

THE RED LOCK

A Tale of the Flatwoods

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.
—19—

"Let y'u alone—after y'u bungled it the way y'u did—with fifty pistols in the air—and you drunk—h—h—!" This was my lay, anyhow, and a one-man job, only you and Loge had 't mess in—and now, with y'ur long tongues and squirrel whisky, y'uve jined it."

"Mess in?" The shadow among the gnarled roots raised a trifle. "Who hid y'u an' nursed y'u back well again after that marshal dern' nigh croaked y'u last winter? Mess in—!"

The other strode a hard step nearer; apparently realized that any sort of an outbreak just there and then might prove dangerous; finally turned and stalked away up the yard.

The parlor door opened, closed. Black Bogus half rose, slipped away up the jath—and the woodsman was alone with the voice of the night.

Counterfeiters—the mystery was cleared. Simon Collin—money-lender;



"Let Y'u Alone—After Y'u Bungled It the Way Y'u Did—With Fifty Pistols in the Air—an' Y'u Drunk!"

money-lender—offered just the right opportunity.

Their plan was absolutely flawless—each night to slip out a number of good bills and replace them with counterfeit bills of the same denomination. And the rumpling of the spurious bills in tobacco-stained leaf mold to make them appear old and worn, so practically eliminating the chances of detection—it was a master thought.

Crouched in the shrubbery, the woodsman pondered the revelations of the night. But what to do? Proof—it was the one big word that confronted him. Since they had printed their supply of counterfeit bills before coming to the Flatwoods, there would be no outfit—nothing that fire could not destroy.

A thought of the concealed houseboat, with the shapely heelprints on its dusty after deck, crossed him; and assumed a new significance. But one false move and even that would disappear—and they had their eyes on him.

But with all the caution of his woodcraft, Jack Warhope was not a man to plan and scheme. He came of other stock than that. A stroke to the core—when the ripe instant came—and devil take the chips, was his way. A bold thought took shape in his musings—but the ripe instant had not yet come. Another night would bring it, with the banker warned and both of them on guard.

With a grim look on his face he crawled out of the shrubbery, stole back to the path winding along under the dense shadows at the base of Black Rock and slipped through the corner of the orchard to his own small cabin.

Pausing in the fallow yard under an old apple tree, just now renewing its youth in the glory of full bloom, he stood for a long time sifting the sounds of the night and frowning back toward the red-roofed cottage.

The moon stole up under the edge of the east and cast a glittering spear that broke against the face of Black Rock. A quiver seemed to thrill over the sleepy world at the bold assault. The geese in the barn-lot honked and clapped their wings, a bullfrog down in the bayou cleared his throat; a soft breeze waked, rustled the leaves of the old apple tree and snowed the man white with blossoms.

He had his hand on the latch—when suddenly there rang out upon the silence of the night, from the direction of the red-roofed cottage, a woman's wild scream, repeated again and again.

He whirled, rigid, striving to distinguish the cry—but all women scream much alike. Next moment he was dashing across the orchard toward the sound—probably the most awesome on earth—a woman's wild cry in the night.

The sound had ceased when he came out of the orchard and a candle was flitting about the sitting-room. He leaped the orchard fence and ran around to the porch. To his surprise the sitting-room door was partly open and he dashed in.

There in his big armchair in the room that served as office, half bent

By DAVID ANDERSON
Author of "The Blue Moon"
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back over the chair arm, his grizzled head lolled down horribly, sprawled the old money-lender—dead.

Textie was crying wildly in the arms of the housekeeper. The preacher had just come from the parlor bedroom and stood stooped and trembling, peering through his huge spectacles in awed silence. But great as his haste in dressing must have been, he had found time to put on the frock coat and high neck stock—demands of custom that he had probably found impossible to deny.

Jack found the dead man still warm. He noticed that his night shirt was torn to shreds at the neck and sleeves, and that his face was scratched and streaked with blood, but there was no wound apparent that could have caused his death.

The room presented every evidence of a struggle. A chair was overturned; the cover on a small stand had been brushed away; the rug was dragged back a foot or two from before the dead banker's writing desk; where, for an instant the woodsman bent a searching eye upon some faint markings that, in the dim candle-light, could barely be traced upon the dusty floor-boards thus laid bare.

The old man's sawed-off shotgun was lying on the floor, where it had probably been wrenched from his hand before he could use it.

Jack had only time to note these particulars when a rabble of people from the village, alarmed by Textie's screams, came running up the yard and stormed into the house. A moment later Jerry Brown, the town marshal, bustled in and took charge—and the peaceful cottage passed into the hands of the law.

The house was cleared of all but the preacher, the woodsman and two or three women, a messenger sent to the city for the coroner, and a deputy put on guard at the door pending his arrival.

Seventy years ago the coroner's office was in the saddle, the coroner, then as now, always a physician, usually of the "saddle-bags" type, a race of men staunch and true, who, next to the minister and teacher, did most to nurse the young republic to manhood.

Early the next morning the coroner arrived. After a short consultation with Jerry Brown, he entered the room where the tragedy occurred and began his inquest.

Aside from the disarranged furniture, the torn garment, the scratches on the face, there was little evidence, and no clue whatever to the person or persons with whom the old man had waged his fatal battle in the dark. Not a cent of money, or any article of value, had been taken. The safe was still locked, apparently just as it had been left the day before.

Textie testified that she had heard a struggle, and words strained and muffled and indistinct—that she immediately sprang out of bed and ran into the housekeeper's room—that they lighted a candle and hurried downstairs—that there was no one else in the room except her father, and he lay back across the chair arm—her voice choked into silence.

"Were the doors all closed?"

"All but the door of the settin'-room—it was open a little bit."

"Was it closed when you went to bed?"

"I s'pose so—father never failed to shut and lock it."

"Was there more than one key 't the door?"

"No, only one."

"Where was it kept?"

"Hangin' 'hind the door."

"Marshal," directed the coroner, "will you see if that key is still hangin' there?"

The marshal peeped behind the door. "Yes, it's thar yet, Y'ur Honor," he answered.

The coroner relaxed his gruff severity long enough to offer the weeping girl a word of kindly sympathy, and then dismissed her.

The housekeeper was next called. Her testimony agreed in every particular with Textie's.

And then came the preacher. In his peering, jerky way, he testified that he was a heavy sleeper—that he had heard nothing till Miss Textie screamed—that he had then, hastily thrown on the few articles of dress necessary to make himself presentable before ladies—that he had opened his door and hurried across the parlor, across the sitting-room and into the office, where he was horrified to find his dear friend dead, and the room in its present disarray.

"Is it true that you carry a key to the parlor door?"

"It is. Brother Collin placed it at my disposal the evening I came."

"Where is it?"

"Here."

He drew it forth and held it toward the coroner, who waved it away.

"Did you lock the parlor door las' night?"

"I did."

"You're excused."

The coroner looked in his note-book, glanced into the corner of the room where Jack Warhope stood near Textie's chair and motioned with his hand. The woodsman approached the table.

"What do you know of this case?"

"In his slow, careful way the woodsman told what he had heard and seen, from the moment of Textie's scream to the arrival of Jerry Brown. "What was you doin' up so late?"

The question probed deep. Things would have happened had he answered it—and they would have happened fast. Back along the wall the preacher straightened a trifle and his eyes tightened behind the huge spectacles. "I was—studying."

Just what the character of his "studies" had been he left fall no word, and fortunately the coroner did not ask. Back along the wall the tightened eyes behind the huge spectacles relaxed.

"Is it true that you carry, and have for some time carried, a key to the kitchen door?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was that key—las' night?"

"In my pocket."

He drew it out and held it forth; the coroner waved it away; back along the wall the eyes behind the tinted spectacles tightened again.

"It appears from the evidence that you was the only person who could have entered this house las' night without breakin' in."

Textie slowly rose from her chair; her eyes suddenly dried—and wide.

"Your Honor—w-y—that's Jack—Father trusted him the same as he did me—"

The coroner looked toward her; waved his hand. The girl glanced helplessly at the woodsman; sank back into the chair and buried her face in her hands.

Uncle Nick had edged through the crowd and approached the table.

"Doc, Y'ur Honor, he never done it. He couldn't. Hit ain't in 'im—n-r the men 'e sprung from. W-y, I'd back the boy with my life."

The coroner looked at him; turned again to the woodsman.

"Your name's Warhope?"

"Yes, sir."

"Son of Col. David Warhope?"

"Yes, sir."

The coroner mused a moment, then went on.

"I knowed your father, and I don't believe it has ever been my privilege 't know a nobler man or a finer gentleman."

He turned to Uncle Nick, anxiously fumbling the coonskin cap in his fingers.

"You say you'd be willin' to answer for this boy's honesty with your life?"

"I would that."

"So would I." He turned to the woodsman: "Young man, you're excused."

Tense strung bodies relaxed; faces cleared; a murmur swept the crowd—a murmur that, only for the presence of the dead, would have swelled to a cheer.

After writing a hasty line or two in his worn note-book, the coroner rose to the effect that Simon Collin came to his death from an acute attack of apoplexy, precipitated by struggling with some person, or persons, unknown, who had entered the house probably with intent to rob.

Looking around over the assembled villagers, a man seriously conscious of the trust the state had committed to

him, the coroner folded up his note-book, came out from behind the table—and the inquest was over.

The crowd was sent away; the woodsman helped Jerry Brown and the coroner carry the dead man into his room and lay him upon his bed.

Watching a chance when no one was looking, Jack snatched up the sawed-off shotgun and hurriedly examined the caps on the tubes. He found what he was looking for—the fulminate had been removed from the caps, rendering them absolutely neutral. No amount of hammering could have caused them to explode.

Crossing the floor, he took down the key, which the marshal had left hanging behind the door undisturbed, and studied it critically. On the shaft of it was a faint discoloration that could be nothing else but blood.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Beautiful Paper Nests.

But the wasp had been saying: "I'm too busy to bother about her and I don't believe she will bother me." "If she does she will be sorry. Oh yes, that little girl will be sorry if she tries any monkey business with Mr. Wasp."

Now it seemed rather foolish for Mr. Wasp to speak about monkey business when he wasn't a monkey at all and had no monkey business he had to attend to at any time.

But he had heard the expression and it had struck his wasp fancy, and he had decided that he would use it very soon.

"I will be building my mud house now. It will be a regular mud palace."

"Now there is Mr. White-Faced Hornet and his family. There is a clever family.

"They can make paper. They know how to mix up the old bits of wood and splinters and ravelings on fences and barns with sticky stuff and so make beautiful paper nests."

"Some of them can make such good paper that it actually can be written upon with pen and ink.

"They knew how to make paper from wood pulp long, long before people knew how to do this."

"And yet people are always boasting of their great discoveries and accomplishments and don't go around saying how much other creatures have done."

"Yes, the White-Faced Hornet family knew how to make paper from woodpulp before the people. That's a pretty big thing for hornets to have discovered."

"But I am all for mud.

"Give me mud every time. There goes that little girl now! Doesn't she act strangely?—just as though she knew me but I didn't see her as she didn't want to stop and speak."

"Well, she needn't think I want to stop and speak to her.

"I am busy and have other engagements."

And Mahalia was saying to herself: "Dear me, I'm so nervous. I wonder if that wasp noticed me passing?"

"If I can only get away quickly enough I may escape him."

So Mahalia hurried away and all she could talk of for days and days was.

"I saw a wasp the other day. I saw a wasp. The warm weather has come. I saw a wasp."

And so often did she say that, that even Peter Gnome overheard her one evening, and late that night after she was in bed he came and perched himself at the end of her bed and sang this ditty:

"You saw a wasp the other day, yes, yes, you did! You hoped it wouldn't look at you, and you hid, hid, hid. But the wasp was very busy and you were busy, too. So nothing really happened. To the wasp, or to you!"

Tongue Twisters

Daddy dishes dolly Daisy delicious dinners.

Sally showed sister Sue something sild slowly.

Tom took Tressa through Tigers tavern timidly.

Pauline poured peppermints in papa's pockets.

Sally said: "Send Sara some strawberry shortcake."

Sleepy, slender, slim Strieter's siled sild slowly siant.

Some sisters sought silly Susie Sinders Saturday.

"Jinger Jinger's just judgment," joked Jack Joyce.

Bertha Brown's brother borrowed Billy Bremer's books.

Some silly sisters said: "Stop sewing Susie Springer's stockings, Sally."

MAHALIA'S WASP

Mahalia had never liked wasps. Many a wasp had stung her. Not because she had ever meant to hurt any of them but she always happened to have had luck in surprising a family of wasps when she hadn't intended to at all.

And now she had seen her first wasp of the season.

She had not spoken to the wasp though she had said to herself: "Dear me, I hope he doesn't see me."

But the wasp had been saying: "I'm too busy to bother about her and I don't believe she will bother me." "If she does she will be sorry. Oh yes, that little girl will be sorry if she tries any monkey business with Mr. Wasp."

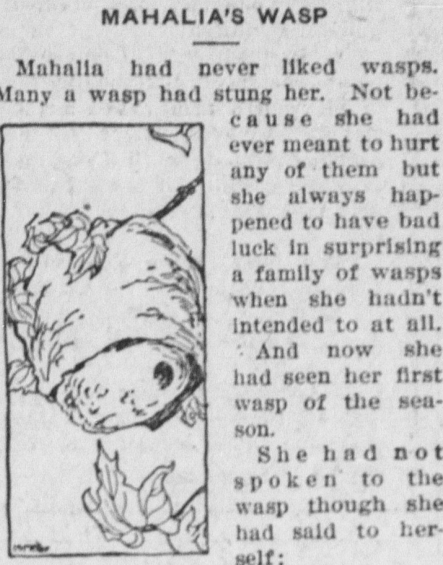
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DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

Mary Graham Bonner
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Just a Little Smile



SHOULD SAY HE WAS!

She was a dainty young thing, dressed in the latest fashion, and as she tripped into the room the office boy gasped, then grinned as she came to a standstill before him.

"Could you tell me if Mr. Jenkins is in?" she asked.

The boy nodded and pointed vaguely over his shoulder at the open door.

The girl hesitated for a moment. "Do you know if he is engaged?" she inquired.

The boy looked astonished. "Engaged?" he almost shouted. "Engaged! Why, he's married and got two kids!"

WHAT HE TOOK

Prosecutor—Did you see him take his departure?

Witness—Ah never seen him take nothin', sah, but his valise.

THE LOST LIGHT

Sweetheart, the wintry skies are cold and gray—

From all life loved apart, The lost, dear lights makes desolate the day.

Sweetheart! Sweetheart! Sweetheart!

KNEW THE COLOR, ANYWAY

"Look here," said the landlord to his tenant, who was two months behind in his rent, "when am I going to see the color of your money?"

"I can't exactly say when you're going to see it," replied the tenant.

"But I can tell you about it. The color just now is invisible green."

LONG ENOUGH

Jack—I say! How long did it take you to learn to drive?

Betty—Only four cars.—London Opinion.

FARAWAY JOB

Lady of the House—Don't you ever look for work?

Hobo Harry—No, mum; me method is to listen in fer it.

OPENING TO A HOLE

"That was a fine opening offered you last week—did you take it?"

"I did—and went in the hole."

SELF-JUDGMENT

I ask of love no promises; The heart that beats for me Will serve no other lady fair, Wherever it may be.

NOW THEY DON'T SPEAK

Mrs. Newcomer—My little girl learned to play the piano in no time.

Mrs. Nextdoor—Yes, I heard her playing it that way this morning.—Boston Transcript.

ALL OF THAT

"That halfback is playing a wonderful game—that's the third field goal he's kicked."

"Yes—he's certainly putting his best foot forward."—Life.

NOT YET

He—Oh, do hurry up, Angela! Haven't you done your hair up by this time?

Angela (from within)—Done it? I haven't found it yet!

RELIEVING THE AGONY

"Hubby, I shall drop into the office this afternoon. I want to see you about five."

"Say no more. Here is the five."

EASY

"Pa, what is capital?"

"The money the other fellow has, my son."

DRAFT FROM THE NORTH

"My, why are you sneezing so?"

"Got a draft on me from the north this morning and it must have given me a cold."

Illustration of two men talking.

Illustration of a man holding a bottle.

Illustration of a man holding a bottle.

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Makes Morning Bright*

St. Joseph's
LIVER REGULATOR
for BLOOD-LIVER-KIDNEYS
The BIG 25¢ CAN

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Fresh and Young

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COMPOUND

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