Monsieur Tremblay came out and made it clear to Hilary that he was wanted.

"Say, Mr. Askew," he said, "I'm phoning you from my boarding place. The boat was late; maybe you didn't know. They've been cross-questioning me and Baptiste all the morning. Brouseau's just left, and Morris has ordered the storekeeper's rig to drive over to you in an hour's time."

"Thanks, Connell," said Hilary. "I'm much obliged. I'm coming over."

He reached the office just in time to see Morris emerge toward a buggy which was drawn up before the door. Morris looked plainly disconcerted to see him.

He was an older man than Hilary had expected to meet. He seemed well on the shady side of fifty. He had illusive gray eyes, a prominent but ill-defined nose, and a heavy, thready mustache. It was a type Hilary knew intimately: The crooked business go-between.

"Mr. Morris, I think," he said, descending and tying the pony to the hitching post in front of the building.

Morris held out his hand, which Hilary took, with no great cordiality. "I came back last night and heard you were here, Mr. Askew," he said. "I was just coming over to see you."

"I heard you were here," said Hilary. "I came to see you and talk things over."

Morris, recognizing the situation, accepted it and turning back, pulled the key out of his pocket and opened the office door. Hilary sat down at the desk nearest the window, from which he could see the endless line of logs ascending the cogged chain that drew them into the mill flume.

Morris took a box of cigars from his desk drawer and offered it to Hilary, who declined. Morris chose one and, biting off the end, lit it. Hilary could see that his hand trembled a little.

"Well, sir," he said, seating himself, "this is the last place in the world where I should have expected to see you. I have just heard from Mr. Lamartine that you intended to pay a visit to Quebec, but that letter was written some days ago. You didn't see him?"

Two days before Hilary would have jumped at the bait, would have shown his resentment of the lie, declared hostilities, and given Morris his cue. Now he only smiled pleasantly.

"Yes, I saw him," he answered. "He tried to dissuade me from coming up here, but I wanted to see the property."

"If you had let me know," said Morris, "I could have made arrangements. You have come in the slackest month of the year. There is very little to show you. But I shall arrange to take you all over the concession. I suppose you'll be staying long enough to do some fishing, Mr. Askew? There are some fine trout lakes a few miles to the north. We might make a day's trip of it."

His sentences were not continuous. There was a considerable pause after each, long enough to allow Hilary to reply. If Hilary's silence had aroused respect in the mind of Lamartine, they aroused positive fear in that of Morris.

Hilary came to the point. "I have come here to assume charge, Mr. Morris," he said. "Please let me see the map and books."

company, the fact that it is adjacent makes it easy for me to devote a little time to it, so far as I can spare it from my duty here. The two companies are not in conflict, Mr. Askew. Quite the contrary. What helps one, helps the other."

"Quite so," said Hilary. "I don't dispute that you have had a right to engage in other interests. But how about their use of our mill?"

"At a sum, Mr. Askew, which makes quite a little showing on the credit side of our ledgers. We can't afford to throw money away, and our cuttings are not large enough for the one to interfere with the other."

"You mean the timber is bad," "Damn bad," said Morris. "Gummy fir, Mr. Askew. What little spruce there is I've been holding to make a show in case we decide to sell."

"That sounds plausible," said Hilary; and then he shot his bolt. "Why does the Ste. Marie company wish to purchase this gummy fir of ours?" he asked.

Morris rose up, trembling with anger that was only half feigned. "I see you have suspicions of my good faith, Mr. Askew," he said indignantly. "That is the only possible interpretation I can put upon your question."

"If you will answer it, we can interpret it together later."

"I am not prepared to answer it off-hand. Many companies would like to get our property. The Ste. Marie company may or may not have that intention. I should no more think of disclosing the Ste. Marie's plans to you than I should think of disclosing your plans to the Ste. Marie."

"May I have the books and map of the seigniory limits and leased tracts, Mr. Morris?" asked Hilary.

"If you think my services are worthless I have no desire to retain my position here."

Hilary rose, crossed to Morris' desk, and tapped the roll top. "I suppose you do not refuse to produce them?" he asked.

Morris took a key from his waistcoat pocket with fingers that could hardly find it. He inserted it after two failures, snapped back the lock, and threw the top up, revealing the books heaped together, as if they had just been under examination. "Go through them by all means, if you think you've been swindled," he cried. He flung another key on the desk. "This is the key to the office," he said. "The other desk contains my private papers."

"The map, Mr. Morris?" "The seigniory is bounded on the west by the Rocky river. It is a straight concession of eighty-five thousand, five hundred odd arpents, with three sides approximately equal. If you want a map you'll have to go to the government. Mr. Lamartine has the legal documents."

"There must be a map," said Hilary quietly.

"It isn't drawn to scale. You'll find a rough plan of the leases among those papers." He moved toward the door, laid his hand on the handle, cleared his throat and looked back.

"I have only to say that my yearly contract expires on October first," he said. "If you wish to renew it I shall expect adequate notice."

Hilary looked up from the books. "You may regard it as terminating on October first, then," he answered. "If I wish to renew it I shall let you know when I have looked into these."

Man lumber business. You'll be bankrupt inside of six months and glad to sell out for a song. That's all I have to say to you, except that I'm resigning and not discharged, and if you say I'm discharged I'll sue you for libel in the Quebec courts."

He opened the door, but Hilary called to him. "One moment, Mr. Morris," he said.

Morris turned and looked at him uncertainly. He was ready to accept any extension of the olive branch.

"Take your cigars," said Hilary, opening the drawer and bringing out the box.

Mr. Morris turned purple, snorted, then snatched up the box and made his exit.

Apparently he wished to convey the impression of a furious quarrel with a less humiliating ending, for Hilary heard him shouting angrily outside. Through the window he saw Jean Baptiste come running up to him. There came later, the confused sound of many voices in consultation. But Hilary turned his attention to the books.

The deficit for the half-year had been eight thousand dollars. That much Lamartine's papers had shown, and Hilary could find no fault with the statement. It was, of course, impossible to arrive at any discovery without experience of the practical working of the concession, and Hilary quickly realized that little was to be obtained by a prolonged scrutiny. There was, however, a considerable expenditure for provisions at the Ste. Marie company's store, which he assumed to be the store on the property.

In view of an item on the credit side for the lease of a building. There, at any rate, Morris' dishonesty was manifest. Hilary closed the books. He would discharge no man for insolence, but he felt that Morris was entitled to no more than his salary until October.

Having closed the desk, he looked about the office. A door led into an extension of the two-story building.

He found that the key to the outer door fitted this, and, opening it, entered a very comfortable little living room, with a small kitchen at the back. A stairway at the back of the house, built on the outside, evidently led into the bedrooms. He decided to take over Morris' quarters for his personal use.

He had just returned into the office and put on his hat preparatory to leaving when there came a tap at the door. The frightened face of Jean-Marie Baptiste looked in.

"Monsieur Morris has raised his—," said the sceler.

"How's that?" "Everybody is discharged—everybody what works for the Ste. Boniface company. Only the Ste. Marie men stay. They are very angry. They say they could have got work on the south shore for winter, but now too late maybe."

"Go and tell the hands nobody is discharged—yet," answered Hilary. "Can't you get it through your head that I'm in charge here?"

"Emulating the Lark." Lectured for lying ahead late, the farmer's boy promised that in future he would "be up with the lark." The next morning the old farmer came in from his milking and found his son sitting on the stile and singing as blithely as though there was no such thing as work.

"Why, you young rascal," said his exasperated sire, "this is worse than sleeping. What do you mean by loafing on that stile and singing at the top of your voice?"

The lad grinned. "Why, dad, you told me to be like the lark, and that's all he does when he gets up early."

"Flinpancy Loses." John D. Rockefeller Jr., in a Y. M. C. A. address on salesmanship cautioned his young auditors against flinpancy.

"Nothing in flinpancy," he said. "A middle-aged gentleman with thinning locks came into a barber shop the other morning as I was being shaved. He sat down in a chair and said: 'I want a haircut.' 'Yes, sir,' said a flippant young barber. 'Which one?' 'The middle-aged gentleman got up and left without a word. Flinpancy had lost that shop a good customer.'

A Remarkable Case Given Up By Five Doctors

Last Chattanooga, Tenn.—Two years ago Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery not only saved my life but restored me to perfect health. Before the case came I became so bloated that I could not get around at all and finally I stayed in my bed helpless for nine weeks. The doctors said I would not live two weeks when a neighbor recommended Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery to me, and a last resort I took it. Before the first bottle was one I was up and around, and by the time I had finished the second bottle of Golden Medical Discovery I was a perfectly well woman. That state of good health I am still enjoying, so am convinced that mine was a permanent cure, and I cannot praise Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery too highly for the great benefit it has been to me.—MRS. MARY LEE HAMPTON, 9 Oriskany St.



Our Neighbors Suffer from Colds

Alton Park, Tenn.—"About three years ago I caught a very heavy cold and my limbs ached and pained me terribly. I took several different kinds of medicines but nothing gave me the relief that Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery did. I took the first few doses. I took two bottles of it and consider it an excellent tonic and health-giver. My cold cleared up nicely and the aches and pains left me—that is why I recommend Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery so highly.—MRS. ELIZABETH BLACK, Union St.

Long ago Dr. Pierce combined certain valuable vegetable ingredients—without the use of alcohol—so that these remedies always have been strictly non-toxic medicines. Send 10c for trial package of any of Dr. Pierce's medicines. Address: Invalids' Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y.

GET SLOAN'S FOR YOUR PAIN RELIEF

You don't have to rub it in to get quick, comforting relief

Once you've tried it on that stiff joint, sore muscle, sciatic pain, rheumatic twinge, lame back, you'll find a warm, soothing relief you never thought a liniment could produce. Won't stain the skin, leaves no marks, wastes no time in applying, sure to give quick results. A large bottle means economy. Your own or any other druggist has it. Get it today. 35c, 70c, \$1.40.



Modern Dream. One night while asleep in bed, Mr. B. reached over to his wife, giving her a nose a twist, whereupon Mrs. B. awakened and asked for an explanation. Mr. B. explained that he had been dreaming and thought he had turned off the electric light.

"CAN I BE CURED?" SAYS THE SUFFERER

How often have you heard that sad cry from the victims of disease. Perhaps the disorder has gone too far for help, but oftener it is just in its first stages and the patient and those who are nature's first cries for help. Do not despair. Find out the cause and give nature all the help you can and she will repay you with health. Look after the kidneys. The kidneys are the most overworked organs of the human body and when they fail in their work of filtering and throwing off the poison that constantly accumulates in the system, everything goes wrong. GOLD MEDAL HAZELDEN OIL CAPSULES will give almost immediate relief from kidney and bladder troubles and their kindred ailments. They will free your body from pain in short order. But be sure to get GOLD MEDAL. Look for the same on every box. In three sizes, sealed packages. Money refunded if they do not help you.—ADV.

By Degrees. Church—I see several colleges have conferred degrees on Cardinal Mercier, primate of Belgium, who is visiting here. Gotham—Yes; the cardinal is learning a lot about our country by degrees.

Dr. Perry's "Dead Shot" not only cures Worms or Tapeworm but cleans out the "mud" in the blood and tones up the digestion. One dose sufficient. ADV.

None but Japs Admitted. Amid restaurants of all nationalities in London open to all nationalities, it is just one for one race alone. On its entrance is "For Japanese Only."

For Grip, Colds and MALARIA 7-11 CHILLIFUGE kills the Malaria germ and regulates the liver. 25 CENTS



Cuticura Soap Best for Baby

Bronchial Troubles. Both the irritation and you relieve the distress. Do both quickly and effectively by using Cuticura a simple and safe remedy.



A Glance at Her Face Showed Him That She Was Perfectly Aware Who He Was.

then he became aware of Madeleine Rosny upon her horse, at the end of the branch road, waiting for him to pass. Hilary felt uncertain and awkward. Ought he to raise his hat to her? A glance at her face showed him that she was perfectly aware who he was. It showed him a firm chin, resolutely set, two angry blue eyes, and flushed cheeks whose redness did not come from heat riding.

He decided to bow. But before he did so the buggy had passed, leaving a path; and Madeleine, Madeleine, her face averted, started her horse down the hill. Hilary jerked the reins angrily, and the pony set off at a gal-