



WOODEN SPOIL

By Victor Rousseau. Illustrations by Edwin Myers. Copyright, 1919, by George H. Dore Co.

CHAPTER I.

The Roamy White Elephant. The office in Quebec which Georges Lamartine, the notary, occupied was located inconspicuously in a small building in an old part of the Lower Town. Small, wiry, black-haired, with an air of unassuming plausibility about him, Monsieur Lamartine was seated at his desk, drumming his fingers, staring out of the window, and turning again to look at a letter signed Hilary Askew, when his boy brought him a card with the same name upon it. Monsieur Lamartine frowned.

"Tell Monsieur Askew that I am busy with an important court case," he said. "Ask him to call at this time tomorrow." "Mr. Askew says he's busy, too, and he'll wait," announced the boy, returning. The notary considered. "Well, tell him I'll see him in a few minutes," he answered. "When the boy was gone he took down the telephone receiver and gave a number. "Is that you, Brousseau?" he asked. "Monsieur Hilary Askew has turned up."

"There was a spluttering at the other end of the line which made the notary smile. "I can't say, I haven't seen him yet," said Monsieur Lamartine, in answer. "But if I can't send him home with a smile on his lips and a check in his pocket I shall try to keep him in Quebec until I have seen you. And you'd better try to get Morris by long distance and warn him. Good-by."

He hung up the receiver, rang for the boy and told him to admit Mr. Askew. Then he rose to receive his visitor. He looked at Hilary keenly as he shook hands with him. The young man was different from what he had expected. He was about as big, and he had the same air of American energy; but he appeared more determined, he looked like one of those unscrupulous men who have the knack of disengaging themselves from obligations. However, Hilary looked good-natured. And he was certainly inexperienced. Monsieur Lamartine gave him a chair and looked very plausible indeed.

"Your visit has followed very close upon your letter, Mr. Askew," he said. "Perhaps you did not get mine, advising you to wait before coming to Quebec?" "No," said Hilary, "but I would have come anyway. I want to get this matter settled."

"The American haste," said the notary looking almost ingenuous. "But the law is not to be taken by storm, least of all in Quebec. It is only a month since your uncle died. Perhaps it will be months before we can turn over the property to you. I understand that you were not in close touch with your uncle during his latter years?"

"I hadn't seen him since I was a boy. That was what made the legacy a surprising one. He had not shown any interest in me. I had a hard fight to get through my forestry course. So when I heard that I had become the owner of a tract of a hundred square miles it seemed like an intervention of Providence. That is almost a king's demerit."

"Ten miles by ten?" inquired the notary, smiling. "Well, I suppose it does seem a large territory to you, although the Roamy seigniory was one of the smallest of the old feudal grants. It is almost the last on the north shore of the St. Lawrence that remains in the hands of the original family."

"Four hundred thousand dollars seems a big sum for my uncle to have paid for it," said Hilary. "Your uncle," said Monsieur Lamartine, beginning to drum softly, "made this investment against the advice of a good many people. The Roamy timber rights are practically valueless, because the wood is principally balsam fir instead of pine and spruce."

"He noted that Hilary only watched him instead of answering, and he began to feel that he would not be disappointed as easily as he had anticipated. "The property has never begun to pay its way," continued Monsieur Lamartine. "Your uncle paid three hundred and fifty thousand for the cutting rights alone. He found himself up against the St. Lawrence which limited on the size of trees. Seven inches for black, or swamp spruce, I believe; twelve for white spruce; twelve or thirteen for pine. And nearly all the trees on the Roamy limits that aren't fir are under the legal size. Your uncle sank half his fortune in it. He was—excuse me—eccentric. This is the case: the timber cannot be cut except at a loss, on account of its sparseness and the high cost of transportation. The balsam fir is too young to make any but inferior paper, because the standard sizes of the newspapers. It occupies the greater portion of the tract, together with second growth birch, which is, of course, of use only for firewood. The expenses are very considerable. In short, Mr.

Askew, I cannot advise you to consider your uncle's legacy seriously." "I'm sorry to hear that," answered Hilary. "But I suppose something can be done with the wood. There are uses besides pulp-wood to which the timber is entirely irregular, Mr. Askew, really?" "Let me have the papers, please," said Hilary, smiling. "And you need have no fear that you will be held responsible for my anticipating my inheritance. I imagine I have as much right there as Mr. Morris."

"Of course, it that is your decision, there is nothing more to say," answered the other brusquely. He pulled out a drawer and removed an envelope containing some documents. "You will find the statement here," he said. "Mr. Morris has the books and the map of St. Boniface. I wish you a pleasant journey, sir. You wish me to continue to represent you?"

"For the present, yes. Good-bay." "When he was gone Monsieur Lamartine sat back in his chair and drummed his fingers for nearly a minute. Then he picked up the papers and looked at them. "He's just gone," he said. "And he starts for St. Boniface tomorrow morning, in spite of all my representations."

He smiled at the spluttering that came over the wire. "It was well into the afternoon when Hilary reached St. Boniface on the small tri-weekly mail boat. For fifty or sixty miles below Quebec the country, sparsely inhabited though it is, and primitive, contains settlements of shingle houses, hotels, tourists in season; and it was not until the lumber landed into the Gulf that Hilary realized, almost with surprise, that the ship was calling into a territory as primitive as it had been a score of years after Jacques Cartier landed when he sailed upon the banks of the St. Lawrence. He had never known a place so remote, and he was not at all prepared for the little town of St. Boniface. He was about to show my uncle, Monsieur Lamartine, that he sized me up wrong."

"I understand how you feel, Mr. Askew," he said. "What you want is a nice little tract of a few hundred acres not far from Quebec. A place with a little trout lake on it, to build your camp beside, ten acres freehold and the rest leased. You'll enjoy that, and—when you've scrutinized him with his fox look—"I think I may be able to dispose of the Roamy white elephant at once, if you wish."

Hilary returned no answer, and Monsieur Lamartine could not decide whether it was a sign of strength or weakness. Still he was sure that a man who loved trees apart from their commercial value was a dreamer and impractical.

"They would pay forty-five thousand dollars, cash," said the notary. "And that would enable you to realize your own aspirations. You are fond of fishing, Mr. Askew? Think it over. Spend a week here—two weeks. Look about you. I expect you'll see old city. Do you know we are the only walled city on this continent?"

He stopped; perhaps he saw Hilary redden, perhaps his instinct warned him to do so. "What I want," said Hilary, "is the Roamy tract." "The offer is too small!" "I will discuss that after I have seen the concession."

The notary sighed. "Well, at least think the matter over for a while," he said. "Mr. Morris, the manager, is away on business. He should be in Quebec tomorrow, and perhaps he can arrange to take you up there."

"I am thinking of going at a very early date," said Hilary, "in fact, by the boat tomorrow." "Mr. Askew, I assure you, you had better wait for Mr. Morris. He is a man of expert judgment. You cannot have a better adviser, and he has absolutely no personal interest one way or another. There are so many things to consider; and then—you don't speak French, do you?"

"A little." "The dialect up at St. Boniface is somewhat different from the one you speak in the city. They are a wild lot up there, a very bad lot of people; smugglers and peaches, Mr. Askew." Hilary, who had already sensed Lamartine's objection to his going to St. Boniface, was awakened to suspicion at last. "I shall leave on tomorrow morning," he said. "When I have made my decision I shall let you know."

I think I shall refuse your company's offer. Will you let me have the papers, Monsieur Lamartine, including the last half-yearly statement and the map of the limits?" "But it is entirely irregular, Mr. Askew, really?" "Let me have the papers, please," said Hilary, smiling. "And you need have no fear that you will be held responsible for my anticipating my inheritance. I imagine I have as much right there as Mr. Morris."

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to this time over his shoulder as he went. His statement in the store must have created a good deal of sensation, for presently two clerks, as well as the two loungers, who had gone inside, came to the door and stared. Disengaging himself from among these came the foreman, a tall, lean, lanky New Englander, whose deliberate slouch and typical bearing warmed Hilary's heart instantly. He knew the type, knew it as only one with the New England blood knows his own.

"The Lase Connell, at your service," Mr. Askew, said the foreman, coming up to Hilary and standing respectfully before him. "I suppose I should have let you people know that I was coming," said Hilary.

"He wondered why Lase Connell whistled; he knew nothing about Brousseau's telephoned warning. "I guess you'll find things upset a little," said Connell. "Mr. Morris has been away for a couple of weeks, seeing to his other interests, and I can't exactly say for you'll be homesick back. It's our usual custom, you know, Mr. Askew. The men don't go into the woods until September, and we don't keep a large force employed on the mill work."

"Tomorrow's soon enough to start in," said Hilary. "I'm pleased to have met you, Mr. Connell." "Wait a minute," said the foreman. "If you don't mind having me, I'll go up to the hotel with you. Maybe there'll be some things that you'll want to see."

"All right," said Hilary. They went together silently across the shaking bridge and ascended the hill, each quietly taking stock of the other. At the top, where a branch road ran off at right angles to that which created the cliff, a figure on horseback appeared in the distance.

It was a girl, riding side-saddle, with gray-blue eyes and brown hair, the brow earth in his saddle, he gripped it. He had never known what it was to take hold of a virgin land; and he was about to grapple with it, not among the men of cities, but among the wilds of a remote territory. He was about to show my uncle, Monsieur Lamartine, that he sized me up wrong."

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talks existed in a civilized land before. Now you take a Dutchman or a Dane—more or less human. These people ain't. They paint their houses yellow and green, when they paint 'em at all. I never saw a yellow house with a green porch in my life till I come up here."

"Just a difference of taste, Mr. Connell." "Maybe," said Lase, spitting. "Maybe it's all right not to have sense to plaster their houses, so as to freeze to death in winter time. Maybe it's all right to run to Father Lucy when there's a forest fire, instead of getting to work and putting it out. Maybe he ought to get out for them. I got nothing against the place, except that my wife and the kids are in Shoburport, and I'd rather rot here alone than bring 'em up. But what's the use? I'm here and I got to stay here," he added, shrugging his shoulders.

"Lase was a bad cross-questioner, and he put upon Hilary by Brousseau was not only a man of his own calibre for a man of his own calibre. However, he made a valiant attempt to draw Hilary out. "You're thinking of spending some time here, Mr. Askew?" he asked.

"I've come to take charge. I'm going to stay," said Hilary, not without a little look at him, curiously. What sort of a man could this be who chose of his own volition to reside in St. Boniface?" "I guess you'll change your mind when you've seen it a little longer," he said innocently.

"On the contrary, Mr. Connell, I mean to take hold, and I mean to make it pay. It hasn't paid very well, I understand." "Lase floundered. "I've heard it don't pay as much as it ought."

"I've heard it don't pay as much as it ought," Lase said. "But there's some good spruce along the Rocky river," he added, "and some of the best timber in the province is below the site at which cutting is allowed?"

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that wasn't enough. He wanted the seigneur's place, because he found that the folks up here thought more of old Mr. Roamy, with his broken-down house and debts, than they did of him with all his money. So he set to work and got him cinched.

"The old man hates and despises him, and he's been fighting against it for a long time, but he seen what's coming to him and I guess he's made up his mind he'll have to stomach it. Brousseau's staked old Mr. Roamy's pride against his love, and I guess he's won his stake and won Mamzelle Madeleine into the bargain."

He rose. "That'll be all for tonight, Mr. Askew," he said. "Thanks, Mr. Connell," he said. "In the morning I shall ask you to show me around the place."

He didn't follow Lase Connell inside the hotel, but sat upon the porch, musing. Lase had enlightened him on several points. He doubted whether Lamartine had spoken anything approaching truth concerning the property, and he was sure that Morris and Brousseau were the company in whose behalf he had offered forty-five thousand dollars. There would be need of a good many explanations from Morris. "Mr. Hilary felt instinctively that it was Brousseau, not Morris, with whom he would have to contend."

On the face of the sun, right over the face of Madeleine Roamy painted with surprising clearness. He saw the blue of her eyes, the curve of her



He Saw the Blue of Her Eyes, the Curve of Her Flushed Cheek, the Dignity and Gentleness and Pride That Blended in Her Looks.

flushed cheek, the dignity and gentleness and pride that blended in her looks. If ever he had any quarrel with Brousseau, he would show him. Then he cursed himself for a fool, and, entering the hotel, took his lamp and went up to his room.

CHAPTER II. Lase Connell Explains. After breakfast the next morning Hilary hired Monsieur Tremblay's buggy and started out with Lase, with the intention of covering a portion of the limits and seeing the operations of the jobbers; he also meant to keep his eyes open as to the nature of the timber.

The buggy surmounted a hill, and another hill appeared in the distance. Here and there, scattered along the roadside, were solitary cabins, with little patches of cultivated ground about them.

On the right of the road is the Ste. Marie territory," asked Hilary. "Yep, Mr. Askew. The two rans neck and neck back into them mountains. We turn off presently. We haven't touched this district yet."

Lase noted the first growth spruce along the banks. "Why don't we cut this spruce?" asked Hilary. "It's a good deal of fir on our property, and it's a good deal of pine and spruce there is smallish. There was a big fire over this district fifteen years or so ago. Now Mr. Morris calculates that if we go slow for a while and give the trees a chance to grow, they'll be worth twice as much in a few years. We're developing the property slowly, Mr. Askew."

Hilary's hand fell on Lase's shoulder. "Connell," he said, "I brought you up here with me to learn the truth on my property. You're going to sign on again on October first, and it's me you're going to sign with, not Mr. Morris. Now tell me the facts about all this."

This country, and I'm here to stay. Now suppose you forget about Mr. Brousseau for a while and consider yourself to be what you are, my paid employee. And you can count on my standing by you."

He held his hand out. For a moment Lase Connell's keen gray eyes met his searching inquiry; then he took Hilary's hand and wrung it. "I believe you mean what you say, Mr. Askew," he returned. "And you can reckon on me so far as my duty goes."

"I suppose that tale about the Roamy seigniory being nothing but fir is a lie, Connell?" asked Hilary presently, as the pony ambled through a valley overgrown with red pine.

"Mostly," said Lase. "There is a deal of fir, but there's enough spruce and pine to make the concession pay, if Mr. Morris wanted it to."

"So Morris has been playing double?" "Lase nodded. "You see, Mr. Askew, it's this way," he said. "When Morris came up here I believe he meant to run straight. But he'd been a lumber man in a small way up in Ontario, and he wasn't wise to the game as it's played here. He got it graft, and it's never been nothing else. So when Morris found your uncle didn't know nothing about the business, and left it in his hands, he naturally fell for the game Brousseau was playing."

"Brousseau is the big man up here, and he's had his eye on the Roamy seigniory for a long time. He wanted to buy, but Roamy was sore on him, and he closed the deal with your uncle instead. But afterward Brousseau got the mortgage on the Chateau and the little bit of land round it, to keep hold on Roamy."

"Well, the Roamy seigniory is the only piece of free-hold up this way. Beyond it's government land, and all round it's government land. Brousseau started in to squeeze your uncle out, and Morris went with him. He played double, as you were saying, Mr. Askew. He got the point of the whole game was to freeze out your uncle and get the property for a song. That's how it stands. Here we turn off into Mr. Leblanc's lease."

"Who's he?" "Your next jobber," said Lase. "The buggy turned off through the forest along a new road. Here was some splendid timber, black and white spruce and tall white pine. The sound of axes began to be audible, and presently they reached a clearing, in which a number of frame shacks were under construction. Superintending the work was a tall, rather fair man of about forty years, with a cast in one eye; and with him was a short, thickest man of great muscular power. The two looked up at the buggy as it approached, and the short man bowed.

"This is Mr. Leblanc," said Lase. "Mr. Leblanc, this is Mr. Askew, the owner." "Leblanc put out his hand limply, but Hilary, nettled by his manner, did not take it.

"Mr. Leblanc is clearing a camp for his next year's lease," continued Lase. "But the lease is not signed?" asked Hilary. "It will be signed in October," answered Leblanc. "I have arranged with Monsieur Morris."

"You'll make your arrangements with me in future," said Hilary. "If the price is satisfactory, you can have this tract."

Leblanc stared at him insolently with his good eye, the other fixing a tree on Hilary's right. "I work for Mr. Morris, I make arrangements with him," he answered.

"See here, Leblanc, you didn't catch who this gentleman is," said Lase. "This is Mr. Askew, the nephew of the late Mr. Askew. He has come into the property. He's boss. You get me, don't you, Leblanc?" "Leblanc shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, yes, I understand," he answered, and, turning without another word, walked back toward the lumbermen, accompanied by the short man, who was chuckling maliciously at Hilary's discomfiture.

MEMO Historical Sir Sam

Their names upon enduring stories cherished by grateful people, of Frankford and their lives in the honored Wednesday a beautiful and was unveiled in the ford to their uncle Gen. the Hon. Sir Minister of performed the ceremony witnessed by the. Almost every part represented, while Frankford and the ney turned out in Prominent among were the relatives dead.

Frankford and heavily in the war. His genius were very leaders and men won in the field. Few seven of the young trict surrendered the cause of freedom, proves this.

The monument dollars and is the Coughlin, of Peterples a commanding school grounds, on The Rev. J. D. F. saw, formerly of pled the chair. He was men prominent life of Canada and service. The pro with the singing of Rev. Mr. Knox. M with deep feelings Fields."

To Sir Sam. Hugh war minister, who raising volunteer arminion, fell the hope the memorial stone did not speak at great ferred to the part Hastings in particular the great conflict. So to the deeds of hero boys in France and his address he drew ings and the monume Post", and comrades as a guard of honor of three volleys over in tribute to the glori

1914 — E Erected by the citford and vicinity in soldiers who fell in 1914—1918. Their forevermore

Brigadier-General ston, voiced his grat honored with a place form on this day who done to the dead son and the vicinity. He

Mr. J. J. B. F. Writes About Return

Editor Ontario.— Before continuing a my return journey, I out what I think is a to citizens of Canada United States. Upon fore you reach the boundary, an American your name, age, parent are you going to re United States, your of there, and you pay this American money, lost count. You are told if Canada within six money will be returned treat visiting United S in this manner. Why adians be submitted to like an outrage?

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