

The Free Traders

By Victor Rousseau

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(Continued from last week)

CHAPTER XVII

Rathway Takes Thought of His Spoils

Rathway laughed like a hyena as he saw Lee disappear in the swift waters of the torrent. He spun about and struck the pistol from Joyce's hands, pulled the girl to him, and crushed her brutally against his breast.

And Joyce, overcome by this climax of the night's work, suddenly relaxed in his arms and fainted.

Rathway laid her down on the sand and looked at her in perplexity.

He discovered that he was somewhat in the same situation as the fox with the sack of corn and the goose.

If he carried the girl through the tunnel and left her while he went back for the gold she might escape him.

On the other hand, if he left her in the cave while he carried the gold away, she might fling herself into the stream in her despair. And someone might take the gold.

The only thing for Rathway to do was to remove the gold and the girl simultaneously. He carried the bag of gold to the cave's mouth, but in spite of his great strength, the weight was terrific. He recoiled himself to his labors, however, by the reflection that the bag contained a fortune.

Then, returning to Joyce, he carried her to the bag and set her down beside it.

It was fortunate for him that Joyce remained unconscious, or he would have been helplessly handicapped in his maneuvers. Cursing and struggling first with the bag and then with the girl, Rathway at last got them to the rock at the foot of the tunnel which Lee had so indiscreetly pointed out to him.

Then arose the most difficult problem of all. Either the girl or the gold would have to be left on the upper side of the tunnel while he went back for the other. And during his absence—Rathway shuddered at the thought of any prowler coming along and making off with the treasure.

He was not convinced in his mind that his sides had not followed him.

Rathway chose to leave the girl in safety. It was the greater of his two passions. Gathering Joyce in his arms, he essayed the ascent of the cliff.

How he got to the tunnel's entrance he hardly knew afterward. It was a feat which only the spur of triumph enabled him to accomplish. He had to hold on with both hands while gripping the girl with the insides of his arms.

At length, however, he did succeed in reaching the tunnel's mouth, dragging himself through, and pulling Joyce through after him. The ascent of the rock ladder was trifling in comparison.

He looked at Joyce. She was still in a condition of profound unconsciousness. Breathing an unvoiced prayer to whatever gods controlled his soul, that she would not awake, Rathway laid her down between the monolith and the rocking stone, and went back for the gold.

This job of hoisting the heavy bag up the side of the cliff, required less dexterity, but every ounce of strength that he possessed. Inch by inch, straining and scrambling up the rocky wall, Rathway pushed it before him until, bruised by the impact of the treasure, he got it safely within the tunnel, and thence to the rocking stone above.

He stopped to breathe. He wiped the sweat from his face. He was not very far from dawn. He must have spent hours on that hideous task.

Then, carrying the bag and the girl alternately, he pushed on toward the house. He wakened his aides with a yell. They came staggering out, drunk and half asleep.

"Start up the engine, Kramer," he shouted. "We'll have to be on our way by daylight. Gimme a drink!"

He gulped down half a bottle of his own liquor. The reaction after his incredible labors, the possession of the gold, the supreme triumph of that night excited him. But he was anxious to get away as soon as possible.

At Siston lake, which was only a few hours' journey by motor boat, he would be in his own retreat. He could wait till noon to enjoy success. He gazed as he looked down at the unconscious girl.

Something had gone wrong with the engine, and Rathway fussed and fumed while Kramer, the mechanic, was repairing it. The packs were got together, the engine overhauled. Rathway placed the bag of gold dust in the middle of the boat, and carried Joyce to it. He laid her down, and they pushed off.

Joyce had fallen into a profound sleep, stretched out her arms.

"Lee, dent," she murmured.

She opened her eyes and looked into Rathway's vulpine face. She screamed. She struggled. She remembered.

She fought like a mad woman, and Rathway was forced to call for a rope. He tied her ankles together and fastened her arms to her sides. He passed the rope around one of the cleats. In spite of her bonds she

struggled so that it was all Rathway could do to keep her from tilting the boat over. She screamed continually and tried to throw herself over the side.

At last she stopped, however, and lay still from exhaustion. She never renewed her struggles. She lay in the bottom of the boat with her eyes closed, drawing in convulsive breaths. Despite his triumph and his anticipations, Rathway was afraid of her. He wondered what was going on inside her mind.

It was about noon when they reached the promontory.

Rathway, preceded by Pierre and Shorty with the gold—carried the girl across the neck of land to an isolated hut about three hundred yards away, following a secret passage among the reeds. He laid her down upon the camp bed. Joyce lay rigid, looking at him with dilated pupils, and still drawing in those shuddering breaths. Rathway went out with a sigh of relief; he was still more afraid of her in that condition.

Another person he feared was Estelle, and it was with relief he learned that she was not at the promontory. Estelle had odd ways of wandering alone about the country. Rathway was glad of this temporary respite. Going to the stables, a shanty with two stalls close by, where he kept two horses and fodder for use in unexpected emergency, he saw that one of the animals was missing. No doubt Estelle had gone out riding.

Estelle's personality was a stronger one than Rathway's. He could never covet her by violence, as he coveted his men; on the contrary, he feared her lashing tongue when she was aroused.

He had seen Pierre, Shorty, and Kramer gloating over the gold, and he knew that he would have short shrift if once his men suspected that he was unable to keep it against them, or if they trusted each other sufficiently to combine against him.

That was why he had removed it to the hut in the swamp, approachable only by a single narrow track.

There were six other men at the promontory, one of them, the man whom Lee had shot through the hand, being still disabled. Rathway set the whole lot on various jobs, to keep them busy during the remainder of the day. He knew that they would be talking about the gold at night, but he was making his own plans. And, left alone, he paced the track, now glancing over the gold, now over Joyce who still lay silent on the bed, her lips compressed, and that awful look in her eyes.

He went to her side and cut the bonds that bound her. There was no need to guard her; she could not escape him. Joyce sat up slowly, still looking at him in that terrible way. He could not face her eyes. He felt helpless before her. He needed two allies—night and whisky.

"Come, dearie," he began, in a voice that was meant to be placable, "you know everything I've done has been out of love for you—"

"Murderer!" Rathway trembled before her outstretched finger. He had thought to have her at his mercy; she seemed to have him at hers.

"Come, now, my dear, if I had to treat you rough—"

"Murderer!"

"He was pulling a gun on me. He fell into the stream himself. I didn't hit him."

"You—murderer!"

Rathway beat a retreat. Her eyes were blazing like a panther's. He couldn't understand his fear of her. He crossed the neck, went into his hut, and began drinking. His mind was muddled, and worse, his will was wavering. That girl was bad enough—then there would be Estelle to face.

Curse those women! The mental picture of Joyce rose up before his eyes. She had never seemed so desirable. He saw her unconscious in the mine again, with her short, fair hair hanging about her neck, her eyes closed, helpless. Curse her! Why had he only been thinking of the gold? He had had her at his mercy then.

He looked cautiously into the hut again. Joyce was still sitting on the bed, still as a carved statue. Rathway was beginning to be afraid that she was going mad. If she would only give him the chance, he wanted to tell her that he would share the gold with her. Why couldn't she be reasonable? It was that d—d Anderson! How long would she be thinking of him? Weeks, perhaps.

His suspicions of Joyce and Anderson lashed him, and he raged all the afternoon, abusing his men, and giving them unheard-of tasks. He had the boats cleaned, the engine overhauled, a drum of gasoline placed in the motor boat. He sent some food to Joyce. The men grumbled and went about their work sullenly. Rathway fancied he saw looks passing between them, as if they had some secret understanding. He believed they were conspiring against him. And where the devil was Estelle?

In spite of the hate that he now felt for her, he turned to her in his thoughts in time of difficulty. Curse the woman! She was getting too strong a hold on him! He must send her packing.

His desire for Joyce was a constant goad to him. But he was still afraid of her. He must give her time to weaken. It was not dark enough. And he had not drunk enough.

At nightfall the men began a carousal, gathering in a hollow between the huts, protected by a skin roof and sides, but open in front, where a huge fire was kindled. Usually Rathway kept liquor from them, except when on long journeys and for the weekly debauch which he permitted, but now they were openly defying his rigid rule. The possession of the gold had disintegrated everything.

For Rathway, too, he cared no longer. The drunker his followers became, the better for the plans that were condensing in his mind.

As he passed, one of the men defiantly held up a bottle, an act that would have brought swift physical retribution under other circumstances. A man at his side dashed it out of his hand, whispering in his ear. The bottle smashed, and the spirit ran out on the ground. Rathway affected not to notice the incident.

Another man, staggering out of a hut, lurched past him with a mumbled gibe. Rathway affected not to notice that either. Let the fools weave their halter!

He went into his own hut and swallowed a cupful of whisky. It helped to steady his nerves. He crossed the neck and made his way to the hut where Joyce was. It was nearly dark now, and through the darkness he could see her sitting where he had left her, her hands folded in her lap. Fear of her sprang up in him again, and with the fear unreasoning fury. Hate and love left him neutral for the moment, so strongly they contended within him.

The girl did not turn her head, and he steered a wide course of the bed, edging sidewise toward the sack of gold dust. Picking it up, he made his way quickly outside. With a great effort he managed to hoist it upon his back, and staggering along, almost bent double by his burden, he made his way among the reeds until he reached the shore of the lake, a few yards from where the motor boat lay beached at the end of the broken parapet.

He laid the bag down in the swamp growth. He felt more at ease now.

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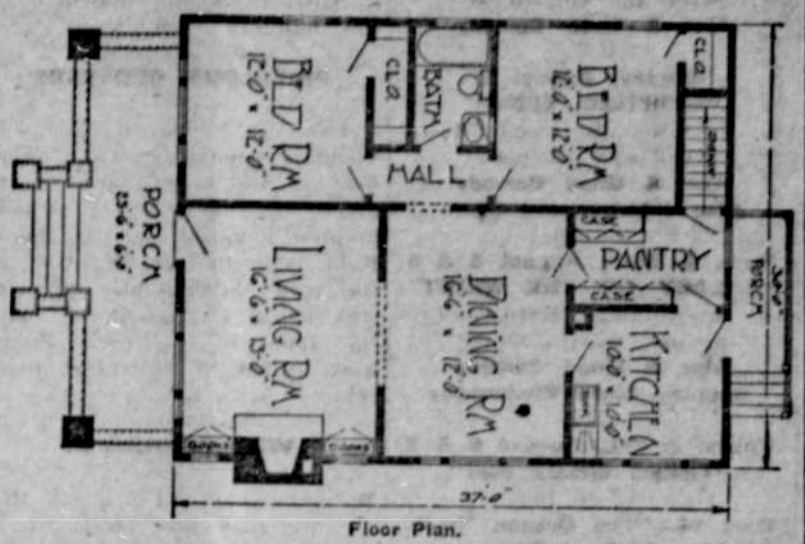
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Comfortable Five-Room Bungalow Makes Desirable Country Home



By WILLIAM A. RADFORD

Mr. William A. Radford will answer questions and give advice. FEES OF COST on all problems pertaining to the subject of building, for the readers of this paper. On account of his wide experience as editor, author and manufacturer, he is, without doubt, the highest authority on the subject. Address all inquiries to William A. Radford, No. 1817 Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Ill., and only inclose two-cent stamp for reply.

Two things which are essential to make a country home complete are a porch and a fireplace, and these must be something more than mere architectural features. They must be the sort of features which invite constant use by every member of the family.

A broad porch with its comfortable porch swing and easy chairs offers an inviting prospect as a spot where the family may enjoy the cool evening breeze after a strenuous day of work. It is the rest and recreation room of the summer time.

When the first chilly days of fall, with their prophecy of many long winter evenings ahead, have displaced the heat of summer, the family naturally turns to the living room with its big fireplace, with a cheerful wood fire tempering the atmosphere and forming a center for the family group.

Both of these features are prominent in the bungalow pictured here. The porch is broad and gives the impression that it will afford a cool retreat even on the hottest day of summer. Its brick work, together with that of the chimney at the side, put a finishing touch to the attractive exterior of this frame house. The timbering under the eaves is another

decorative feature which adds a bit of individuality without being overly ornamental. The lawn is well laid out and cared for and the plants and shrubbery about the house serve to break the foundation line.

The main entrance is exactly in the middle of the front and opens directly into the living room. Here is found the large brick fireplace which, with built-in bookcases at either side, dominates the room. It is well lighted with windows at the front and over the bookcases. A wide, open doorway communicates with the dining room behind it.

Beyond the dining room are the kitchen and pantry. The kitchen is on the outside of the house with plenty of windows to light it. It is connected by a door with the pantry which also opens into the dining room. In the pantry are found ample china closet and storage cases, built-in, to meet the needs of a good-sized family. From the pantry, also, a stairway leads down to the basement, while the rear door opens from the kitchen out to the back porch.

At the opposite side of the house are two bedrooms with a bathroom between. Both of these are good-sized rooms, 12 by 12 feet, and are provided with ample closets. A small hallway, reached by a door from the dining room, gives access to the bedrooms and bath.

All this is included within a space only 30 feet wide and 37 feet deep. The inclusion of so much of roominess and comfort within such small dimensions is the result of skillful planning, and this house will serve well for the family which desires a homelike bungalow.

Concealed Bed Adds More Room to House

Doctors tell us that sleeping porches do more to induce good health than any other one thing, yet home builders of moderate means cannot afford a sleeping porch and a sun porch, too.

It is quite a problem to decide which will place in your new home—a sleeping porch which can be used only at night, or a sun porch which can be used during the nice daylight hours of spring, summer and fall. If you could afford both rooms you probably would build them.

This problem is easily solved by using concealed beds—beds which are hidden in the daytime.

Concealed beds are nothing more or less than good-looking, comfortable, well-designed beds which can be put up out of the way. The head and foot ends come in most any design you desire—designs which are just as beautiful as the products of the large bed companies, now so widely advertised.

These beds are comfortable. Many types have coil springs and you can use your regular mattresses on them. When they are down and in use as a bed, no one need ever know that they disappear by day. When they are up no one will know they are in the room unless you tell them.

Land Values Should Govern Price of Home

Many home builders at the outset of construction work after purchase of a lot for the new home are confronted with a serious problem, according to leaders in the home-building world.

"The question most often asked is 'What value house should I build?'" these leaders say.

In answer to that question they say the safe general rule is that the cost of the building should approximately equal the value of the land on which it is constructed.

"While there are exceptions to this proportion, it forms a medium line of departure, applying most closely to business properties, whether the building is a \$5,000, one-story brick on a cheap lot or a \$50,000 office building in the highest-priced location," they say. "On a street where traffic is increasing rapidly a business building costing several times the value of the ground may be erected profitably."

Shalac Finish

A shalac finish on furniture or woodwork can be made fairly water-proof by the application of two or three coats of banana oil. The last coat of shalac must be sandedpaper as smooth as possible, and the liquid applied generously with a soft brush such as is used for varnish, says Popular Science Monthly. Each coat should be sandedpaper lightly. Shalac treated in this way dries with a dull finish, but can be brightened by the application of furniture wax.

Inside Woodwork

The colonial interior should be carried out with woodwork suitable for painting or enameling, in the fashion of our forefathers. White pine, being neutral in grain and color, is an excellent selection; birch is a close-grained hardwood which is also excellent for enameling, and may be mahogany-stained for colonial style.

Sheathing Paper

Sheathing paper of the liner kind should last as long as the building it protects, and should act as a perfect insulator.

CONSTANT

One step won't take you very far, You've got to keep on walking; One word won't tell folks who you are, You've got to keep on talking; An inch won't make you very tall, You've got to keep on growing; One little ad won't do it all, You've got to keep them going. A constant drop of water Wears away the hardest stone. By constant knowing, Towser Masticates the toughest bone The constant coming lover Carries off the blushing maid And the constant advertiser Is the one who gets the trade.

TECHNICALITIES

"Beg pardon, are you a prize fighter?"

"I'm a pugilist—not a prize fighter. I suppose you're one of them reporters?"

"No, I'm a journalist."

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Because of its germ-destroying properties, it quickly subdues the itching, cools the irritation and heals the eczema right up, leaving a clear, smooth skin in place of ugly eruptions, rash, pimples or roughness.

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SPECIAL NOTICE TO OUR PATRONS

In line with progressive methods of merchandising we wish to announce a new policy effective Aug. 1, 1926. From that date forward we will discontinue the giving of trading stamps.

We are doing this, first, because it is to the advantage of the shopping public to have their money's worth in merchandise itself. We want the merchandise, its assortment, its value, and its price, to be the reason for your buying it, not for any prize or premium.

Second, because modern business methods and the ethics of up-to-date merchants demand that the value shall be in the merchandise bought and not in some premium or prize.

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