

HOW TEDDY McCORK WON BACK HIS CLAIM

By J. Harmon Patterson.

There had been one or two good discoveries of silver on Oswald Lake, and as was usual there had been a great foregathering of prospectors.

I arrived after the first rush, and by dint of much searching had found some apparently good ground, on which I staked two claims and at once set to work prospecting them. In a rush such as this it is necessary to stake with all possible speed. If you waited to make a real discovery someone might run lines around you while you worked, so I lost no time in getting in my stakes.

Adjoining my claims was one which had a fairly good showing. I soon met the owner, an Irishman named Teddy McCork.

You do not wait to be formally introduced in the wilderness, and Teddy and I became fast friends inside of an hour. As he had no partner and I had none he removed his little tent to the small stream on which I was encamped, and for two weeks we cooked and ate together.

A goodly man to look at was Teddy, tall and straight as an arrow, with a shock of brown hair and a clear blue eye. His smile was contagious. He was very active and strong, and I often thought he would be a dangerous man in a fight.

"I've been offered two thousand dollars for the claim," he informed me one night by the camp fire, but I want a thousand pounds."

"Why the thousand pounds?" I inquired. He went into the tent and came out with a photo in his hand. "That's why," he replied.

It was the picture of a girl of about twenty and very pretty she was.

"And isn't she the little fairy," he remarked. "No night could be as black as her hair, no sky as blue as her eyes, and the cherries were not more red than her lips. Sure she is the prettiest and sweetest little maid in all Ireland, and if I had that thousand pounds I'd go back to her at once."

"Nothing less than a thousand do?" I asked.

"Her father turned me away as being too poor," was the reply, "but the dear girl promised to wait a hundred years for me."

* * * * *

A prospector is allowed thirty days after staking in which to record his claim. If he fails to do this it is liable to be jumped, that is, restaked, by someone else. If a man deliberately abandons his claim this restaking is not considered anything amiss, but the regular claim jumper is held in great detestation by all prospectors.

Some men are unprincipled enough to take any advantage possible of the error of another, either in staking or recording, with the intent to do him out of his lawful discovery; but the mining laws of the Province, though they may be far from perfect, are justly administered and will not allow any rogue to profit at the expense of an honest but ill-informed man if it can be helped.

Teddy had not recorded his claim, as he was anxious to get in as much work as possible while the weather was fine. As the thirty days were drawing to a close he set out for the recording office alone. He intended first to visit another claim he had staked on his way.

Time passed and Teddy did not return. I was a little anxious, but decided that he would have his claim recorded in any case.

In company with another prospector named Roland, I set out for the recording office, having found sufficient indication of silver to warrant recording my claim. While in the office I thought I would look up the record of Teddy's claim. His name did not appear; but on the ground where his claim should be appeared the name of Daw. I further saw that it had been restaked and recorded.

The date of the staking was sworn on the Saturday before I left. I had been over the claim on Sunday and it had not been restaked, and as Daw had sworn falsely I saw a chance for Teddy. But where was he to be found. I waited all of the next day. Then as Roland was in a hurry and as three other men whom we knew were going in we set out for camp.

* * * * *

The route we had to follow was not an easy one, being a succession of small shallow lakes and bad portages. On one of these we met Teddy.

"Where have you been all this time?" I inquired as we all put down our loads.

"Got lost," was his mournful reply. "I was not very sure of the way, and somehow I got astray and put in six hungry days hunting my way; but I'm out now and will just hustle in and record and be back next day."

"No use," I informed him, "it's restaked and recorded."

Teddy jumped to his feet. "The dirty claim-jumper," he shouted, "who is he?"

"Don't know," I replied, "only his name is Daw."

"That sucker," said one of the men. "Why he jumped a claim on me down in Burke, and I had the assessment work nearly all done, too."

"I'll do my assessment work on his face," said Teddy, wrathfully. "See if I don't. Jump my claim, will he. I'll teach him."

"You didn't record within the thirty days, Teddy," I said, "so that legally Daw had a right to restake, but he swore that he did it last Saturday. Now I was on the claim on Sunday and no restaking had been done. I can swear to it. This will put Daw out. All you have to do is to go in quietly restake the claim, present your certificate, and file a caution against Daw, and I am sure that you will win."

"Me go to law to get my own claim," was his reply, "and then give it to the lawyers. Not I. I'll choke it out of him."

"Suppose he won't fight?" I suggested.

"I think he will," said one of the men, "he's some scrapper himself."

But Teddy didn't care how great a scrapper he was. In vain we warned him that he might lose the claim altogether. Vengeance he would have and his claim as well.

"If nothing but a fight will do you," I suggested, "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll see this Daw if he is on the claim and try and get him to agree to fight you for it." I said it as a joke; but it was not taken as such. Teddy was most agreeable, and the men thought that Daw should be made to accept.