

SERIAL STORY

The Girl from Tim's Place

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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SYNOPSIS.

Chip McGuire, a 16-year-old girl living at Tim's place in the Maine woods is sold by her father to Pete Bolduc, a half-breed. She runs away and reaches the camp of Martin Fribble, occupied by Martin, his wife, nephew, Raymond Stetson, and guides. She tells her story and is cared for by Mrs. Fribble. Journey of Fribble's party into woods to visit father of Mrs. Fribble, an old hermit, who has resided in the wilderness for many years. When camp is broken Chip and Ray occupy same canoe. The party reach camp of Mrs. Fribble's father and are welcomed by him and Cy Walker, an old friend and former townsman of the hermit. They settle down for summer's stay. Chip and Ray are in love, but no one realizes this but Cy Walker. Strange canoe marks found on lake shore in front of their cabin. Strange smoke is seen across the lake. Martin and Levi leave for settlement to get officers to arrest McGuire, who is known as outlaw and escaped murderer. Chip's one woods friend, Tomah, an Indian, visits camp. Ray believes he sees a bear on the ridge. Chip is stolen by Pete Bolduc and escapes with her in a canoe. Chip is rescued by Martin and Levi as they are returning from the settlement. Bolduc escapes. Old Cy proposes to Ray that he remain in the woods with himself and Anni and trap during the winter, and he concludes to do so. Others of the party return to Greenville, taking Chip with them. Chip starts to school in Greenville, and finds life unpleasant at Aunt Comfort's, made so especially by Hannah. Old Cy and Ray discover strange tracks in the wilderness. They penetrate further into the wilderness and discover the hiding place of the man who had been sneaking about their cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

Then came another surprise, for suddenly Old Cy caught sight of a man just emerging from behind a rock fully ten rods from the rising smoke; he stooped, lifted a canoe into view, advanced to the shore, slid it halfway into the water, returned to the rock, picked up a rifle, then pushed the canoe off, and, crossing the lake, vanished into the outlet.

The two watchers on the ridge exchanged glances.

"He's goin' to tend his traps, an mebbe oum," Old Cy said at last, and then led the way back to their bark shack. Here he halted, and placing one hand scoop-fashion over his ear, listened intently until he caught the faint sound of a paddle touching a canoe gunwale. First slightly, then a more distinctive thud, and then less and less until the sound ceased.

"The coast's clear," he added, now in an exultant whisper, "an' while the old cat's away we'll take a peek at his den."

A hurried gathering of their few belongings was made, the canoe was shoved into the lagoon, and no time was lost until the lake was crossed and they drew along side of where the smoke was still rising in a thin film. No landing was possible here, for the shore was a sheer face of upright slate, and only where this lone trapper had launched his canoe could they make one.

From here a series of outcropping slate ledges rose one above another, and between them and parallel to the shore, narrow, irregular passages partially closed by broken rock. It was all of slaty formation, jagged, serrated and gray with moss.

Following one of these passages, Old Cy and Ray came to the ledge out of which the smoke was rising from a crevasse. It was a little lower than one in front, perhaps 40 feet in breadth, double that in length, and of a more even surface. At each end was a short transverse passage hardly wide enough to walk in, and a few feet deep.

And now, after a more careful examination of the crevasse out of which the thin film of smoke rose, Old Cy began a search. Up and down each narrow passway he peeped and peered, but nowhere was a crack or cranny to be found in their walls. In places they were as high as his head, sheer faces of slate, then broken, serrated, moss-coated, or of yellow, rusty color. Here and there a stunted spruce had taken root in some crack, and over, back from the topmost ledge, this green enclosure began and con-

tinued up the low mountain. Here, also, in a sunny nook below this belting tangle of scrub spruce, were ample signs of a trapper's occupation in the way of pelts stretched upon forked sticks and hanging from a cord crossing this niche. They were of the usual species found in this wilderness,—a dozen muskrat, with a few mink and otter skins and one lynx.

Another sign of human presence was also noted, for here a log showing ax marks, with split wood and chips all about, was seen.

"Some o' them pelts is oum," Old Cy ejaculated, glancing at the array, "an' I've a notion we'd best hook on to 'em. Mebbe not, though," he added a moment later, "it might git us into more trouble."

But Ray was getting more and more uneasy each moment since they had landed there. It seemed to him a most dangerous exploit, and while Old Cy had hunted over this curious confusion of slate ledges and stared at the rising film of smoke, Ray had covertly watched the lake's outlet.

"I don't think we'd better stay here much longer," he said at last. "We can't tell how soon that man may come back and catch us."

"Guess you're right," Old Cy asserted tersely, and after one more look at the inch-wide crack out of which the smoke rose, he led the way to their canoe.

"That's a cave thar, sure's a gun," he muttered, as they skirted the bold shore once more, "an' that smoke's comin' out on't. I wish I dared stay here a little longer 'n hunt fer it."

Old Cy was right, there was a cave there beneath the slate ledge—in fact, two caves; and in one, safe and secure, as its owner the notorious McGuire believed, were concealed the savings of his lifetime.

More than that, so near do we often come to an important discovery and miss it, Old Cy had twice leaned against a slab of slate closing the entrance to this cave and access to a fortune, the heritage of Chip McGuire.



Closed in a Death-Grapple.

Ray's fear, while well founded, were needless, however. McGuire—for it was this outlaw whom they had ample reason to avoid—was many miles away. And yet so potent was the sense of danger, that neither Old Cy nor Ray thought of food, or ceased paddling one moment, until they had crossed the vast swamp and once more pulled their canoe out at the point where they had entered it the day before.

Here a brief halt for food and rest was taken; then they shouldered their light craft and started for Birch Camp.

In the meantime another canoe was ascending this winding stream, and long before nightfall, Pete Bolduc, sure that he was on the trail of McGuire, entered the ledge-bordered lake.

CHAPTER XV.

To trail an enemy who is never without a rifle and the will to use it, requires courage and Indian cunning as well. Pete Bolduc had both, and after observing the many signs of a trapper's presence in the swamp, he knew, after he crossed it and reached this lake, that somewhere on its shores his enemy, McGuire, had his lair.

He paused at the outlet, as did Old Cy, to scan every rod of its rocky shores, not once, but a dozen times.

No thought of the blessed harmony of lake, sky, and forest, or the sequestered beauty of this spot, came to the half-breed. Revenge and murder—two demons of his nature—were in his heart, and the Indian cunning that made him hide while he watched for signs of his enemy. The bare peak overlooking the lake soon impressed him as a vantage point, and after a half-hour of watchful listening he laid his rifle across the thwart, handy to grasp on the instant, and, seizing his paddle once more, crossed the lake to the foot of the peak.

To hide his canoe here, ascend this with pack and rifle, was the next move of this human panther, and here in a

sheltering crevasse he lay and watched for his enemy.

Two hours later, and just at sunset, McGuire returned to the lake.

As usual, he, too, paused at the outlet to scan its shores. He believed himself utterly secure here, and thought no human being was likely to find this lakelet. But for all that, he was watchful. Some exploring lumberman or some pioneer trapper might cross this vast swamp and find this lake during his absence.

A brief scrutiny assured him that he was still safe from human eyes, and he crossed the lake.

From the bare cliff a single keen and vengeful eye watched him.

As usual, also, McGuire made his landing at a convenient point, some 50 rods from his cave, and carried his canoe up and turned it over, back of a low-jutting ridge of slate. He skinned the half-dozen prizes his traps had secured that day and followed a shallow defile to his lair. Here his pelts were stretched, a slab of slate was lifted from its position in a deep, wide crevasse between two of these ledges, and McGuire crawled into his den.

Most of these movements were observed by the half-breed, who, watching ever while he plotted and planned how best to catch his enemy unawares, saw him emerge from amid the ledges again, go down to the lake, return with a pail of water, and vanish once more.

All this was a curious proceeding, for he, like Old Cy, had expected to find McGuire occupying some bark shelter, and even now he supposed there was one among this confusion of bare rocks.

Another surprise soon came to this distant watcher, for he now saw a thin column of smoke rise from a ledge and continue in varying volume until hidden by twilight.

And now, secure in his cave and quite unconscious of the watcher with murderous intent who had observed his actions, McGuire was enjoying himself. He had built a little slate fireplace within his cave. A funnel of the same easily fitted material carried the smoke up to a long, inch-wide fissure in the roof. He had a table of slate to eat from, handy by a bed filled with moss and dry grass, also pine knots for needed light.

Opening into this small cave was a lesser one, always cool and dry, for no rain nor melting snow could enter it, and here was McGuire's pantry, and here also a half-dozen tin cans, safely hidden under a slab of slate, stuffed with gold and banknotes.

To still further protect this inner cave he had fitted a section of slate to entirely fill its entrance.

When the last vestige of sunset had vanished and twinkling stars were reflected from the placid lake, the half-breed descended from his lookout point, and, launching his canoe, followed close to the shadowed shore and landed just above where McGuire disembarked. Indian that he was, he chose the hours of night and darkness to crawl up to the bark shelter which he expected to find, his intention being to thrust a rifle muzzle close to his enemy's head and then pull the trigger.

But to do this required a long wait and extreme caution. His enemy surely had a camp-fire behind a ledge, and shelter as well. The smoke had seemed to rise out of a ledge, but certainly could not, and so—still unaware of McGuire's position, yet sure that he was amid these ledges, and near a shelter—Pete grasped his rifle and crept ashore.

It was too early to surprise his enemy—time to fall asleep must be allowed. Yet so eager was the half-breed to deal death to him, that he must needs come here to wait. No chances must be taken when he did crawl up to his victim, for a false step or the rattle of a loose stone, or his form outlined against the starlit sky as he crawled over a ledge, might mean death to him instead of McGuire. And so, crouching safely in a dark nook above the landing, Pete waited, watched and listened.

One hour passed—it seemed two—and then the half-breed crept stealthily up to where the smoke had been seen. Not by strides, or even steps, but as a panther would, lifting one foot and feeling where it would rest and then another, and all the while listening and advancing again.

It was McGuire's habit, while staying here, to look at the weather prospects each night, and also to obtain a drink of cool water before going to sleep.

Often when the evenings were not too cold, he would sit by the lake shore for a half-hour, smoking and watching its starlit or moon-glittering surface, and listening to the calls of night prowlers.

In spite of being an outlaw, devoid of moral nature, and one who preyed upon his fellow-man, he was not without sentiment, and the wild grandeur of these enclosing mountains, and the sense of security they gave, were pleasant to him. His life had been a harsh and brutal one. He had dealt in man's lust and love of liquor. He measured all humankind by his own standard of right and wrong, and believed that he must rob others or they would rob him. He had followed that belief implicitly from the start, and

would so long as he lived. He felt that every man's hand was against him, and no reproaches of conscience had resulted from his cold-blooded killing of an officer. Never once did the thought return of the few years when a woman's hand sought his in tenderness, nor any sense of the unspeakable horror he had decreed for his own child.

So vile a wretch seemed unfit for God's green earth; and yet the silence of night beside this lake, and the stars mirrored on its motionless surface, soothed and satisfied him.

He had now and then another impulse—to some day take his savings of many years, secreted here, and go to some other country, assume another name, and lead a different life.

And now, while an unsuspected enemy was waiting for him to enter a sleep that should know no waking, he left his cave and seated himself on a shelf-like projection close to the lake, which was deep here, and the ledge shore a sheer face rising some ten feet above the water.

One hour or more this strange compound of brute and man sat there contemplating the stars, and then he suddenly detected a sound—only a faint one, the mere click of one pebble striking another.

He arose and listened.

Soon another soft, crushing sound reached him. Some animal creeping along in the passage between the ledges, he thought.

He stepped quickly to the end of the shelf. On that instant a crouching form rose upward and confronted him.

He had one moment only, but enough to see a tall man a step below him, the next a flash of splitting fire, a stinging pain in one shoulder, and this human panther leaped upon McGuire!

But life was sweet, even to McGuire, and as he grasped and struck at this enemy in a blind instinct of self-preservation as both closed in a death grapple, one instant of awful agony came to him as a knife entered his heart—a yell of mingled hate and deadly fear, as two bodies writhed on the narrow shelf, a plunging sound, as both struck the water below—and then silence.

Death and vengeance were clasped in one eternal embrace.

CHAPTER XVI.

For two months life at Birch Camp much resembled that of a woodchuck or a squirrel. Now and then a day came when the crusted snow permitted a gum-gathering trip into the forest, or a few midday hours at ice fishing; and never were the first signs of spring more welcome than to those winter-bound prisoners. The wise counsel and patient example of Old Cy had not been lost upon Ray, either; and that winter's experience had changed him to an almost marvelous degree. He was no longer a moody and selfish boy, thinking only of his own privations, but more of a man, who realized that he had duties and obligations toward others, as well as himself.

With the returning sun and vanishing snow, animal life was once more astir, and a short season of trapping was again entered upon, and mingled with that a few days more of gum-gathering. It was brief and at a disadvantage, for ice still covered the lake, and until that disappeared no use of the canoes could be made.

Once well under way, however, spring returned with speed, the brooks began to overflow, the lake to rise, and one morning, instead of a white expanse of watery ice, it was a blue and rippled lake once more.

And now plans for Ray's return to Greenville were in order, and the sole topic of discussion. He was as eager as a boy anxious for the close of school, and for a double reason, which is self-evident.

It was agreed that Old Cy and himself should make the trip out together in two canoes, and convey their stores of gum and furs. At the settlement these were to be packed, to await later sale and shipment. Old Cy would then return to camp, and Ray would go on to Greenville.

A change in this plan came in an unexpected manner, however, for a few days before the one set for departure, Old Cy, always on watch, saw a canoe enter the lake, and who should appear but Levi, Martin's old guide.

"I've been cookin' up at a lumber camp on the Moosehorn," he explained, after greetings had been exchanged, "an' I thought I would make a trip up here an' call on ye 'fore I went out."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Cargoes Worth a Fortune.

It might be supposed that the great ocean liners bring in the most valuable cargoes. They don't. The little steamers that ply between here and the mighty Amazon river bring the richest cargoes that reach the port. It is safe to say that \$500,000 is the value of an average ocean liner's cargo. The steamship Graegene recently brought 4,369 cases of rubber. On a basis of \$500 per case this alone was worth \$2,184,500. This is outside the value of the skins, nuts and cocoa on board. Sometimes the ships bring egret plumes that are worth a fortune.

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