

CEDAR SWAMP

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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, he stands trial, which results in a long prison sentence. He is soon pardoned, however, but back in Scottsdale he and

PATSY JANE, his trusting wife, agree that public sentiment against him is too strong so they migrate up north to some land that has been in the family for years. While there they form the acquaintance of

ISAIAH 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 it 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 out stone cold.

ied him. But Eddie had taken 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 several 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 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. The cad alongside Eddie surveyed the lanky Bull with shrewd glances. He was freshly shaven, and a necktie was knotted awkwardly under the collar of his flannel shirt.

"Mr. Davenport's coming in on the afternoon train, isn't he?" queried Eddie.

"Yeah," replied the foreman. "Got a telegram yestiday."

"Now, don't you go hiring too many men down town," commanded Eddie, smiling. "I'll be over bright and early tomorrow."

"All right, Forbes, if there's a job for anyone, you'll have it." He looked at Eddie quizzically. "Of course it's none of my business, but whose buzz saw did you tangle with?"

"Found a tramp in my cabin and he didn't want to leave," explained Eddie. "I've been away for a few days and when I came back he'd taken

This has not been an impulse. I've thought it all out. I don't dare go on any longer. Drinking is a habit with you. It will become more of a habit as the years go on until you are just a sot." She drew her breath sharply. "It will never be any easier to stop than it is now. You have a fight on your hands, a terrible fight. It must be made right away, if you're to win."

"But, Pat!" There was hurt and bewilderment in his eyes and in his tones. "I know it; I know all that. But the fight is won. I've told you I'll never touch another drop. When the craving for the stuff comes you must be there to help me fight it."

"She smiled sadly. "I've been with you before when the craving came and it didn't make any difference," she reminded him. "You're mistaken, Eddie. The fight isn't over. You can't win it with crutches. You must win it alone."

"But I can't win it without you!"

"You can't win it with me. That's been proven."

It was a wretched hour that followed, painful for both of them. Eddie pleaded with all the power of a lovable personality. It grew harder and harder to hold out against him, but somehow Patsy Jane did it. "No," she would say, "I don't dare. If I give in now, Eddie, you'll never win. I know it. You'll always be a drunkard, if poisonous liquor doesn't kill you before your time. Please don't ask me."

He gave over at last, his face sullenly clouded. "Well, when are you coming back?" he asked more unkindness in his tone than he had ever displayed toward her before. "When will this cure be complete?"

"Oh, I don't know—I don't know," she replied drearily. "There hasn't been a single month since our marriage that you haven't had liquor; that's your disease."

He echoed her words with angry incredulity. "Why don't you get a divorce and be done with it!" he demanded. "I think that's what you're aiming at!"

He slammed the door violently as he went out. But remorse overtook him before he reached the car. He went back to find Patsy bowed in tears over the typewriter. "I'm a beast, Pat," he said, remorsefully. "I'm not worth crying over. It was not true, that nasty thing I said, you're all right. It will have to be fought out. And I suppose I must do it alone. I can see you sometimes?"

She nodded and smiled through her tears.

H. P. Davenport decided to go thru with his ambitious schemes for the ranch, and Eddie was hired as one of his farmhands for the summer. The wages Davenport paid were above the usual scale. But he demanded superior service. There was plowing and planting in the older fields; the breaking up of new tracts with tractor; and when the planting was done, and before the needs of cultivating, the removal of great pine stumps.

As Eddie worked his mind engaged in endless calculations. Even if he saved every cent, sold the car and their household belongings, he could not, by several hundred dollars, raise enough money to pay the back taxes. But he had a vague idea that the money could be raised elsewhere. Perhaps the governor, or Davenport would advance it. Anyway he would not worry until worry was necessary.

He lived at the ranch but spent Sundays at his own cabin. Usually he left Davenport's early, so that he might have many hours at home. It was his first impulse to seek Patsy in town every Sabbath, but her pleadings and his own pride changed that. She had urged him to stay away, thus making it harder for both of them. So only occasionally he went to Long Portage for dinner with Patsy at the Kinnane's, returning to the wilderness in mid-afternoon.

One Sunday in late May he was at the cabin unusually early. He was replacing a broken board in the floor when he heard the ponderous throbbing of an automotive engine. He looked out curiously. A big truck, its load closely watched, swung down from the north. It made the turn in front of his door and went on toward Long Portage. Within a half hour there was another, and inside a similar lapse, another.

"Must be a liquor ship is at the landing," he thought, putting away his tools. "Guess I'll go up and see what she looks like."

Curiosity was not the only motive for going. He had not conquered the craving for liquor. At times the appetite swooped down like a tidal wave utterly submerging him. Then he clung to one anchor: The thought of Patsy Jane.

"You'll lose her if you slip," he warned himself. "You'll lose her forever. And what kind of a world would it be without her? She believes

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 with frequent glances at the blood-stained shirt. 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 backlock, 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 have 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 our lives. I know you can conquer this habit if you wish. Show that you care enough about me to do 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 on him. Eddie laughed grimly, drew a chair forward and sat down, confronting the motor-tramp, the rifle across his knees. "Found out who owns the hoose?" 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. 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 where you found it. If you try any funny business—" His fingernails 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 bedding, after sweeping and scrubbing the floors and burning the litter in the fireplace. When he left his rifle accompan-

A short distance from town they saw two motor cars ahead of them in the road. One, bulging like a fat man carrying many packages, Eddie recognized as the property of the tramp. When they came into view the other one headed toward them, was started and the conference which had been going was broken up. The east bound auto Eddie noted as it passed them, was occupied by Sealman.

He went first to Long Portage's largest garage. His car was there, the attendant told him readily, glancing curiously at his disfigured face the while. The missis had brought it in a week or so ago, she'd said he would call for it. "She's working in Mr. Kinnane's office," he added watching Eddie to see how the information would be received.

"Thank you," Eddie returned, non-committally, and drew back to cover the charges. He drove two blocks up the street to the one-story frame building which served Lawyer Joseph Kinnane as an office.

Mr. Kinnane was in court, Patsy Jane was alone in the sunshiny main room when he entered. The color left her face and her hand flew to her throat when she saw his disfigurement. "Eddie!" she breathed, "you're hurt!" But she kept the tall pine railing between them and recoiled when he attempted to take her in his arms.

"Not much," he replied with a rueful smile at the repulse. "A tramp had our house and didn't want to leave. But I got him out, finally."

She surveyed him anxiously. "Don't you want to hear about it—where I have been?" he went on, eager to justify himself, and restless under her grave, unsmiling eyes.

"Why, yes, Eddie."

So he told her everything. He blamed himself and made no excuses, though his boyish, disarming smile pleaded for him. "I know I've said this before," he concluded, "but this time I mean it. I'm through Pat. Never again. I'm off the booze for life. There's nothing in it from any standpoint."

Besides, the stuff's getting worse and worse. It's downright dangerous. But it won't catch me. I'll never take another drink. So you just quit her and come on back home. I'm sure of a job on the Davenport ranch tomorrow."

CHAPTER XIV
A New Job

"Poor kid," he rattled on, for her attitude nor her expression had not changed. "It must have been tough, that night alone in the house, not knowing where I was or what had become of me!" Concern and contrition overspread his face. "I'm a beast Pat, a selfish beast. But it's the last time. Where are you staying?"

"With Mr. and Mrs. Kinnane. They are nice old people."

"Well, we'll forget all this and start out on the right foot. I'll see Mr. Kinnane and explain—"

"No." The word stopped him in mid-sentence. "I can't do it, Eddie.

you can beat the booze. Show her she's right. She's worth fighting for. You're the luckiest man in the world that she loves you enough to give you a chance."

He had beaten the wave so far, because there was no liquor available when the appetite rolled the highest. There was none on the Davenport ranch, principally because Davenport hated it, and would not have on the place a man who drank. So victory of a sort rested with Eddie.

When the craving subsided, it left him, sometimes, sullen and resentful toward Patsy. He would tell himself that she was deserving of no consideration; that any fight for her sake was fruitless because she had abandoned him in time of need. This unreasonable mood soon passed, however. Then he would acknowledge that she was right. Love welled up anew, and he resolved to make the fight for her sake. If he did win, it would be for her.

But on this Sunday his heart beat recklessly as he left the house and went out along the lonesome road to the north. His eyes were aight, his step buoyant. There was in his air something of the fearful exhilaration that men exhibit as they go into battle.

Soon he passed a fourth truck. There were two on the seat in front, a third perched on the rear of the

load. All eyed him suspiciously as they jolted by. Another two miles he came on a fifth truck in the bottom of a little valley. His hands clenched involuntarily and blood surged in to his eyes. He recognized two of the three—Jake, the driver, and Culley, the big guard. They were the men who had given him drugged whiskey and locked him in the car bound for Chicago.

There was no retreating, for Culley had looked up and he recognition was mutual. He saw the guard's hand go swiftly to his hip pocket. He saw Culley speak cautiously out of the corner of his mouth. Whereat the other two men straightened and stood in an attitude of waiting, ready to snatch out a weapon if the necessity arose.

He decided on a course of action, and throttled the rage that possessed him. He brought a smile to his face. "Hello, there, sports!" he called gaily. "It's a long time since I saw you fellows. Where have you been?"

Continued next week

Some Americans oppose maintaining our merchant marine because they think it would be too expensive for us. A lot of Europeans oppose our merchant marine, too. But no one is innocent enough to believe that the Europeans oppose it because they think it might not be good for us.

The white man's burden is now the lawn-mower.—Minneapolis Journal.

The Father of Waters may have taken as an example the numerous other fathers who are stepping out these days.—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

Lindberg strikes us as a young man who never has to be called in the morning.—Detroit Free Press.

The Mississippi river, is another striking illustration of the evils of overproduction.—Milwaukee Journal.

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