

AT BIG LOON POST

By George Van Schaick

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Author of "Hearth of the North," "Ishmael of Grand
Lae," Etc., Etc.

Syndicated.

Boyer Curran, agent of the Hudson Bay Company's Big Loon Post, is about to start back to the north country. He leaves that Lorimer, an Englishman and his assistant has just married Ameou, an Indian. He sees the death notice of Lorimer's wealthy uncle, and reads a letter just arrived for Lorimer that he has an interest in the west. Curran learns that if Lorimer should die, the money would be his wife's, then he could marry her himself and get it.

Curran sends Lorimer and Mashkagan on an exploring trip and the Indian pushes Lorimer into the rapids and leaves him for dead. During his absence Lorimer's son is born.

Mashkagan comes back with news of Lorimer's death.

But the white man is not dead. With much difficulty he makes his way back and just before reaching the camp of Atuk, an Indian, he finds a white baby left alone in the woods.

Curran meanwhile has schemed to have Scarface, an Indian, play a trick on Ameou by telling his baby to the woods and leaving him for Curran to bring back.

Immediately after the discovery of her loss, Ameou starts to search for the child. The frightened and despondent Mashkagan accompanies her. They find the place where the baby was left, but he is gone. The superstitious guide is frightened away by the sight of Lorimer.

Mashkagan goes back alone to get the baby and is rescued from drowning by Lorimer. The Indians take care of them both, and the baby.

"No! Do not cry out! In silence must thou come! There is one who I do not want here. In silence must we depart. We will start at once, for I can travel but slowly, having done my errand, to get her home swiftly and lay thy little one on thy breast. I must have a few moments' rest, for I am nearly done."

"My two ladies are strong," said Father Gregoire, "but we will start in the canoe, and we will start in the canoe. I can paddle, also."

In a very short time they were afloat on the now placid river, paddling down the scintillating path of moon-rays.

For time Mashkagan rested quietly, like one who knows he has done all that can be asked of the crews of a man; but after a while he felt strong again and once more took up the paddle.

Ameou was kneeling in the bow, with the precious little bundle of humanity lying before her, comfortably ensconced in the narrowing point. She also was paddling with one infinite sweep of her arms, and behind her the missionary, the hunchback, and the two men followed her stroke.

The canoe dashed ahead so fast that the thwart grating and the long bank of spruce roots and the thin cedar ribs cracked and the birch-bark complained. The breaths of the strong men began to come out in sibilant grunts, as when one smiles with all his force for a minute.

They heard nothing of the splashing of muskrats or the cries of night-birds; none of the whispers of the gentle breeze through the reeds of the delta. The paddles were cast and the craft flew upon them until the swift river was reached, and the paddles struck the calmer water as with one blow.

At the outlet they were compelled to stop, for the water was shallow.

"At that point the river curved sharply and the canoe grazed for a second on the sandbar until it passed on to deeper water.

"A journey to be remembered," whispered one of the priest's men. "We have traveled through the water as Upishik, the wild goose, wings her way through the sky."

They had reached the place of Atuk's fishing-camp, and ran to the beach between the high butting rocks.

Leaping out, the men dragged the canoe ashore, and Ameou jumped out with her baby and followed Mashkagan to the tent that was contained in the trees.

"We will wait here," said Father Gregoire. "Too many mourners are here in sorrow, too many witnesses also in happiness. We will pray that the sick man may recover well again, and the two may light your pipes. Soon I will go up and see whether I can do anything for this man who is so ill. Get me my little box of medicines from my pack."

In the meanwhile Ameou had entered the tent where a man was resting upon blankets resting on balsam-boughs.

To the young wife neither the long hair nor the straggling beard nor the face that was covered with suffering mattered a whit. She bent over and kissed them tenderly and went to sleep.

"Ameou! Ameou! My wife," cried Lorimer without looking at her. "I am here," she said softly.

Then her eyes opened and she looked at her blissfully.

"I had many dreams—thou being taken away—away from me," he whispered hoarsely.

"I am with thee now—never to leave thee," she answered.

Lorimer smiled at her, and his blindness was amazing.

head fell back contentedly in peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

Reaping the Whirlwind.

Quite late that evening Curran was turning over the pages of an old magazine. He was very restless. Finally he hurried the book rudely across the room. The worn, yellowed, slightly printed word was of the greatest value in the far wilderness, being commonly treated with the greatest respect.

"I wonder what that old sky-scraper is doing with it," he said. "I should have come in and gone to bed long ago. Likely he's found some Indian kid with a stomachache and is sitting up with him."

He consulted his watch—the only one, within a radius of some hundred miles, that he had.

"Eleven o'clock! Hanged if I'm going to wait up any longer for him!"

He had gone to his room and was beginning to undress when he decided to have a better take a turn outside and see for himself whether he could find any explanation for the priest's absence.

He lit his pipe and opened the door. Absolute silence reigned. For a moment he listened for human utterances that would carry far in the still night, but heard nothing.

Then he went toward the tent of Minisutis, his soft moccasins making no sound. He saw a dog begin to howl. The ample snore of the old man assured him that the inmates were sleeping. The agent scratched his head.

"Seems pretty queer," he muttered, and off toward the landing-place, where many canoes were pulled upon the shore and could be clearly seen in the moonlight.

For a moment he searched among them, but could find no sign of the priest. Then he heard a faint, sharp, clear voice.

"He's gone! That was a great trick to play on me. I suppose that devil of a girl told her she didn't have to marry me, or else he told her that he didn't appear to be a good man."

"I'll get square with him for putting in his ear what way—the old fool! He's just gone so that I can't be married now, and told her that no Indian marriage would be all good with the best hat in the way. I'll take her down in the spring and marry her when we get south."

He returned to the post, where he took a drink from his bottle of alcohol before he sought his bed. He passed the night in a fitful sleep, and the next morning came a few hours of sleep, and he awoke later than was his custom.

He clamed for his breakfast and questioned the old Cyprian when he awoke.

"When did White Beard, the Manito Ilo, go away?" he asked. "I found last night that his canoe was gone."

"I saw this morning that it was no longer at the landing," answered the old fellow. "Yet he cannot have gone for a long time, because he was to take flour and kukush, the meat of pig. He cannot go to the great water in the north without a provision for his needs, gone."

"That's so," agreed Curran. "I laid the stuff for him on the floor of the storeroom."

Investigation showed that the provisions were gone, the tent untouched. Well, he was gone for good, yet intends to come back soon, that's sure. Wonder what kind of a dodge he's up to now?"

Curran also inquired about Mashkagan, and the old Indian had said him. Curran was growing more and more nervous, vaguely suspecting something that might be affecting his plans.

He judged it best not to go to the priest's tent, desiring it likely that the girl, after her conversation with the priest, might not be in a mood in which it would be best to talk with him.

He had to get hold of Ni-miss-ah, also inquiring for the old man, he learned that the old man had taken his gun and gone out on the barrens to try for a caribou.

During the next two days Curran made rather large inquiries about the old man, and began to suspect that the old priest had not returned. As for Mashkagan, Curran heard him hope that he had broken his neck somewhere.

"Perhaps he's gone and made away with himself with all his crazy intentions. I hope he has; 'twould be a good riddance of bad rubbish. Best we could have done."

Wandering over to the landing, he counted his canoe, and found all, a regular blank, one of them attracted his attention. This canoe had been there for a number of days, he felt sure, and looked like the others, so that he had hitherto paid no notice to it.

Curran turned it over. There was nothing but Mashkagan.

The agent looked about him. An Indian squaw was coming down to the waterline, bearing a kettle she was to fill.

"How long's this canoe been here?" he asked.

The squaw looked at him in some surprise. "To her these white men were but commoners."

The canoe had been there four days, it once should have been able to recognize it at the nearest glance. Here was a man who had never noticed it. Such blindness was amazing.

She held up one hand with four fingers outspread.

"Four days," she replied. "Time when Mashkagan came in the night."

"Did you see him?"

"No see him," she replied. "Came gone and then canoe came back, so Mashkagan came."

"She's his shoulders and went up the sloping bank, bearing her heavy black kettle."

Curran dashed off to the chief's tent. It suddenly struck him that he had not seen Ameeou for some time, and he was always busy be-

ing the tent over the cooking fire, or doing some of the endless jobs of Indian women always waiting for them. He must ask if she was ill or had disappeared.

This time he laid aside the usual formula of asking for admittance. He found the old chief just returned with a big quarter of meat. The wife and children were also in the tent, but there was no sign of the young woman.

"Where's your daughter?" he demanded harshly.

The old man pointed to the north with his thumb.

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"They place is not in here," said the hunchback.

"Come and get him, and he would have flung him aside, but he could hardly budge the half-breed. Father Gregoire, who quickly followed, laid a powerful hand on the agent's shoulder.

"I will not have any brawling on this day," he said gravely. "Loosen your hold, men! I order peace among you. Mashkagan, stand back! Curran has surely the right to be here, and I am in your re-judge. Enter quietly now."

The agent walked in, glancing furtively at Mashkagan, and the old missionary.

"But when he was inside the tent

he remained like a man transfixed by an arrow, his eyes looking in his hands, who leaned against a tree and there been frozen stiff and stark.

And Lorimer had raised himself on one elbow.

The thin, drawn features looked to the east, like those of a corpse that has been taken from a tomb, notwithstanding the smile that was upon them.

Casting a bewildered glance about him, he awoke, Ameeou with the child upon her breast. The gentle smile of happy greeting with which he met his look translated his excitement as a grin of triumph over victory.

"Peace! Keep still, I command you," shouted Father Gregoire.

But Curran had no head and ran toward Mashkagan, who stood at a short distance with folded arms.

"I'll have no fighting!" cried the priest again. "Run away, Mashkagan! till we quiet down."

The Indian canoeeman came running up as Mashkagan turned away. Mashkagan ran a few steps like a deer, paying little heed to his direction. The infuriated man followed him.

The man dashed furiously out of the tent.

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In a few seconds he was on the ledge of rock which overhung the lake, and was compelled to turn at bay.

Curran flung himself upon the hunchback, who grappled with wild beast, panting like bull mouse in deadly fight. For a moment the agent tore his hand from the grasp of the hunchback's long arms, and an explosion another brief instant, Mashkagan loosened his hold, but one of his great fists came crashing against Curran's lower jaw.

The agent fell like an animal that has been poked, and went into the water, which closed over him—ripping at first, and then smoothing over it to cast a veil over the gruesome evidence of his blind, wild beast.

The hunchback leaped into their canoes and paddled swiftly to the spot.

For a time they searched with long, setting poles, but the water was deep and they could find nothing. In a short time they ceased, fearing that the spirit that gathered about the places of sudden death was upon them.

Mashkagan was lying on the ground. The men carried him close to the tent, where the old missionary knelt by him, weeping.

"I should have permitted the to defend myself," he said to himself.

"It is for the best," he said in a low, halting voice. "I would like to see the father, and be shiverned by the beauty of his life, and the natty chorus get by with dancing and singing which please mightily. The favorites who have been here for the past three days will go this week to a new bunch who will give them a good show, and make the old timer sit up and take notice. The Folly is a show place for the 'boys' who appreciate a show that has plenty of life, fun and pretty girls, and a good time for going to the dance hall, smoke and make yourself at home."

Commencing next week there will be a series of sensational Parisian dances that will beat everything in the dance line ever produced in Detroit.

The old man listened. For some minutes slow words that hurt continued to come. Then Father Gregoire made a sign and Makau came to him.

"Bring Lorimer!" he ordered.

The sick man was brought, supported on both sides, and knelt by the reclining man.

"Mashkagan begets thy forgiveness, an enemy and hated carefully the traitor at the margin of the lake. Then one of them pointed and the other nodded.

They sniffed like moose, scenting an enemy and hated carefully the traitor at the margin of the lake.

"Indeed, I forgive thee all, Mashkagan," said Lorimer. "I would give much to know that we two soon might travel again as friends together in the greatness of the world."

The hunchback smiled at him gratefully and spoke in a stronger voice.

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teaches them the first in a neat clasp-board house, while Mashkagan and the Indians give their lessons in the long evenings. The world's best book is the wonderful book of the great wilderness.

(The end.)

DETROIT THEATRES

AT THE GAYETY

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DETROIT

THE BIG SHOWS

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This is the theater that always gives you your money's worth. The latest and brightest in burlesque every day in the week. Lots of pretty girls, funny comedians, newest songs and dances.

Coming to the Folly For a Jolly time

Manager Levy now perfected arrangements for the season in fine shape, with the result that good old fashioned burlesque is available in Detroit at all times. The shows for the past three weeks on the arrangement have been of high-class, full-blooded and well-entertained visitors.

Visitors to Detroit who are looking for spice and a lot of new gingers are invited to the Folly for the balance of the season.

The pleasure takes one into the realms of fun, with a chorus that is remarkable for beauty of face and figure. In fact the Follies of Pleasure is one of those shows that one can see a mile off.

The Follies of Pleasure is an ideal spot for the "boys" who appreciate a show that has plenty of life, fun and pretty girls, and a good time for going to the dance hall, smoke and make yourself at home.

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