

SERIAL STORY

The Girl from Tim's Place

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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CHAPTER I.

Chip was very tired. All that long June day, since Tim's harsh, "Come, out wid ye," had roused her to dally toil, until now, wearied and disconsolate, she had crept, barefoot, up the back stairs to her room, not one moment's rest or one kindly word had been hers.

Below, in the one living room of Tim's Place, the men were grouped playing cards, and the melody of their oaths, their laughter, the thump of knuckles on the bare table, and the pungent odor of pipes, reached her through the floor cracks. Outside the fireflies twinkled above the slow-running river and along the stump-dotted hillside. Close by, a few pigs dozed contentedly in their rudely constructed sty.

A servant to those scarce fit for servants, a menial at the beck and call of all Tim's Place, and laboring with the men in the fields, Chip, a girl of almost 16, felt her soul revolt at the filth, the brutality, the coarse existence of those whose slave she was.

And what a group they were! First, Tim Connor, the owner and master of this oasis in the wilderness, 60 miles from the nearest settlement; his brother, Mike, as coarse; their wives and a half a dozen children who played with the pigs, squealed as often for food, and were left to grow up the same way; and Pierre Lubec, the hired man, completed the score.

There was another transient resident here, an old Indian named Tomah, who came with the snow, and deserted his hut below on the river bank when spring unlocked that stream.

Two occasional visitors also came here, both even more objectionable to Chip than Tim and his family. One was her father, known to her to be an outlaw and escaped murderer in hiding; the other a half-breed named Bolduc, but known as One-Eyed Pete, a trapper and hunter whose abode was a log cabin on the Fox Hole, ten miles away. His face was horribly scarred by a wildcat's claws; one eye-socket was empty; his lips, chin, and protruding teeth were always tobacco stained. For three months now, he had made weekly calls at Tim's Place, in pursuit of Chip. His wooing, as might be expected, had been a persistent leering at her with his one sinister eye, oft-repeated innuendoes and insinuations of lascivious nature, scarce understood by her, with now and then attempted familiarity. These advances had met with much the same reception once accorded him by the wildcat.

Both these visitors were now with the group below. That fact was of no interest to Chip, except in connection with a more pertinent one—a long conference she had observed between them that day. What it was about, she could not guess, and yet some queer intuition told her that it concerned her. Ordinarily, she would have sought sleep in her box-on-legs bed; now she crouched on the floor, listening.

For an hour the game and its melody of sounds continued; then cessation, the tramp of heavily shod feet, the light extinguished, and finally—silence. A few minutes of this, and then the sound of whispered converse, low yet distinct, reached Chip from outside. Cautionously she crept to her window.

"I gif you one hundred dollars now, for ze gal," Pete was saying, "an' one hundred more when you fotch her."

"It's three hundred dowp, I've told ye, or we don't do business," was her father's answer, in almost a hiss.

A pain like a knife piercing her heart came to Chip.

"But s'pose she run away?" came in Pete's voice.

"What, 60 miles to a settlement? You must be a damn fool!"

"An' if she no mind me?"

"Wal, thrash her then; she's yours."

"But I no gif so much," parleyed Pete; "I gif you one-feefty now, an' one hundred when she come."

"You'll give what I say, and be quick about it, or I'll take her out to-

morrow, and you'll never see her again; so fork over."

"And you fotch her to-morrow?"

"Yes, I told you." And so the bargain was concluded.

Only a moment more, while Chip sat numb and dazed, then came the sound of footsteps, as the two men separated, and then silence over Tim's Place.

And yet, what a horror for Chip! Sold like a horse or a pig to this worse than disgusting half-breed, and on the morrow to be taken—no, dragged—to the half-breed's hut by her hated father.

Hardly conscious of the real intent and object of this purchase, she yet understood it dimly. Life here was bad enough—it was coarse, unloved, even filthy, and yet, hard as it was, it was a thousand times better than slavery with such an owner.

And now, still weak and trembling from the shock, she raised her head cautiously and peeped out of the window. A faint spectral light from the rising moon outlined the log barn, the two log cabins, and pigsty, which, with the frame house she was in, comprised Tim's Place. Above and beyond where the forest enclosed the hillside, it shone brighter, and as Chip looked out upon the ethereal silvered view, away to the right she saw the dark opening into the old tote road. Up this they had brought her, eight years before. Never since had she traversed it; and yet, as she looked at it now, an inspiration born of her father's sneer came to her.

It was a desperate chance, a fool-hardy step—a journey so appalling, so almost hopeless, she might well hesitate; and yet, escape that way was her one chance. Only a moment longer she waited, then gathering her few belongings—a pair of old shoes, the moccasins Old Tomah had given her, a skirt and jacket fashioned from Tim's cast-off garments, a fur cap, and soft felt hat—she thrust them into a soiled pillow-case and crept down the stairs.

Once out, she looked about, listened, then darted up the hillside, straight for the tote road entrance. Here she paused, put on her moccasins, and looked back.

The moon, now above the tree-tops, shone full upon Tim's Place, softening and silvering all its ugliness and all its squalor. Away to the left stood



The Ever Present Menace of a Wilderness Assailed Her.

Tomah's hut, across the river, a shining path bright and rippled.

In spite of the awful dread of her situation and the years of her hard, unpaid, and oftentimes cursed toil, a pang of regret now came to her. This was her home, wretched as it was. Here she had at least been fed and warmed in winters, and here Old Tomah had shown her kindness. Oh, if he were only in his hut now, that she might go and waken him softly, and beg him to take her in his canoe and speed down the river!

But no! only her own desperate courage would now avail, and realizing that this look upon Tim's Place was the last one, she turned and fled down the path. Sixty miles of stony, bush-encumbered, brier-grown, seldom-traveled road lay ahead of her! Sixty miles through the somber silence and persistent menace of a wilderness, peopled only by death-intending creatures, yellow-eyed and sharp-fanged!

With only a sickening, soul-nauseating fate awaiting her at Tim's Place, and her sole escape this almost insane flight, she sped on. The faint, spectral rifts of moonlight through interlaced fir and spruce as often deceived as aided her; bending boughs whipped her, bushes and logs tripped her, sharp stones and pointed sticks bit her; she hurried over hillocks, wallowed through sloughs and dashed into tangles of briars, heedless of all except her one mad impulse to escape.

Soon the ever present menace of a wilderness assailed her,—the yowl of a wildcat close at hand; in a swamp, the sharp bark of a wolf; on a hillside above her, the hoot of an owl; and when after two hours of this desperate flight had exhausted her and she was forced to halt, strange creeping, crawling things seemed all about.

And now the erratic, fantastic belief of Old Tomah returned to her. With him the forest was peopled by a weird, uncanny race, sometimes visible and sometimes not—"spites," he called them, and they were the souls of both man and beast; sometimes good, sometimes evil, according as they had been in life, and all good or ill luck was due to their ghostly influences. They followed the hunter and trapper day and night, luring him into safety or danger, as they chose. They were everywhere, and in countless numbers, ready and sure to avenge all wrongs and reward all virtues. They had a Chieftain also, a great white spectre who came forth from the north in winter, and swept across the wilderness, spreading death and terror.

To Chip, educated only in the fantastic lore of Old Tomah, these terrors now became insanity breeding. She could not turn back—better death among the spies than slaving to the half-breed; and so, faint from awful fear, gasping from miles of running, she stumbled on. And now a little hope came, for the road bent down beside the river, and its low voice seemed a word of cheer. Into its cool depths she could at least plunge and die, as a last resort.

Soon an opening showed ahead, and a bridge appeared. Here, for the first time, on this vantage point, she halted. How thrice blessed those knotted logs now seemed! She hugged and patted them in abject gratitude. She crawled to the edge and looked over into the dark, gurgling water. Up above lay a faint ripple of silver. Here, also, she could see the moon almost at the zenith, and a few flickering stars.

A trifle of courage and renewal of hope now came. Her face and hands were scratched and bleeding, clothing torn, feet and legs black with mud. But these things she neither noticed nor felt—only that blessed bridge of logs that gave her safety, and the moon that bade her hope.

Then she began to count her chances. This landmark told her that five miles of her desperate journey had been covered and she was still alive. She began to calculate. How soon would her escape be discovered, and who would pursue her? Only Pete, her purchaser, she felt sure, and there was a possible chance that he might return to his cabin before doing so. Or perhaps he might sleep late, and thus give her one or two hours more of time.

And now cheered by this trifling hope and lessening sense of danger, her past life came back. Her childhood in a far-off settlement; the home always in a turmoil from the strange men and women ever coming and going; the drinking, swearing, singings, at all hours of the night, her constant fear of them and wonder who they were and why they came. There were other features of this disturbed life: frequent quarrels between her father and mother; curses, tears, and sometimes blows, until at last after a night more hideous than any other her mother had taken her and fled. Then came a long journey to another village and a new life of peace and quietness. Here it was all so different—no red-shirted men to be afraid of, no loud-voiced women drinking with them. She became acquainted with other children of her own age, was sent to school and taken to church. Here, also, her mother began to smile once more, and look content. For two years, and the only ones Chip cared to recall, she had been a happy schoolgirl, and then came a sudden, tragic end to it all. Of that she never wished to think. It was all so horrible, and yet so mercifully brief.

The one friend life held, her mother, had been brought home, wounded to death amid the whirling wheels of the mill where she worked; there were a few hours of agonized dread as her life ebbed away, a whisper or two of love and longing, and then the sad farewell made doubly awful by her father's frowning face and harsh voice. At its ending, and in spite of her fears and tears, she was now borne away by him. For days they journeyed deeper and deeper into a vast wilderness, to halt at last at Tim's Place.

Like a dread dream it all came back now, as she lay there on this one flat spot of security—the bridge—and listened to the river's low murmur.

All through her mad flight the wilderness had been ghostly and spectral in the moonlight; now it had become lost in inky blackness, yet alive with demoniac voices. All the goblin forms and hideous shapes of Old Tomah's fancy were rushing and leaping about. Now high up in the treetops, now deep in the hollows, they screamed and shrieked and moaned.

And now, just as this fierce battle of sound and spectral shape was at its worst, and Chip, a hopeless, helpless mite of humanity, crouched low upon the bridge, suddenly a vicious growl reached her, and raising her head she saw at the bridge's end two gleaming eyes!

CHAPTER II.

Martin Frisbie and his nephew Raymond Stetson, or Ray, were cutting boughs and carrying them to two tents standing in the mouth of a bush-choked opening into the forest. In front of this Angle, Martin's wife, was placing tin dishes, knives and forks

upon a low table of boards. Upon the bank of a broad, slow-running stream, two canoes were drawn out, and halfway between these and the table a camp-fire burnt.

Here Levi, Martin's guide for many trips into this wilderness, was also occupied, intently watching two pails depending from bending wambecks, a coffee-pot hanging from another, and two frying-pans, whose sputtering contents gave forth an enticing odor.

Twilight was just falling, the river murmured in low melody, and a few rods above a small rill entered it, adding a more musical tinkle.

Soon Levi deftly swung one of the pails away from the flame with a hook-stick and speared a potato with a fork.

"Supper ready," he called; and then as the rest seated themselves at the table, he advanced, carrying the pail of steaming hot potatoes on the hooked stick and the frying-pan in his other hand.

The meal had scarce begun when a crackling in the undergrowth back of the tent was heard, and on the instant there emerged a girl. Her clothing was in shreds, her face and hands were black with mud, streaks of blood showed across cheek and chin, and her eyes were fierce and sunken.

"For God's sake give me suthin' to eat," she said, looking from one to another of the astonished group. "I'm damn near starved—only a bite," she added, sinking to her knees and extending her hands. "I hain't eat nothin' but roots 'n' berries for three days."

Angie was the first to recover. "Here," she said, hastily extending her plate, "take this."

Without a word the starved creature grasped it and began eating—as only a desperate, hungry animal would, while the group watched her.

"Don't hurry so," exclaimed Martin, whose wits had now returned. "Here, take this cup of coffee."

Soon the food vanished and then the girl arose. "Sit down again, my poor child," entreated Angie, who had observed the strange scene with moist eyes, "and tell us who you are and where you came from."

"My name's Chip," answered the girl, bluntly, "an' I'm runnin' away from Tim's Place, 'cause dad sold me to Pete Bolduc."

"Sold—you—to—Pete—Bolduc," exclaimed Angie, looking at her wide-eyed. "What do you mean?"

"He did, sartin'," answered the girl, laconically. "I feerd 'em makin' the bargain, 'n' I fetched three hundred dollars."

Martin and his wife exchanged glances.

"Well, and then what?" continued Angie.

"Wal, then I waited a spell, till they'd turned in," explained the girl, "and then I lit out. I knowed 'twas 60 miles to the settlement, but 'twas moonlight 'n' I chanced it. I've had an awful time, though, the spies hev chased me all the way. I was jist makin' a nestle when I seed yer light, an' I crept through the brush 'n' peeked. I seen ye wa'n't nobody from Tim's Place, 'n' then I cum out. I guess you've saved my life. I was gittin' dizzy."

It was a brief, blunt story whose directness bespoke truth; but it revealed such a pigsty state of morality at this Tim's Place that the little group of astonished listeners could scarce finish supper or cease watching this much-sold girl.

"And so your name is Chip," queried Angie at last. "Chip what?"

"Chip McGuire," answered the wail, quickly; "only my real name ain't Chip, it's Vera; but they've allus called me Chip at Tim's Place."

"And your father sold you to this man?"

"He did, 'n' he's a damn bad man," replied Chip, readily. "He killed somebody once, an' he don't show up often. I hate him!"

"You mustn't use swear words," returned Angie; "it's not nice."

The girl looked abashed. "I guess you'd cuss if you'd been sold to such a nasty-looking man as Pete," she responded. "He chaws terbaccer 'n' lets it drizzle on his chin, 'n' he hain't but one eye."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ARE LOFTIEST OF MINES.

Worked by Incas and Now to Be Opened by New Company.

It is thought that the old Caylloma silver mines in Peru are probably situated at a greater elevation than any other considerable mines in the world. Their altitude varies between 14,000 and 17,000 feet. They were worked by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, and before that, it is believed, by the Incas. An English company is now preparing a hydro-electric plant for them. This plant will be situated at an altitude of between 15,000 and 16,000 feet. It will derive its power from a waterfall on the Santiago river, and in a dry season from Lake Huallacho, one of the sources of the Amazon. The power will be transmitted by cable about three miles. At the highest mines the pressure of the atmosphere is only eight and one-half pounds a square inch, and water boils 24 degrees below the ordinary boiling point. —Youth's Companion.

Knives, Spoons and Forks.

Knives and spoons are of great antiquity, but the use of forks is comparatively modern. Indispensable as these adjuncts of the table may now appear, they had not become at all general at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Cosmopolitan City.

The city of Eperjes in Hungary is one of the most cosmopolitan places in the world. Nearly every one who lives there speaks six distinct languages and several dialects, and has to use them all in order to do anything.

Manila is Thriving.

According to the census of the board of health, Manila has 11,022 houses of strong material, 15,142 of light material, and 3,311 of mixed material, a total of 29,745 houses. The population is 223,542, says the Manila Daily Bulletin.

Both Worlds.

The grand difficulty is to feel the reality of both worlds, so as to give each its due place in our thoughts and feelings, to keep our mind's eye and our heart's eye fixed on the land of promise, without looking away from the road we are to travel toward it.—Augustus Hare.

Chicken May Die of Grief.

Two chickens were hatched from one egg last spring on the farm of John Paulus in Bethlehem, Pa. Both developed fully and became great pets of the family. One of the twin chickens was crushed to death. Since then the other twin has refused to eat and Paulus fears it will die of grief.

Couldn't Take the Job.

A middle west graduate came to New York to seek employment, says Success. Through a friend he received an offer of a place as shipping clerk to a certain firm. In reply he wrote as follows: "I regret that I cannot accept your kind offer of the position of shipping clerk, but the fact is that I am always sick when on the water."

Advised to See Real France.

C. A. Le Neveu, in Modern Language Teaching, says: "If tourists would go farther on into old France, into the old provincial life, instead of remaining quartered in Paris or some other big, fashionable town, they would really learn to know what French is like. They would feel they have wrongly judged us, and they would acknowledge that Frenchwomen are good wives, good mothers and good friends."

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