

Huntsman's Luck

By Charles Dorian

LORNA Duke sprouted in Ragonak like all the wild things that grew there and blossomed into beauty. Flowers thrived well in her garden, the birds and animals were attracted by her and men fought over her.

Her father had been station agent since Ragonak was first planted. She and her sister grew up in the station and took many a peep into the mysteries of rail-roading. William Duke lacked the temerity to ask for more assistance as the work grew heavier, so the girls pitched in and helped. The older delved into the dusty records and books while the younger learned the Morse secrets on the telegraph key. As Mary Duke remained in the background of the office and grew up plain, Lorna occupied the front desk where trainmen and passengers alike saw and admired her.

The dusty window panes could not hide her beauty; it was like looking at pink roses through smoky gauze, the veil giving an incentive for protracted feasting. Her hair was a shade yellower than natural silk, her eyes a shade deeper than the blue sky, her teeth whiter than ivory.

Trainmen have consummate nerve, it is said, but no trains were ever delayed at Ragonak for five-minute flirtations with the pretty stationmaster's daughter. She repulsed familiarity with her certain

over-bold had paused for a glimpse of Lorna Duke and became ensnared by the winning charm of her. It came again and often, closer each time until she felt its cool, perspiring nose in her hand, and knew she had tamed it. Then she put a cowbell on it and called it "Pete" and the neighbors petted it and fed it and called it "Lorna Duke's fawn."

In the woods it would have grown a beautiful thing; civilization had made it a gawky creature with long, jointy limbs and big ears, resembling a mulley cow. Its large, trusting eyes never grew hard, though, and in them lurked the glimpse of ancestral freedom.

The summer was fading, "Pete" was growing, and Willie Fendale and Lorna Duke were spending outrageous hours eye-gossiping in the shadow of an historic maple in the station garden or boldly facing the chaffing moon on the water front.

The hunting season brought its usual votaries who assembled their accessories and trudged into the surrounding wilderness. A new comer was easily recognized by the fact that he carried no equipment except his gun, and stayed over night at the hotel.

He strolled down to the station before supper and caught a glimpse of the pink rose through the window. She was alone.



Major Richard Lloyd George, eldest son of David Lloyd George, Premier of Great Britain, and his bride, formerly Miss Roberta McAlpine, daughter of Mr. Robert McAlpine, of Tottenham, Hertfordshire. The bridegroom had been convalescent for some time and was staying at Bath, where the marriage took place. The route from the hotel to the church was lined with smiling Tommies presenting arms. The Premier and many prominent personages were present at the ceremony.

superiority just as she repulsed all the hopeful swains of the village—except one.

Willie Fendale was it. Willie was a farmer lad of sturdy build, handsome face and quiet habits. He had no words for her attractiveness; he had only eyes. And just as the Morse code flashes secrets that written language cannot spell so do eyes convey deeper messages than the tongue can tell.

Lorna Duke and Willie Fendale were very happy together and so let them be while we look at the scenery and see how the trouble started.

Ragonak was wild, we said. It was prettily poised on the side of a hill with a command of a long stretch of Lake Huron. Back of it was a string of placid lakes where black bass abided. The surrounding bush was low set, thick and snarled. Here and there rugged pioneers had cleared homesteads; over the hills prospectors had made meagre discoveries. It was a port of call for the lake steamers; freight was transferred from boat to train and an occasional tourist dropped off to stretch a fishing line or hunt deer. A small sawmill gave to the place a "getting on" spirit, yet all in all, Ragonak was a wild spot, beloved of huntsmen and anglers.

Deer abounded there. They came up to the back doors in the early morning hours to sniff at the garbage pails and fled at the first sound of human movement. Not all had fled, though, for one

Her father was laid up with rheumatism, her sister tired out and she was holding down her trick at the key when the stranger came round and waited respectfully until she had closed the key before he spoke.

"They told me it was the deer that brought people here. I don't believe it," he opined, by way of introduction.

His voice was musical, his manner pleasant, and he was a good-looking stranger withal. His words thrilled her; his eyes held her, not as Willie Fendale's did—somehow there was no sentimental submission in them but compelling mastery. She looked at him in a startled way, which was an unusual way for Lorna Duke. He continued:

"I didn't want to come. I never handled a gun in my life. But they say deer are as thick as bees here and one can't miss them. Even if one does the outing has its compensations. Did you—ah—grow here?"

The startled look gave way to that superior glance which meant dismissal to so many.

"If you want to send a message I'll be glad to take it, but if it's local history you're after, try the guides," she said.

"Oh, you're busy," he laughed. "Well, never mind talking to me. I'll maybe have a message later."

He lifted his cap, politely and went away.

He arose very early in the morning but he was not out before "Pete" had recon-

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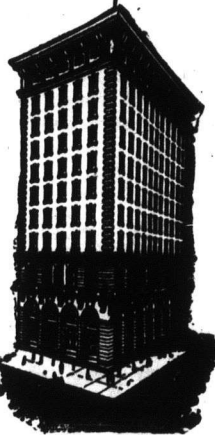
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