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CEDAR SWAMP

by Michael J. Phillips

Illustrations by Henry Jay Lee
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THE LEADING CHARACTERS —

Edison Forbes, a young resident of Scottsdale, with an inherent craving for liquor, is held for the death of a woman who has been killed by a bootlegging truck. Circumstantial evidence points to Forbes and rather than tell the truth of the episode which would clear him but cast another friend in a bad light, he stands trial and is sentenced to a long term in prison. The governor of the state, an old friend of Eddie's father, believes him innocent and pardons him shortly after his arrival at the jail.

Scots Libbey, a worthless character, who has smashed his machine into another car, killing its lone occupant, a woman. Forbes' companion and Libbey quit the scene hurriedly, leaving the former alone to face a constable who reasons that Eddie, with the scent of whiskey about him must be connected in some way with the accident. Accordingly, Forbes is arrested.

Patsy Jane, Eddie's pretty wife, agrees that public sentiment runs too high against him. Accordingly they migrate up north to some land that has been in the family for years. Settled in their log cabin

Isiah Sealman, a shifty neighbor who is anxious to buy their land. Eddie learns that the back taxes amount to over eight hundred dollars but as he has five months to pay he decides to refuse Sealman's offer of \$1200 and try and get final title to his property—Sealman's offer having led him to think is very valuable. But things do not go well. Eddie drinks heavily from some bootlegger's potions, is forgiven by Patsy, but soon after falls in with the same gang, gets drunk, and wakes up in a freight car in Chicago—many miles away. Stricken with remorse he returns to his cabin but finds his wife has left and in her place a ruffian, who orders him out. A fight ensues in which Eddie finally knocks his opponent stone cold.

CHAPTER XIII.

Patsy Declares Herself

Eddie backed until he possessed himself of the rifle. It was loaded, he found. He straightened the unconscious man, thrust the table aside, and permitted the other to slide to the floor. He sat huddled against the logs by the fireplace. Rifle in hand, and with frequent glances at the blood-stained figure, Eddie looked about the cabin.

All his belongings had not been thrown out. His suitcase under one of the bunks had not been disturbed. Nothing of Patsy Jane's was to be found. She had taken the other bag and left the cabin before the usurper arrived. But it wasn't like Pat to go without a word. She had left a message. It should be here, if the motor-tramp had not destroyed it. His glance turned to the fireplace. There were ashes and blackened embers, a crumpled newspaper, and, yes, partially under the backlog, a little ball of white paper.

He smoothed it out. It was in pencil in Patsy's firm, thoroughbred writing, the letters pointed and well-shaped. "They has just told me in Long Portage," he read, "that you passed through town on a truck yesterday, drunk. So I cannot stay any longer. There is no use. You would ruin both of our lives. I know you can conquer this habit if you wish. Show that you care enough about me to lo it. I am going to town to work."

He looked up. The eyes of his late adversary, from a face that was a smear, were fixed upon him. Eddie laughed grimly, drew a chair forward and sat down, confronting the motor-tramp. The rifle was across his knees. "Found out who owns the house?" he asked.

"Yes," responded the man in a subdued tone. "You do. Can I have some water?"

"After we've talked. Who sent you here?"

"Nobody. I came along and found it—"

"You knew I was coming back. Why did you try to drive me out with a gun?"

The man did not speak. "Well," went on Eddie, "there's a law against trespass. Guess I'll turn you over to the sheriff."

The motor tramp looked up. "Don't do that, mister," he pleaded. "I'll go away from here. I won't bother you again, honest I won't! Let me go."

Eddie considered. Nothing particular could be gained by sending the

fellow to the county jail. If he had been hired to hold the cabin against its rightful owner, he was merely acting for someone else. He would not know that other's motives. It was possible, too, that he was telling the truth; that he was a wanderer who had stayed in the cabin before.

"All right," agreed Eddie, "I'll let you go. But you must get out of this country and stay out. First, clean up this place and put all my stuff back where you found it. If you try any funny-business—" His finger-nails clicked significantly on the stock of the rifle.

The man rose unsteadily. He washed the blood from his face at the pump and took a long drink of water. He ran the rusty car out of the garage, loaded it with his belongings and tied them in place with pieces of wire and rope. Piece by piece, he restored Eddie's furniture and bidding, after sweeping and scrubbing the floors and burning the litter in the fireplace.

When he left, his rifle accompanied him. But Eddie had taken the pains to remove all his cartridges. The victor washed his own hurts. He was relieved to find that the scalp wound was not serious. He trembled with weakness as he cooked and ate the first satisfying meal in days.

His strength flowed back after he had eaten. He prepared to set out for

town. It was a long walk, if he could get no ride, but he had to find Patsy Jane. He must convince her that this time his resolution was complete and sincere, that he would never drink again. The thought of her working in Long Portage made him writhe. All this little world, as all their former world of Scottsdale, must consider him a drunken failure.

He was surprised to note that this eventful day was but half spent. The sun was overhead when he took to the road. He had not walked far when he was overtaken by Milo Bull, foreman of the Davenport ranch.

"Hop in," invited Bull, stopping the car alongside. Eddie surveyed the lanky Bull with shrewd glances. He was freshly shaven, and a necktie was (Continued on Page 6)



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