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THE

SWAMP SECRET.

A STORY OF THE FRONTIER.

By EDEN E. REXFORD

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CHAPTER XXI.

(CONTINUED.)

There was a second of awful silence, then a report that would have long credit for a small cannon, and Samanthy measured her length on the floor.

"Land o' goodness!" How it knocked her sprawlin! the panstrick daunted. "I reckon I'd better splitted it t' t' t' other way."

At the door there had been a quick, sharp exclamation from the shadow in the doorway, a rush of feet from another inside, and then a man staggered and fell across the hearth, with a red stream of blood spurting from his breast.

"Are you hit?" cried the other, coming to his side and attempting to raise him to his feet.

"Yes," was the hissy answer. "I guess I'm done for at last. Don't stay here. You can do the rest good if you do. They won't hang me after I'm dead. Make tracks, partner."

"But I can't leave you in this fix," said the other. "You may not be hurt as bad as you think. Couldn't you walk to the cabin with me? Try it."

"It's no use," was the reply. "I'm shot through the body. Run for it if you want to save your neck."

He seemed to be in great pain, and he could do but little more than groan when he was raised to his feet. A heavy curse at the threat of the wounded man, drowned him.

"Well, then, need be old fellow," he said, pitying one his hand and turning the others arm at parting. "I'd give my old body, yes, I'd bring it back, but I'm still waverin' between a home to be hoed to an old companion in crime and a hearing to seek personal safety."

The only answer was a gurgling sound in the throat of the dying man. He knew that his companion like was coming, and he sprang over his body and fled into the darkness.

"I reckon I've convinced you we wasn't all away from home," said Samanthy, trembling to her feet. "I'll bet I'll be black 'n blue to-morrer from the kickin' of that gun. I never see nothin' like it."

"Are you hurt much?" asked Nannie, hurrying to assist her from her fright.

"Not a mite," replied Samanthy. "Suppose you look out an' see if you can see anything."

Nannie went to the window just in time to see the man running toward the woods.

"He's coming," she answered. "And oh, Samanthy!" with a tickled-eared quiver in her voice, "there's something lying in the barn door that looks as if it might be a man! Oh, Samanthy, what if it should be? What will you do if you've killed him?"

"Shan't waste mourning for him," said Samanthy, beginning to feel queer, as she afterward related the part of the story to her friends. "I wouldn't like to know I'd killed somebody, but if it was a horse-thief, somebody'd orter kill him, an' I dunno but it mought as well be me's anybody else.

"We ought to let Uncle Porter know," said Nannie. "Oh, Samanthy!"

"I wouldn't wonder to the least if they'd got our horses, too."

"Like's not," said Samanthy. "If you'll go right down an' let 'em know what's happened, I'll stay here and keep watch."

"Oh, I wouldn't dare to!" cried Nannie. "What if I met one of the horse-thieves?"

"Then you stay here, an' I'll go," said Samanthy.

"Let's both go," said Nannie. "It wouldn't do any good for one of us to stay here while the other was gone."

To this plan Samanthy assented, and they set off on a run for the camp-meeting grounds.

"It cured my toothache, anyway," said Samanthy. "I declare 't was lucky I had it, wa'n't it? It sent me hum at jest the right time. Ef we 'd a be'n five minutes later, they 'd a be'n gone with the hosses."

Mr. Porter was in the midst of a stirring exhortation when the two women reappeared at the camp-meeting.

Samanthy went up to him and gave his arm a twitch.

"You 'd better come hum," she whispered. "There's trubble to the barn. Hoss-thieves, I reck'n!"

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE TRAIL.

Mr. Porter broke off his exhortation very abruptly, and joined Mr. Boone, to whom Nannie had gone with the news of what had happened.

It was evident to all, from the action and manner of the women, that something unusual had taken place, and a crowd soon gathered about them for information.

Samanthy told all there was to tell in as few words as possible.

Five minutes later the services of the evening were declared ended, and the entire congregation set off for Mr. Porter's.

"Did you say Samanthy shot one?" asked Rhoda, coming up to where Nannie stood, with her mother and Mrs. Porter. "Oh, dear! Isn't it dreadful? I shan't sleep a wink to-night thinkin' of it."

"Neither shall I," said Nannie. "I haven't got the sound of that gun out of my ears yet. It doesn't seem to me as if I ever would. Come home with me, Rhoda. You and Will have plenty of company, and won't need you. Do come, please! I can't bear to think of staying alone, and you haven't stayed with me in a long time."

Rhoda consented, and the party followed the men from the camp-ground.

It was a crowd of stern-faced men that collected about the barn a few minutes later.

"Shot he was, sure enough," said the foremost settler, as he passed through the open stable door. "He's hurt pretty bad, or dead by now, judgin' from the blood."

"Light lanterns," said Mr. Boone. Mebbe he fainted."

Two men stepped forward and attempted to do the thing in the doorway.

"It's hard work," said one of them, after painfully straining his body. "Neighbor, you'd better come here and help us. We can't budge him an inch."

There was a murmur of disapprobation at the news. The prisoner's friends knew the determination of the settlers to rid the country of such as he.

As the Widow Green came up, she went without a word to assist.

"We have tried to make him easy," said one, "but he's evidently a curiosity. Come, what ails the man? Don't be afraid to speak out. We mean business."

"Water," groaned the helpless man, as the speaker ceased, and the hoarse whisper which accompanied the words seemed forced and unnatural.

"We have," said Mr. Porter, bobbing his head in a way that the light of it, fell full upon the dead man's face.

Wayne saw it, too, and with a frightened exclamation, he stood for a moment and looked upon the ghastly sight, then turned away with a shudder that he could not hide, and walked toward the house.

"The wrath of God comes on the trail of a horse-thief," said the minister, solemnly. "May He have mercy on this poor sinner's soul! Let us pray."

And there, by the dead, among the assembled neighbors which filled the barn to its utmost limits, the good man prayed as a thousand times before he had prayed, and all that heard the solemn words said "Amen."

A hurry of conjecture and half-spoken comment followed the disposal of the dead body.

Before a supper was finished, Mr. Boone and his hungry guests heard the news that he hoped was true.

"I tell you what it is, neighbors," said one of the foremost, as he listened to the tidings, "we must get on the track of the thieves, we must do it now. Those with Boone's horses can't be more than an hour's start of us, at the most, as it seems as if they must have left some track behind. This" pointing to the body on the doorway "if he is quite likely to put an end to their performances in this neighborhood for a spell, anyway, an' we don't want 'em to get away if it's possible to find 'em. We've hunted for 'em high 'n low, an' hunted tharrer, but we hasn't got out to the right trail for some reason or another. We hasn't never found out what they'd done so soon after the evil did it as we did this time. If we turn out an search as it we meant business, I can't help feelin' as if we could get some track of 'em. It seems so, anyway. An I go in for makin' such a heap as we hasn't made yit, though I don't know 'e we can be a lot more thurrer 'n we be now. But we can try, anyhow, an' if we do find any signs of 'em, we can foller 'em up if we get right at it an' don't waste no time. What say, neighbors?"

A hearty murmur of assent went over the crowd.

Lights were procured, and a close examination of the premises about Mr. Boone's barn began.

"Here's their tracks plain's day," declared Bill Green, as eager for the pursuit of the horse-thieves now as he had been an hour ago for pardon of his sins. "I feel's if we was goin' to fetch 'em this time. I do so."

An hour later there was unbroken quiet where, so short a time before, there had been so much excitement. They were on the trail of the horse-thieves at last.

The dead man's body had been placed in the barn to await burial on the morrow.

It was twelve o'clock when the lights carried by the men who were on track of the horse-thieves faded into faint glimmers in the distance, and finally dwindled into so many sparks, and then seemed to go out in the darkness of the night.

In the kitchen at Mr. Porter's, the women and ministers were talking over the exciting events of the evening.

Wayne had retired.

The clock struck one.

"I declare," exclaimed Mrs. Boone. "I'd no idee 't was so late! Come, Mis' Holdredge, let's be goin', or we sha'n't git any rest right to-night, an' I feel clear beat out."

Mrs. Holdredge was a visitor from "down below," whom Mrs. Boone had invited home with her from camp-meeting.

"Are you ready, Nannie?" asked Mrs. Boone, as she and Mrs. Holdredge rose to go.

"You can go on, mother, and Rhoda and I'll come right along," responded Nannie. "I want to see Samanthy a minute."

Mrs. Boone and her friend took their departure, and Nannie called Samanthy into the pantry for consultation.

"Dick ought to know of what's happened," said Nannie. "It may be that the knowledge of it would be of great advantage to him. Hadn't I better write a few lines and put them in the hollow tree? He'll find them to-morrow, if he's already been there to-night."

"I reckon it could be a good idee," said Samanthy.

So Nannie tore a blank leaf out of the front part of a hymn-book and hastily wrote a few lines, explaining the condition of affairs.

"I'll leave it there on my way home," she said. "Good night, Samanthy. I am glad I didn't shoot that man, but I don't think you did wrong. Nobody does."

"Neither do I," said Samanthy. "But I do feel awful curi' over it somehow. He deserved it, but—I'd rather some one else'd did it. But it's done, and can't be helped, an' I guess I'm sorry as he's say call to be. Mought jest as well be me to do it as anybody else, as I said afore, but—"

Nannie and Rhoda took their departure, and Samanthy went to her room and went to bed, but not to sleep. The face of the dead man alone in the barn seemed before her constantly. She was honest with herself when she said that she felt she had done right, and yet the thought that a man had come to his death by her act was anything but a pleasant one.

"He deserved it," she kept saying to herself, "but I'd rather somebody else had did it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THREE OVERHEARD A CONVERSATION.

"Rhoda," said Nannie, when they were half way to Mr. Boone's, "I don't want here a minute while I go down the road just a little way. I'll be back in no time. Some time I'll tell you all about it."

"I'll be right back," said Nannie, as she hurried away. "Don't be afraid, Rhoda."

"Nonsense," responded Rhoda, feeling sure that she was afraid, in spite of her assurance to the contrary.

She sat down on a log behind a clump of bushes to await Nannie's return.

The moon, which had been partially obscured, came out from behind a cloud, and looking toward Mr. Porter's she saw that the window in the gable of the house was raised and a man was leaning out.

As she saw this she became aware of a sound which she recognized as having heard before, since leaving Mr. Porter's—the call of a night-bird.

But as she listened to it now there seemed to be something peculiar about it, which she had never noticed in the call before.

It was given three times. Then the person from which it came was silent a while.

Looking toward Mr. Porter's she saw that the man had been joined by one of the window, apparently his brother, who was now climbing out upon the roof of the shed.

"It must be the singing-master," she thought. "But what can he be getting out of the house in that way for?"

The man she was watching dropped lightly to the ground from the shed roof and came toward the road. Then he leaped the fence and came directly toward the spot where she was hidden.

"What shall I do?" thought Rhoda, frightened half to death. "I don't dare run and I don't dare scream. Oh if Nannie would only come back!"

Being so badly frightened, she did nothing but shrink back closer into the screening shadow of the bush behind which she was sitting.

Then she heard steps coming from the opposite direction. Evidently Mr. Wayne had come to meet some one, and his visitor was approaching.

The two men met in the shelterin shadow of the old cottonwood, not fifteen feet away from where the frightened girl was crouching, her heart beating such a tattoo against her ribs that it seemed to her they must hear it.

"Is that you, Number Five?" asked Wayne.

"Yes, it's me," was the reply. "It's been a bad night for us, captain."

"Yes, it has been a bad night for us," responded Wayne. "Number Six has got through with his trouble."

"They got away all right with the horses from the other place," said the man called Number Five. "They got lost after us, but I think we'll be able to throw them off the scent, after all. When do we leave the swamp, captain? It's getting to be almost too hot for us in this vicinity, and the sooner we're out of it the better I shall be satisfied."

"I will join you to-morrow night, and we will leave at once," replied Wayne. "See that everything is in readiness for a start as soon as I arrive. How many horses are there in all?"

"Six," was the reply. "That is, there will be six if they succeed in running in those they got away to-night. There's the two from Deer Creek, the two from the cross-roads and to-night's haul."

(To be continued.)

Building Superintendent Constable in his recent report says that 3111 new buildings were erected last year in New York City at an aggregate cost of $78,781,945.

AGRICULTURAL.

Concentrating the Manure.

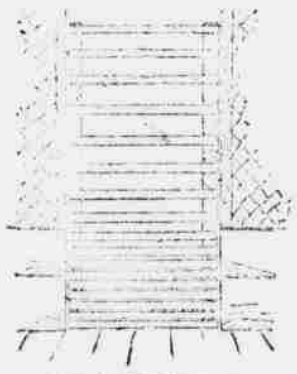
Very few farmers have enough stable manure to fertilize all their land as they would like. The best thing for such farmers to do is to apply this stable manure mainly to the crops on which they expect to put most of their labor. It does not pay to plant, cultivate and hoe poor land. Every addition of manure makes the labor more effective, and therefore more profitable. With mineral fertilizers it is different. These are usually applied to grain crops, for which dressings of 150 to 250 pounds per acre are usually sufficient for the crop, besides leaving some to be taken by the clover after it. These mineral fertilizers so soon become insoluble in the soil that it does not pay to apply them in large amounts. A small quantity each year, sufficient to make the crop it is applied to is much better.

Milk For Cheese Making.

The cheese-making qualities of milk are governed almost entirely by its fat and casein content so far as the composition is concerned. The amount of water in the cheese is independent of the amount of water in the milk. The cheese maker has this under his control thoroughly. The fat in the cheese is equal to the fat in the whole milk. The fat and casein seldom fall below four and one-half or go above seven and one-half pounds to the 100 pounds of milk. Each pound of fat and casein produces approximately one and two-thirds pounds of cheese. There is practically as much fat lost in whey when the milk contains three per cent. of fat as five per cent. This is contrary to the usual belief that there is greater loss with the richer milk. The yield of cheese increases as the milk becomes richer. The water in 100 pounds of milk is retained to a considerable extent in cheese. As cheese increases in richness it decreases in water content.

It Prevents Crowding.

Where a long poultry building is divided into a number of pens the divisions must be carried at the bottom to prevent the fowls, particularly



A GOOD BETWEEN FENCE.

the pullets, from fighting. A good story for such a division is shown in the cut. It is made of lath in the ordinary way, but has the laths at the lower part very near together, the spaces growing more open as they go up. This prevents fighting, makes a handsome gate and one easily constructed.

Humus in the Soil.

After all, the true method to restore lost fertility to a worn-out soil is to fill it with what is generally called humus, and not all of the commercial fertilizers, the chemical compounds and various other substitutes for good, all-around fertility will take the place of it. It asked to define the meaning of the word humus, I would be inclined to say in as few words as possible that it was a decaying mixture of vegetable matter and animal refuse. These two elements form the foundation stone of modern farming. They originally made the soil what man found it,—so rich in fertility that all crops would thrive in it. We wish to return our worn out soil to this condition. There is no shorter road than that which nature followed in the past, and we might adopt with profit some of her ways.

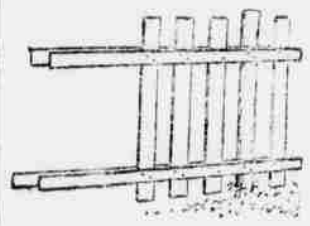
Animal refuse and vegetable matter were deposited on the earth in all ages, and the chemical action of the light, heat, moisture and sunshine transformed them into rich plant foods. They supplied nitrogen, phosphate, potash and electricity, which fed the plants and made them grow. The soil rich in humus not only supplies the plants with food, but it tempers the cold and heat so that the plants are less likely to suffer from either extreme moisture, heat or cold. This is an important point that is often overlooked. In the hothouse bed the manure, which is a near approach to natural humus, keeps the seeds and plants warm with the heat that is generated in it. A piece of land fertilized annually with commercial or chemical manures will be colder in the spring, dryer in summer, and less suite to the growth of plants generally than another field where humus has been put into the soil every year.

The soil that is lacking in humus is thus the poorest soil we have in this or any other country. It is poorly drained, it is cold and clammy, and it is never workable until late in the season. It gives more trouble and dissatisfaction than anything else, and yields precious little in return for labor bestowed upon it. What such soils need is not some elaborate system of underdrainage so much as it does an application of coarse manures or humus.

There is only one way to remedy the condition of things. We must utilize every scrap of barnyard manure, waste hay, straw, grass and every particle of material that will add strength to the soil. Buy barnyard manure every time in preference to commercial manures, if the price is the same.—C. S. Walters, in American Cultivator.

Unique Picket Fence.

The cut shows a way of making a picket fence that is at once strong and cheap. No heavy rails are needed.



AN INEXPENSIVE SHEEP PROTECTOR.

Two narrow strips of board at top and bottom hold the pickets securely nailed between them. The strips are "let in" to the posts. For a sheep fence this mode of construction has great advantages. The pickets can be a foot wide—ordinary boards sawed into picket lengths, and the strips three inches wide. Such a fence can rapidly be put up and will prove very inexpensive and strictly sheep and dog proof.—New England Homestead.

Some Satisfactory Perennials.

The seed of perennials may be sown in the fall or in the spring. If sown in the fall they will bloom the next summer. If sown in the spring they will not bloom for a year, unless an exceptionally favorable fall follows. There is a very long list of perennials, but as with annuals, the really desirable kinds for the average home garden are comparatively few. Were I to restrict myself to four varieties, I would select the following: Perennial phlox, sweet William, Dianthus barbatus, hollyhock and carnations. If I could have six I would add wallflower and campanula, Canterbury bells.

Of these, the two best known are the sweet williams and hollyhocks. The flowers from seed bought of reliable firms are to-day very much finer than they were a few years ago. In hollyhocks, the dwarf double kinds are almost as beautiful as roses. Unless one has plenty of room and time it is best to buy mixed seed of each of the varieties wanted. One's individual taste will determine whether the plants are to be grown in rows, in clumps or in beds, but generally clumps or irregular forms will be found the most pleasing. Of course, the situation has everything to do with it. If the garden is so shaped that one cannot have clumps, then choose rows, but if possible have the plants in irregular rows. Get some old-fashioned, tall, single roses to serve as a background for the dwarf double ones. Hollyhocks should be at least a foot each way and in very rich soil. Phlox and sweet williams, if not less than ten inches, sunflowers and campanulas, a foot each way. The richer the soil, the greater number of plants can be grown upon a given space.

If sown in the fall the bed or rows must be protected with leaves or litter of some kind, and brush must be placed on the covering to keep the wind from blowing it off. Leave on until all danger of heavy frost is over in the spring. Some of the most pushing will get through, but no harm is done. If all push up through it is better to remove the brush only and very top layer of leaves. Keep all weeds down and cultivate. If a fine dust mulch is kept over the surface, the ground will not dry out so much. The plants will self sow, and after once becoming established will only require to be cultivated, and mulched and enriched from year to year. It is best to allow only the very nicest of each specimen to go to seed; there will be more bloom and the next year's plants will be much finer. For the farm wives who have but little time to give to flowers, the perennials and bulbous plants will give most satisfaction.—Emma Clearwaters, in American Agriculturist.

Poultry Notes.

Some hens do not possess the egg laying habit and no system of feeding will make good layers of such hens.

Pure bred fowls, first, last and all the time. The breed does not matter so much, provided you are satisfied with it.

Every little while some one gets up a new theory for telling the sex of the chick from the outside of the egg. All nonsense.

Yes, incubators and brooders are all right. What is necessary is a little experience and you will be quite apt to be successful.

Too much young stock is used for breed-purposes. The young chicks will be hardier and make larger fowls if from two year-old stock.

Make a note of the hen that had the best hatch and raised her chicks in the best shape, and let her repeat it next season. She will do it.

Hens turn the injurious insects on the farm into fresh eggs on your table, or to pay the grocery bill. What other farm occupant does as well.

A moulting hen is easily fattened. Hens do not lay freely while moulting and the food which cannot be used for feather making goes to the production of fat.

Better give your water troughs and fishes a thorough cleaning before it runs too long. It will head off some of those numerous cases of drooping among the flock.

WOMAN'S WORLD.

PRESERVING THE HAIR.

A New Way For Women to Strengthen Nature's Head Covering.

What has made the hair thin? And what makes it fall out? In occasional cases there is some slight scalp disease, due to the presence of some one of the bacilli family, whose mission on earth is to annoy mankind. Such troubles must be cared for by those physicians who make a specialty of skin diseases. But nine times out of nine and a half the trouble comes from defective circulation and thin blood. The doctor has to treat the general condition of the system, but the patient can herself give the local treatment to the hair.

It is very simple, and has within the power of all, yet very many fail to get good results because of lack of persistence. Patience and perseverance are the two words that embody the secret of keeping the hair from falling.

To acquire, and to follow the process from its first step, let me say that a shampoo is the primary requisite. The shampoo preparation for this purpose is best made of green soap, an article resembling soft soap and smelling like melon seed. It is found at the chemists only, and has a hygienic value almost in most soaps. Some chemists keep it in a liquefied form, slightly perfumed, especially prepared for the scalp.

It is not to be thus obtained make a shampoo of the following ingredients: One ounce of green soap, one tablespoonful of well boiled, clear white egg, half a pint of very warm water. Dissolve the borax in the egg, beat, add the soap into a bottle, add the hot water, and shake well, then add the egg and borax, and shake until well blended. This is the recipe of a famous physician, and is the best and cheapest shampoo that can be used. A little perfume may be added, but is unnecessary and unwise.

Your scalp is as often as the hair should be washed. Lads aware that a clear cotton cloth is more frequent in prescribing, but observation and experience have shown me the mistake of hard washing. After the shampoo treat the scalp to a thorough rubbing with some tonic, to aid the process.

Bad cases may have the rubbing night and morning for a time, but once a day will be sufficient ordinarily, and some persons can get along with two or three times a week. These are the ones who are benefited by the treatments at various hair-dressers.

Pour into the scalp a little of the tonic, after having divided the hair with a comb, and rub lightly with the balls of the fingers. When the entire scalp is completed, put the bottle aside, and with all the fingers manipulate the scalp, moving it on the skull in preference to moving its sharp unrelated fractions. The object of this treatment is to move every stagnant circulation. The blood alone nourishes the hair, and it is supply is cut off the hair must suffer.—Harper's Bazar.

A Girl's Footbalance.

All apologies for inserting a paragraph in relation to the feet, which are the most neglected, misused, misunderstood, misjudged, misfitted, misjudged, misfitted, misjudged, misfitted