

HOME

A Story of Today and of All Days

By GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN

Copyright by the Century Company

SYNOPSIS.

Alan Wayne is sent away from Red Hill, his home, by his uncle, J. Y., as a moral failure. Alan returns to his home on his birthday. Judge Healy defends Alan in his business with his employers. Alan and Alix, Gerry's wife, meet at sea, homeward bound, and start a flirtation. At home, Gerry, as he thinks, sees Alix and Alan sleeping, drops everything, and goes to Pernambuco. Alix leaves Alan on the train and goes home. Gerry leaves Pernambuco and goes to Piranhas. On a canoe trip he meets a native girl. The judge falls to trace Gerry. A baby is born to Alix. The native girl takes Gerry to the ruined plantation she is mistress of. Gerry marries her. At Maple house Collingford tells how he met Alan—"Ten Per Cent. Wayne"—building a bridge in Africa. Collingford meets Alix and her baby and gives her encouragement about Gerry. Alan comes back to town but does not go home. Gerry begins to improve Margarita's plantation and builds an irrigating ditch. In Africa Alan reads Clem's letters and dreams of home. Gerry pastures Lieber's cattle during the drought. A baby comes to Margarita. Collingford meets Alix in the city and finds her changed. Alan meets Alix, J. Y., and Clem, grown to beautiful womanhood in the city and realizes that he has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Kemp and Gerry become friends. They visit Lieber, and the three exiles are drawn together by a common tie. Lieber tells his story. In South America Alan gets the fever and his foreman sends him to Lieber's.

Consider the mental agony of an intelligent man when he comes to realize that he has committed a great wrong, an irreparable wrong against his wife and against himself. Revelation and a sort of terror come to Gerry.

CHAPTER XXIV—Continued.

"You've been up all night," said Gerry. "Go and lie down for a while. I'll call you if anything happens."

Lieber rose reluctantly. "Don't fail to call me," he said. "I'll leave my door open."

Gerry sat down in a chair beside the settle. He had not known how tired he was himself. Soon he drowsed. His head fell forward on his chest. Sleep came to him and then a great trouble came to his sleep. He roused himself from a nightmare and, suddenly wide awake, found Alan's eyes fixed on his face.

"You!" murmured Alan.

Gerry did not answer. His face became a mask. It seemed to him that only Alan's eyes were alive, and to Alan that Gerry had projected his spirit to his bedside to watch him die.

Alan tried to smile in defiance. "Can't you speak?" he whispered hoarsely.

Gerry leaned forward. The question he had to ask was stronger than he. It forced its way through his lips. "Alan, what did you do with her? Tell me that and I'll go away."

A troubled look came into Alan's thin face. He frowned. "Do with her? Do with whom?"

"Alan," said Gerry, his suppressed voice trembling. "You know. With Alix."

"Oh," said Alan, still struggling on the verge of consciousness. "I remember. I did nothing with her. She wouldn't go with me."

"Alan," groaned Gerry. "I saw you. I saw you and Alix on the train."

The frown was gone from Alan's forehead. He felt sleep coming back to him and he was glad. "Yes," he said, "she was on the train with me. I remember. She jumped off. A baggage man—caught her." He dropped off to sleep again.

Lieber stepped across the floor. He caught Gerry by one ear, and with the other hand over his mouth led him out of the room. Gerry went tamely. When they were on the veranda Lieber looked at him. "So," he said, his blue eyes blazing, "you only want to kill him."

"No," said Gerry, dazed. "not now."

"Mr. Lansing," said Lieber, "you get out of here. We'll settle this business some other time."

Gerry's lip trembled. "You're right, Lieber," he said. "You're right, only you don't know it all. That chap in there—we were boys together. He ran away with my wife. That's why—"

Gerry suddenly stopped. Alix had not run away. She had jumped off the train. Where was she, then? What had she done through the years he had been away? Why had she jumped off the train. He struck his hand to his head and stumbled off the veranda.

Lieber's anger died in him, but he turned and went back to Alan.

Two hours later he came out again to find Gerry crouched on the veranda. The spirit had gone out of him, but he turned on Lieber with a determination in his tired eyes. "You told me to get out and I haven't. There are things I've got to know. I'll walk."

"I spoke in haste, Mr. Lansing," said Lieber. "I want you should forgive me. You are all in, too. Come with me."

He led him into his own room, made him lie down, and closed the shutters. Gerry threw himself across the bed,

played in bringing resurrection to the abandoned plantation and life to the neighboring stock.

Alan cast a curious glance at Gerry. "Dangerous business," he said, "fooling with the normal level in flood country."

Lieber nodded and went on. He told his tale well. He had seen more than Gerry could have put into words. Gerry listened for a while, but he soon wearied. What had all that to do with him now? He wandered off and started to saddle True Blue. He must get away from Alan. Alan was drawing him, but he was bound in chains. He must remember that. Then, too, what Alan had said about fooling with the normal level worried him. He must go back and station a guard at the great sluice gate.

A sudden puff of air, then a breeze, then a gale, swept down on Lieber's from the southwest. The wind was hot, a furnace blast from the torrid wilderness. It carried with it whirled of dust, light, dry sticks, and finally, small pebbles that hurtled along the ground. Gerry and his horse sought shelter by the house. Herders came running out from their quarters and gathered in front of the veranda. The wind suddenly turned cold, dropped and ceased. The dust settled. The sun blazed as before. There was not a cloud in the sky. The herders all looked at Lieber. They did not talk. They were waiting.

Lieber shrugged his shoulders. "Somewhere," he said with a wave of his hand to the southwest, "there has been rain and hail and that sort of thing. Temperature fell and drove the hot air off the desert." He told the men, but they did not go away. They stood around, their eyes sweeping the horizon to the southwest. At last one of them grunted. His eyes were fixed on a distant pillar of dust. It came towards them. Lieber used his field glasses. Without taking them from his eyes, he spoke. "It's a man, riding. Looks like he's riding for life. Something is up. He's riding to kill his horse."

As the man approached, a dull rumbling filled the ears of the watchers. So gradual was its crescendo that they did not notice it. The rider spurred and beat his horse to a final effort. They could see he was shouting. He drew nearer, and they heard him. "Flood! Flood!" Then they noticed the rumbling. It became a roar. Far

from his loins back he was paralyzed. With a last desperate effort he straddled his forelegs, but he could not brace himself against the backward sag of dead weight. Gerry felt him sinking beneath him and suddenly found himself standing over his prostrate horse. Of True Blue, his forehead outstretched, his head and breast still held high, there was left only a great spirit chained to a fallen and dying body.

A cry escaped Gerry's lips—a cry of horror at what he had done. Then he remembered why he had done it and ran not for the sluice-gate but for the bridge. As he reached it the roar became deafening. There was a splintering, crackling sound that, measured like the great commotion, seemed like the flaking of a tiny bell. But there was something in the sound that called to his brain. He cast a glance over his shoulder. The monster beams of his sluice-gate, hurled, splintered, into the air, were still hanging against the blue sky. Under them surged an angry white wall of racing water. Even as he started to run down the long slope to the house Gerry thought with a great relief that if the gate had been closed it would have gone even so, like matchwood.

Below him Fazenda Flores lay peaceful, still, under the blazing sun. The cotton was a little wilted but high and strong, the cane stunted but alive. Only in the pasture bottoms the stock had gathered in frightened clumps. Their instinct had told them that danger hovered near. Suddenly from the quiet house burst Margarita, carrying her son on one arm. She had seen Gerry from a window. While the others watched the rising river, and now this terrifying torrent bursting down upon them from above, she had slipped out to run to him.

The house at Fazenda Flores stood on a domed mound. Behind the mound was a slight hollow before the steady rise to the bridge began. Gerry caught sight of Margarita as she ran down towards this hollow. Terrified, he cast a glance at the descending flood and his eye measured its pace against hers. "Go back!" he shouted with all the strength of his lungs, and waved his arms. It was as though he had not spoken. Through the din and roar of the flood the sound of the words scarcely reached his own ears.

At the very bottom of the hollow Margarita felt that she was stepping

from a terrible dream, but with the sigh that trembled to his lips came realization.

From head to toe he was battered and bruised. His cotton clothes were in tatters. His chest heaved in great, spasmodic gasps. Breath whistled through his wracked lungs. His eyes protruded. His head ached till it seemed on the verge of bursting. But to his mind pierced a thought sharper than pain—the thought of Margarita and the Man. With clenched teeth he struck out for the current.

Far, far away rose a dusty line of mist. It marked the head of the flood—the meeting of water with the accumulated dust of rainless months. Gerry recognized the meaning of that line. Somewhere there in the turmoil of the first rush of the mad flood were Margarita and the Man—what was left of them. The distance dismayed him, but he swam on. Then he felt the fast approaching end of endurance. A sob choked him.

It was only minutes till his arms refused to answer to his will. They moved so weakly that more than once his gasping mouth sank below the water. He swallowed great gulps of the turbid flood. Then an uprooted tree brushed by him. He clutched its branches.

When all else in the world has passed from a man's brain there remains the life instinct—the will to fight for the last minute of his allotted being. The life instinct was all that still lived in Gerry. It urged him to a last effort. He dragged his body upon the tree where the branches forked from the main trunk. Utterly exhausted, he sank into their embrace. They held him as though in a cradle.

The rush of the waters began to slacken. They stretched out over the valley and crept up its sides. They did not flow so much now as rise. The valley became a moving sea. On its flowing surface beasts, fowls and reptiles struggled, mad-eyed, for life. Here and there a bloated carcass, brought down from far up the river, blundered blindly through the living and brought screams of terror from the swimming horses, and gasping lows from the struggling cattle.

From the middle of the sea rose the old plantation house still high and dry on its mound. It seemed very tiny—a toy house on a lonely islet.

A great, open, white umbrella lined with green sailed gently along. It caught in the branches of Gerry's tree. Uprooted cotton bushes floated by, and cane, snapped off, sometimes torn up in whole hills, banked up against the tree and formed a vast, unstable island, toward which swam the deluded stock.

From the mouth of the cleft in the river gorge issued a thundering cataract. It had burst through the walls of the ditch and even unseated a section of the rocky crag against which the sluice-gate had been buttressed. The ditch was gone. It could never be again, for the water was tearing the channel of the cleft deeper and deeper. The turbid flood devoured the silt of the valley, accumulated since man was, and carried it, seething, out towards the river. The valley would be left naked, stripped of the source of life.

Gerry's tree had crawled away from the main current. In a vast eddy it approached the mound whereon squatted the old plantation house. Dona Maria stood at the edge of the waters. Her two hands were clenched and held above her gray head. Thin wisps of hair hung about her face. Her face was distorted. She was cursing Gerry, cursing the day of his birth, the day of his coming, the day he had opened his ditch. She swept her arms over the terrible scene and called down the curse of all the ruin and death on his head. But Gerry was beyond hearing. In all the world there was none to hear the old woman. She stood alone; about her the silent waters, above her the blazing blue sky.

The tree shot out of the eddy. The current, the main current from the cleft, caught it squarely and swept it away. It suddenly shook its long trail of riffraff, and turning and turning, more and more swiftly, swam out on to the churning bosom of the great river.

The valley had disappeared. Squatting on the very level of the far-lung waters, the old house still stood. The bright sun struck a glint of light from its white walls and gave rich colors to its moss-grown tiles. The roof was crowded with fowl and a strange medley of heavy flying birds, glad of a perch on which to rest. Dona Maria went into the house. She closed the great board shutters. The house looked as if it had closed its eyes in a last renunciation.

Gerry's tree floated down the river. It swung slowly along near the north shore. Just below it were houses. They were perched on the cliff. Below them were more houses and under these the tiled roofs of still other houses just topped the flood. The houses were what was left of Piranhas.

From the shore canoes in search of loot began to shoot out on the quieting waters. One of them happened upon Gerry's tree and then upon Gerry. Gerry's eyes opened and then closed again. He scarcely felt the arms that lifted him. They carried him to the old inn, the miserable little inn he had left behind on that glorious morning of so long ago.

Alan opened his eyes and looked at him. "She is waiting. She has always waited for you to come back. She would not believe you were dead, because of the boy."

"The boy?" groaned Gerry. "What boy?"

"Yours," said Alan. "He is a great boy. There is a new Alix since he came. She is as far from me and what she was as the stars. She is a steady star. But it's all right now. You'll go back to her."

"I can't," whispered Gerry hoarsely, more to himself than to Alan. "I've got a wife here. I've got a child here. To me he is my first-born."

Alan's eyes opened, this time in wonder. A twisted smile came to his lips. "You!" he said. "You!" and then the smile changed to a faint disgust. He turned his head on the pillow away from Gerry and slept.

The next morning found Gerry still at Lieber's. Outside the heavenly bowl of blue was virgin of clouds. It stretched and domed in a sphered eternality of emptiness. Through its depressing void the sun swam slowly, pitilessly, as though it were loath to mark the passing minutes. The whole earth barked. Strong trees wilted and turned up the wrong sides of their leaves on the sea of heat like dying fish turning up their white bellies at the last gasp. Not a breath of air stirred. Heat rose from the ground in an unbroken, visible wave. "My God," said Alan, gazing with wistful, far-seeing eyes beyond the familiar, repellent scene, "a homeward fever parches up my tongue." There was such an agony of longing in the words that Gerry was frightened. He looked questioningly at Lieber.

"No," said Lieber, "he's not dying. He was dying, but he's changed his mind. He's going to go home instead."

"I believe he's right, Gerry," said Alan with a faint smile. "But I didn't change my mind. He did it for me. He's in line for a life-saving medal. Lieber's all right." He stopped, tired out.

Lieber began to talk to Gerry. "How's the water in the ditch, Mr. Lansing?"

"Mighty low," said Gerry. He spoke almost absent-mindedly. For the first time in months the ditch was far from his thoughts.

"It's hard luck," said Lieber. "The river's never been so low before—not in the memory of man. We do not hear the falls any more. The river is asleep. Do you want me to send my men down again?"

"It's no use," said Gerry. "I don't dare deepen the ditch any more. It's way below the normal level now."

Alan stirred. "What's that about a ditch?"

In unburied phrases and a low voice Lieber told him the history of Fazenda Flores since Gerry's advent and of the great part the ditch had

played in bringing resurrection to the abandoned plantation and life to the neighboring stock.

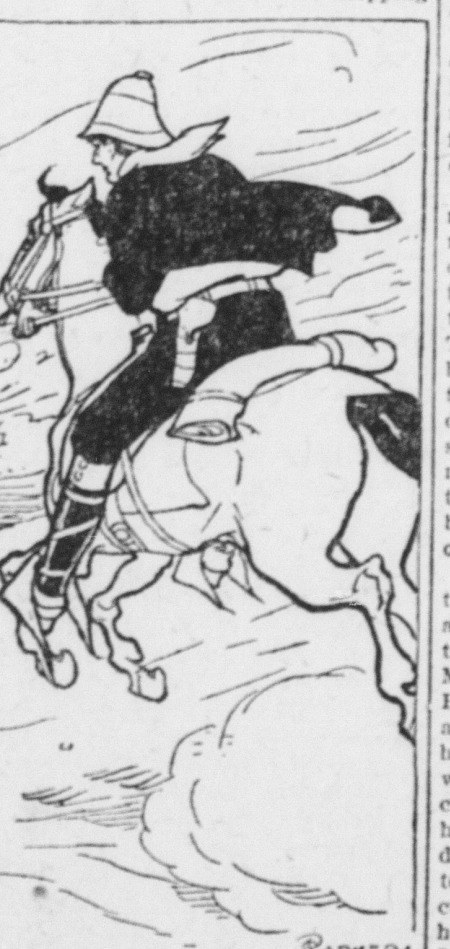
Alan cast a curious glance at Gerry. "Dangerous business," he said, "fooling with the normal level in flood country."

Lieber nodded and went on. He told his tale well. He had seen more than Gerry could have put into words. Gerry listened for a while, but he soon wearied. What had all that to do with him now? He wandered off and started to saddle True Blue. He must get away from Alan. Alan was drawing him, but he was bound in chains. He must remember that. Then, too, what Alan had said about fooling with the normal level worried him. He must go back and station a guard at the great sluice gate.

A sudden puff of air, then a breeze, then a gale, swept down on Lieber's from the southwest. The wind was hot, a furnace blast from the torrid wilderness. It carried with it whirled of dust, light, dry sticks, and finally, small pebbles that hurtled along the ground. Gerry and his horse sought shelter by the house. Herders came running out from their quarters and gathered in front of the veranda. The wind suddenly turned cold, dropped and ceased. The dust settled. The sun blazed as before. There was not a cloud in the sky. The herders all looked at Lieber. They did not talk. They were waiting.

Lieber shrugged his shoulders. "Somewhere," he said with a wave of his hand to the southwest, "there has been rain and hail and that sort of thing. Temperature fell and drove the hot air off the desert." He told the men, but they did not go away. They stood around, their eyes sweeping the horizon to the southwest. At last one of them grunted. His eyes were fixed on a distant pillar of dust. It came towards them. Lieber used his field glasses. Without taking them from his eyes, he spoke. "It's a man, riding. Looks like he's riding for life. Something is up. He's riding to kill his horse."

As the man approached, a dull rumbling filled the ears of the watchers. So gradual was its crescendo that they did not notice it. The rider spurred and beat his horse to a final effort. They could see he was shouting. He drew nearer, and they heard him. "Flood! Flood!" Then they noticed the rumbling. It became a roar. Far



Tore Off in a Mad Gallop.

away on the horizon rose a white, advancing mist. The rider rolled off his staggering horse. "The flood," he gasped. "Never before has there been such a flood."

Before the words were out of his mouth there was a frenzied rattle of hoofs and Gerry on True Blue tore off at a mad gallop down the trail towards Fazenda Flores. Almost at his heels followed the first mounted of the herders, riding all they knew to cut across to Piranhas ahead of the wall of water.

Lieber's eyes followed Gerry's flight. Then he turned them on Alan. "That hollow down there," he said, "will be turned into a rushing river in half an hour—perhaps less. We're just safe here, and that's all. You see Mr. Lansing? He's the spot farthest down the trail. I'm thinking we'll never see him again."

A faint flush came into Alan's cheeks. It was a flush of pride—pride in Gerry. Gerry had not hesitated. He had not ridden off like a laggard. Even now they could see that he was riding for life—riding with all his might for the lives that shackled him.

CHAPTER XXV

Gerry had never ridden a horse to death before. When True Blue first staggered he put spurs to him and laid on his quirt right and left.

The roar of the river was so loud that he could not tell if he had really beaten the flood or not, though he could see just before him the long, snaky ridge of the main ditch banks. He must get on.

But True Blue only came to a staggering stop under the quirt. With his forehead he still marked time as though with them he would drag his heavy body and master one step nearer home.

Would it not be a sort of poetic justice if Gerry should die now without ever being able to make amends to Alix for his dreadful suspicion and without ever seeing his son and heir?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ATTORNEYS.

D. F. FORRESTER
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW
BELLEFONTAINE, PA.
Office South of Court House.

W. HARRISON WALKER
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW
BELLEFONTAINE, PA.
Dr. D. W. High Room.
All professional notices promptly attended to.
A. B. GORRE, J. J. BOWEN, W. A. SMITH

ESTIA BOWEN & SHERY
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW
BELLEFONTAINE, PA.
Bellefontaine in English and German.
Consultations in English and German.

H. B. SPANGLER
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW
BELLEFONTAINE, PA.
Practices in all the courts. Consultations in English and German. U.S. Office, O'Leary's Exchange Building.

CLEMENT DALE
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW
BELLEFONTAINE, PA.
Office E. W. corner Diamond, two doors S. First National Bank.

Penns Valley Banking Company
Centre Hall, Pa.
DAVID K. KELLER, Cashier
Receives Deposits . . .
Discounts Notes . . .

60 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

PATENTS

TRADE MARKS
DESIGNS
COPYRIGHTS, ETC.

Scientific American.

A hand-drawn illustration weekly. Largest circulation of any scientific journal. Terms, \$3 a year. Four months, \$1. Sold by all newsdealers.

MUNN & Co. 361 Broadway, New York

Jno. F. Gray & Son
(GRANDSONS OF J. ROBERTSON)

Control Sixteen of the Largest Fire and Life Insurance Companies in the World. . . .

THE BEST IS THE CHEAPEST

No Mutual No Assessment

Before insuring your life see the contract of THE HOME which in case of death between the tenth and twentieth years returns all premiums paid in addition to the face of the policy.

Money to Loan on First Mortgage

Office in Center's Shoe Building
BELLEFONTAINE, PA.
Telephone Connection

MARBLE AND GRANITE MONUMENTS.

H. O. STROMMEIER,
CENTRE HALL, . . . Pa.
Manufacturer of and Dealer in HIGH GRADE . . . MONUMENTAL WORK in all kinds of Marble and Granite.

BOALSBURG TAVERN

BOALSBURG, PA.
AMOS KOOK, Proprietor

This well-known hospitality is prepared to meet the needs of all travelers. (Selling from 100 to 1000) sleeping at Oak Hall Station. Free delivery made to accommodate the traveling public. No any attached.

OLD PORT HOTEL

BEAVER ROVER Proprietor
Bellefontaine, Pa.
Location: One mile South of Centre Hall. Accommodates five cents. Parties wishing to enjoy an evening even special attention. Many of such occasions prepared on short notice. All were prepared for the transient trade.

DR. SOL. M. NISSLEY,
VETERINARY SURGEON.

A graduate of the University of Penn's Office at Palace Livery Stable, Bellefontaine, Pa. Such phones.