

WOODEN SPOIL

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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BUSINESS AND ROMANCE

"Wooden Spoil" is the story of an American's lively adventures in the Canadian woods. He falls heir to a hundred square miles of forest and a lumbering business. Upon taking possession he finds that he has inherited trouble. Being young and two-fisted, he welcomes the trouble, objects to being run out of the country and goes to work. Doubtless the Seigneur's altogether adorable daughter has something to do with his decision. Love, jealousy, loyalty, treachery—all the passions of a primitive, blooded people—figure in this stirring tale. Strikes, adventure, fighting, hardships—action crowds every chapter. A manly hero, a lovable heroine, a real love and a happy ending—it's a good story from start to finish.

CHAPTER I.

The Rosny White Elephant. The office in Quebec which Georges Lamartine, the notary, occupied was tucked inconspicuously in a small building in an old part of the Lower town. Small, wiry, black-haired, with an air of unconvincing plausibility about him, Monsieur Lamartine sat at his desk, drumming his fingers, staring out at a letter signed Hilary Askew, when his boy brought him a card with the same name upon it. "Tell Monsieur Askew that I am busy with an important court case," he said. "Ask him to call at this time tomorrow."

Askew, I cannot advise you to consider your uncle's legacy seriously. "I'm sorry to hear that," answered Hilary. "But I suppose something can be done with the wood. There are uses besides pulp-wood to which the timber can be put?"

Monsieur Lamartine drummed his fingers for quite a while before answering. "A company with a large capital might find it commercially profitable to develop your tract," he said presently. "But no man without an ample fortune and a thorough knowledge of lumber conditions in this province could dream of pulling out even."



Monsieur Lamartine Could Not Decide Whether It Was a Sign of Strength or Weakness.

offer. Will you let me have the papers, Monsieur Lamartine, including the last half-yearly statement and the map of the limits?" "But it is entirely irregular, Mr. Askew. Really—" "Let me have the papers, please," said Hilary, smiling. "And you need have no fear that you will be held responsible for my anticipating my inheritance. I imagine I have as much right there as Mr. Morris."

"Of course, if that is your decision, there is nothing more to say," answered the other brusquely. He pulled out a drawer and removed an envelope containing some documents. "You will find the statement here," he said. "Mr. Morris has the books and the map of St. Boniface. I wish you a pleasant journey, sir. You wish me to continue to represent you?"

It was well into the afternoon when Hilary reached St. Boniface on the small tri-weekly mail boat. For fifty or sixty miles below Quebec the country, sparsely inhabited though it is, and primitive, contains settlements with shingled houses, hotels, tourists in season; and it was not until the St. Lawrence widened into the Gulf that Hilary realized, almost with surprise, that the ship was sailing into a territory as primitive as it had been a score of years after Jacques Cartier landed. Something of the primeval nature of the land entered Hilary's heart and gripped it. He had never known what it was to take hold of a virgin land and tame it, to grapple with life, nor among the men of cities, but somewhere with the smell of the pines and of the brown earth in his nostrils. Pacing the deck of the little ship, he felt that his desires had come to light at the moment when their fulfillment had become possible.

He looked about him with approval when he stood upon the porch of the tiny hotel at St. Boniface. Nobody else had got off the boat, and evidently the landlord of the little hotel expected nobody. After an ineffectual attempt to enter into conversation with him, in which hardly a word was mutually intelligible, Hilary gave up the effort and started up the hill road which led, he surmised, toward the lumber mill.

The whole settlement was gathered about the shores of the little bay. Beyond it were the mountains, on either side the forest-clad hills, broken, on the east, by an inlet, and on the west by the deep cleft of the Rocky river, whose mouth, closed by a boom, was a congested mass of logs.

Hilary crossed the bridge and approached the mill. Two or three men, lounging outside the store, looked at him without any sign of interest. Everything was very still and peaceful; there was hardly a sound to be heard except the distant hum of the mill machinery. Between the dam and the store, upon a terrain heaped with tin cans and miscellaneous debris, were piles of wood in four-foot lengths, each comprising about two hundred cords. Kneeling at the narrow end of one of these piles was a little man, whose clean-shaven upper lip, the whiteness of which contrasted with a sun-blackened face, indicated that a mustache had grown there recently. He was scaling, or measuring, the pile, and muttering as he added up his figures.

time to time over his shoulder as he went. His statement in the store must have created a good deal of sensation, for presently two clerks, as well as the two loungers, who had gone inside, came to the door and stared. Disengaging himself from among these came the foreman, a tall, lean, lanky New Englander, whose deliberate slouch and typical bearing warmed Hilary's heart instantly. He knew the type, knew it as only one with the New England blood knows his own.

"I'm Lafe Connell, at your service, Mr. Askew," said the foreman, coming up to Hilary and standing respectfully before him. "I suppose I should have let you people know that I was coming," said Hilary.

He wondered why Lafe Connell whistled; he knew nothing about Brousseau's telephoned warning. "I guess you'll find things upset a little," said Connell. "Mr. Morris has been away for a couple of weeks, seeing to his other interests, and I can't exactly do much for you till he comes back. It's our slack month, you know, Mr. Askew. The men don't go into the woods until September, and we don't keep a large force employed on the mill work."

"Tomorrow's soon enough to start in," said Hilary. "I'm pleased to have met you, Mr. Connell." "Wait a minute," said the foreman. "If you don't mind having me, I'll go up to the hotel with you. Maybe there'll be some things that you'll want to ask me."

"All right," said Hilary. They went together silently across the shaking bridge and ascended the hill, each quietly taking stock of the other. At the top, where a branch road ran off at right angles to that which crested the cliff, a figure on horseback appeared in the distance. It was a girl, riding side-saddle. As the horse drew near she pulled in to take the branch road without scattering the dust, passing within a few feet of Hilary. He saw that she was about twenty years of age, or a little more, slight, very straight upon the saddle, with gray-blue eyes and brown hair blown by the wind about her flushed cheeks. There was a combination of dignity and simplicity about her, both in her demeanor and in the way she rode, and in her acknowledgment of Connell's greeting.

Hilary watched her canter up the road till she had disappeared among the trees. Then he realized that he had not taken his eyes off her since he had first seen her. "That," said Lafe, "is Mamzelle Madeleine Rosny. Her father's what they call the Seigneur."

"The owner of the Chateau?" asked Hilary, although he knew this perfectly. "Yes, Mr. Askew. I guess she wouldn't have smiled so pleasant if she had known who you was."

"Why, Mr. Connell?" "Lafe jerked his thumb vaguely about the horizon. "Proud old boy," he explained. "Family's been here nigh on a thousand years, I guess—leastways, since then Frenchmen first came to this continent. Hated like thunder to sell out to your uncle. But I guess he was land poor, like the rest of them, and Mamzelle Madeleine must have cost him a mint of money finishing up in the convent at Paris, France."

Hilary turned this over in his mind as they continued their walk along the cliff and then down the road to the hotel. The idea of any personal ill-feeling on the Seigneur's part or on that of his family had not occurred to him. Though he did not expect to meet Monsieur Rosny, except possibly in the course of his business, he was conscious of a feeling of regret, and also of a half-formed resolution, the nature of which he would not admit, to put relations upon a pleasant footing.

core. Now you take a Dutchman or a Dago—their ways ain't our ways, but they're more or less human. These people ain't. They paint their houses yellow and green, when they paint 'em at all. I never saw a yellow house with a green porch in my life till I come up here."

"Just a difference of taste, Mr. Connell." "Maybe," said Lafe, spitting. "Maybe it's all right not to have sense to plaster their houses, so as to freeze to death in winter time. Maybe it's all right to run to Father Lucy when there's a forest fire, instead of getting to work and putting it out. Maybe he can pray it out for them. I got nothing against the place, except that my wife Clarice and the kids are in Shoeburyport, and I'd rather rot here alone than bring 'em up. But what's the use? I'm here and I got to stay here," he ended, shrugging his shoulders.

Lafe was a bad cross-questioner, and the task put upon him by Brousseau was not only uncongenial but impossible for a man of his temperament. However, he made a valiant attempt to draw Hilary out. "You're thinking of spending some time here, Mr. Askew?" "I've come to take charge, I'm going to stay," said Hilary.

Lafe looked at him curiously. What sort of a man could this be who chose of his volition to reside in St. Boniface? "I guess you'll change your mind when you've seen it a little longer," he said incredulously. "On the contrary, Mr. Connell, I mean to take hold, and I mean to make it pay. It hasn't paid very well, I understand?"

Lafe floundered. "I've heard it don't pay as much as it ought." "I understand that most of the timber is below the size at which cutting is allowed?"

Lafe stared at him. "Why, then, rules are for government land!" he answered. "You can cut any size on freehold. The timber ain't so bad—leastways, some of it ain't." Hilary began to think hard. On this point Lamartine had clearly and definitely lied to him.

"Too much fir on the property?" he asked. "Why, there is some fir," conceded Lafe. "But there's some good spruce along the Rocky river," he added, again oblivious of his instructions. "I saw a good pile in the river."

"Why, that ain't our cutting—not much of it," said Lafe. "Most of that comes from the Ste. Marie limits." "Where is Ste. Marie?" "Ste. Marie's two miles along the coast, beyond our settlement," said Lafe. "Most of our hands come from there. It's a tough place, Mr. Askew. I seen some tough towns in the West, but this has got 'em all beat, with the smuggling of brandy, and the drinking, and the fights every Saturday night—there was a man knifed there last week; and not a policeman within fifty miles, and nobody except Father Lucy, and he can't hold 'em."

"What I want to know," said Hilary, "is, what this company is that you speak about, and how they come to use the Rocky river for their logs." Lafe hesitated, but only for a moment. Then he mentally cast Brousseau to the winds; for, after all, if Hilary meant to know, nobody could prevent it. Brousseau's instructions notwithstanding.

Hilary's suspicions, dormant even after the interview with Lamartine, were now thoroughly aroused. "And Mr. Brousseau has no concern with us, except for the lease of the mill and the right-of-way down the river," mused Hilary. "Who is this Mr. Brousseau?"

"Why, I guess he's the big man of the district," said Lafe. "He's the nearest thing to a boss they've got up here; tells 'em how to vote and gets 'em out of trouble. He ain't good by his father, though. That was old Jacques Brousseau in the store, the trapper."

"I didn't see him." "He was Mr. Rosny's slave, or whatever they called them, in the old times, before these people became free."

He tapped the ashes out of his pipe and poked it. "He's got old Rosny in his pocket," he said, leaning toward Hilary. "He's got him bound and mortgaged after leading him to throw your uncle's money away in crazy investments. He did it deliberately, Mr. Askew. When he was a kid, growing up among the house servants up at the Chateau, he wanted to be a big man, for which I don't blame him. He got his way, but that wasn't enough. He wanted the Seigneur's place, because he found that the folks up here thought more of old Mr. Rosny, with his broken-down house and debts, than they did of him with all his money. So he set to work and got him cinched."

"The old man hates and despises him, and he's been fighting against it for a long time, but he seen what's coming to him and I guess he's made up his mind he'll have to stomach it. Brousseau's staked old Mr. Rosny's pride against his love, and I guess he's won his stake and won Mamzelle Madeleine into the bargain."

He rose. "That'll be all for tonight, Mr. Askew?" he asked. Hilary rose too. "Thanks, Mr. Connell," he said. "In the morning I shall ask you to show me around the place."

He didn't follow Lafe Connell inside the hotel, but sat upon the porch, musing. Lafe had enlightened him on several points. He doubted whether Lamartine had spoken anything approaching truth concerning the property, and he was sure that Morris and Brousseau were the company in whose behalf he had offered forty-five thou-

sand dollars. There would be need of a good many explanations from Morris. Yet Hilary felt instinctively that it was Brousseau, not Morris, with whom he would have to contend. On the face of the soft night rose the face of Madeleine Rosny painted with surprising clearness. He saw the blue of her eyes, the curve of her flushed cheek, the dignity and gentleness and pride that blended in her looks. If ever he had any quarrel with Brousseau, he would show him—

Then he cursed himself for a fool, and, entering the hotel, took his lamp and went up to his room.



He Saw the Blue of Her Eyes, the Curve of Her Flushed Cheek, the Dignity and Gentleness and Pride That Blended in Her Looks.

A girl's hostility adds zest to the game.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SAW COSSACK AT HIS BEST

Writer Waxes Enthusiastic Over Camp of Tired Men, "Soldiers to the Manner Born." If you have read "Tarus Bulba" Gogol's story of the Cossack, then you will know what I mean when I say that last night I had a chance to see a real picture of the Cossack, writes William V. Duncan in the Yale Review. It was at sunset when over the tops of the white birches the heavens looked as if on fire, while to the right the clouds were like waves rolling over a sea of plink. I heard a shout, "The Cossacks are coming," and through the opening in the woods rode these lovers of war. The horse and the rider are one; both were tired, but that if there was something that told you that the bugle had blown all the tiredness would have fallen away. They are soldiers to the manner born. War is life to them. If a thing is worth having it is worth fighting for. Even when they gathered in groups around the common palls and borrowed one another's spoons to eat the common meal their bearing was that of soldiers. Pigs can feed from a trough and you go away disgusted, but when you see these fellows back from a fight, delving into their mess, you stand to admire. Their leader was fully six feet seven inches tall, with a beard that said he was Russian of the Russians. All were well-formed, strong men, hardened to the out of doors. Their eschelon was not there, so they made themselves at home for the night on the ground. It was a sight to remember as our train pulled out of from the station, those Cossack groups around the fire, singing the songs of war in which their spirits revel.

Flower Show Old Institution. The flower shows of English villages have an ancient origin, though few people may ever stop to give the matter a thought. The ancestry of the floral fete reaches back to the days of Ovid, the poet. As for when flower shows were first held in England, it cannot be certainly known, but it is a fact that if they did not actually introduce them, the worsted manufacturers from Flanders, fleeing the wrath of Philip and Alva, in 1567, gave a fillip to the practice. To these people English gardens of Elizabeth's time owed such favorites as the gillyflower and the carnation.

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