CEDAR SWAMP

by Michael J. Phillips

Illustrations by Henry Jay Lee

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CHAPTER XXIV

The Judge

Somewhere the city officers had [illegible] Eddie into Wimpey's [illegible] office. [illegible] got [illegible] Randolph Perkins [illegible] Forbes. [illegible] Eddie.

"Mr. Forbes, I have reconsidered. I shall publish a statement making records straight. And I shall say in it that my son was with you the night."

"Dad!" implored Randolph.

"Be silent!" commanded his father.

"Hold on, Judge," ordered Eddie. "Let him go with me. I brought the liquor. He wasn't as much to blame by a long way as I was. That's why I kept still."

"He shall learn to bear his responsibilities of his own acts," replied the judge, impacably. "If he hadn't been a coward and run away, he might have given us a true, unimpeaching statement."

"It's a favor to me, anyway, Dad. I'm tired of—"

The judge raised his hand. "You may [illegible] another matter now, my son. Mr. Forbes—"

"Yes. I've had the south earth from around on the place analyzed. Judge, it's [illegible] in Texas, which is about [illegible]. The soil over in [illegible] the [illegible] Randolph [illegible] Forbes [illegible] proposition. The [illegible] was only [illegible] genuine.

"[illegible] Bell left a card when he came to get samples a few weeks ago. The name 'Mineral Medicine Corporation, Austin, Texas,' was printed on it. I found out that your mound not far from Austin is about exhausted. That 'its here' in your mound, known as some earth by the Indians and settlers, is a sandy material containing salts of calcium, magnesium, sodium and iron and iodine. That it was overlaid by a solid vein of rock salt—a sort of cap.

"I discovered that it has a tremendous sale when reduced to solution by boiling to free the medicinal salts and that it is bottled and sold under the trade name 'Mineral Magic.' I know that hundreds of thousands of people regard it as a panacea for rheumatism and indigestion and things like that.

"You've been combing the country for another supply, especially where [illegible] conditions were somewhat similar. You became a couple of years ago, original stockholder in the Mineral Medicine Corporation by the death of your uncle. When the analysis of my staff proved up [illegible] I thought you might want to [illegible] me."

The judge permitted himself a grim and appreciative smile. "That was considerate. Because when Randolph made his report, I should certainly have had to look you up. Apparently we are to be rather closely associated, Mr. Forbes. Had you thought of any basis of doing business on a sale of this mound outright to us?"

"Not an outright sale, Judge. I'm going to need some money to play with. I want an income, a steady income. I've put my share on a royalty—say, a certain percentage of the price of every bottle sold."

The Forbes family occupied the one large and comfortable chair in the cabin on Portage creek. It was night and outside the southern lights were putting on a show with full weeks notice to stage. Bass and pickerel and pickerel of white radiance, the greatest of them in dimension, the Lake Huron set on end, soared from horizon to mid-heaven. The air was crisp with coming frost, and windy with the tang of the pines and the aromatic rank growth of the marsh. The creek, swollen by autumn rains, splashed and murmured beyond their front door.

Eddie sat in the chair and Patsy sat in his lap, her knees well up to her chin. His arms were about her, her head on his shoulder. They were engaged in that most delightful of occupations—the building of air-castles which have a solid foundation of practicality and possibility.

"I want to stay here until after the [illegible] Dad," dreamed Patsy.

"The [illegible] season's early November," [illegible] her husband. "We'll get a [illegible] and stick around until the snow comes on to the windowsill. That suits you, Pat?"

"I'd like it," breathed Patsy. "Anyway, till the novelty wears off. Then we'll follow the sun southwest for the rest of the winter."

"Next spring we'll come back here," Eddie pursued the thread, "and I'm study on cattle-feeding with Dad. He's a good old scout, after all, Pat. He apologized like a man for threatening to lick me over the bottle that squarehead got. We'll live here—"

"But the dam! Won't this be all under water?"

"They won't start construction until a year from next April. Malone says we may have this house all next summer, because I'm going to buy a ranch from them somewhere near here. They have a lot of acreage they don't need above the water level."

"Isn't it wonderful?" sighed Patsy dozed, in utter content.

His arms tightened about her. "Not so wonderful as you, Pat," he whispered.

THE END

The dark youth waited patiently in the outer office. When Eddie and Malone came out, he approached the former sulkily. "About that mound, Forbes—" he began, but Eddie cut him short.

"I'll deal only with headquarters. You know why."

It seemed to Eddie that, as he read, Judge Randolph Perkins shifted his thick white hand until it threw a shadow on his face, making its expression impossible for interpretation. But when he had quite finished the jurist's head went up and his big jaw was thrust out.

"This purports to be a confession by one Herman Libney that he was driving the truck which collided with a motor car on the River road last summer, causing the death of Mrs. Maria Knowles," he said, in measured, colorless tones.

"It is a certified copy of the confession," Eddie corrected him, quietly.

The judge bowed. "So I see. Well."

"It completely exonerates me. I was convicted of manslaughter in your court because of that accident."

"Yes; the evidence—"

"Was mostly prejudice. I was really convicted of taking a drink."

"Granted that may be in a measure true. What is your purpose in coming to me? The press will publish this, and you will be set right in the eyes of the community."

Eddie leaned forward. "Judge," he said, "the newspapers published a statement from you after the governor pardoned me. You said his action was 'a miscarriage of justice' and a 'traversity.' You did all you could to ruin me. Now—"

"I did make such a statement," agreed the jurist. "I was not trying to ruin you. But you were half-drunk when the accident happened. You had liquor illegally in your possession. You had been drunk before. In the circumstances I consider the statement quite justified."

"All right," replied Eddie, easily. "I wanted to get your ideas on the subject. But I came for something else, really. Your own—"

The door of the judge's study opened. A dark, weak-faced young man entered. "Hello, dad," he began, and stoped. "Didn't know you were busy." He scowled as he recognized Eddie. "What's he been telling you?"

"He has been trying, because of certain circumstances," said the judge formidably, "to force me to reverse myself on that accident of last spring. He has told me—"

"You sneak!" interrupted the dark young man, passionately, turning on Eddie. "So you had to come and spill it that I was with you that night. I was coming to tell him myself. We agreed, Nance and I, it was the thing to do. And you spoil—"

"Randolph!" His father's hard

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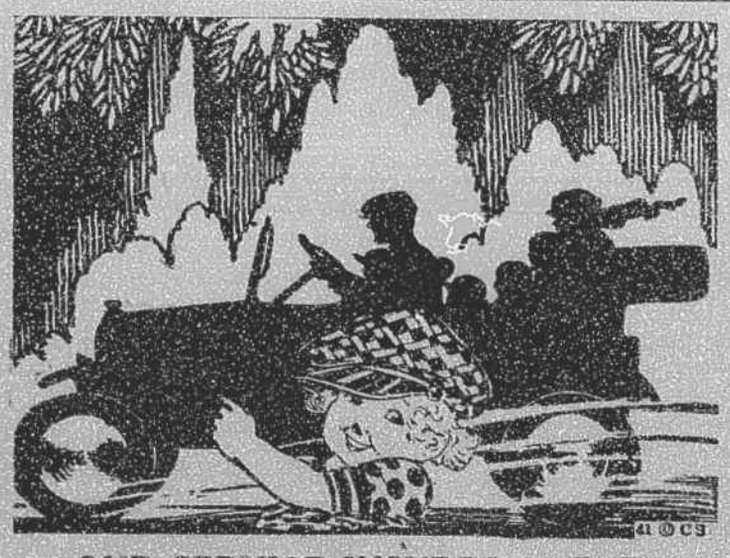

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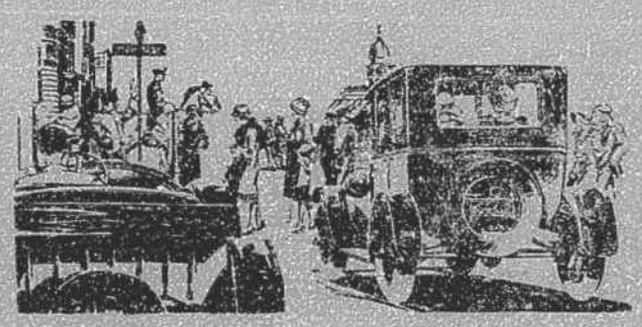

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