Jim the Conqueror

By Peter B. Kyne . .

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CHAPTER I

Old William B. Latham lay on a wicker chaise longue in the veranda of his country house, Hillcrest, and pretended to be asleep-a subterfuge quite in keeping with a certain salient characteristic of his which, quite early in his career, had earned for him the not inappropriate sobriquet of "Crooked Bill." Not that the old rascal was crooked in the commonly accepted sense of that term as employed in the quaint patois of our times (indeed he was a most honorable man), but because he was possessed of an uncommon degree of craft, of audacious and generally amusing slyness, in business and out of it-a sort of super-prudence born of uncanny innate ability to read human nature.

Such men are rarely defficient in a sense of humor, and Crooked Bill had found life more abundantly provocative of laughter than of sighs. He was popularly believed to have more money than some folks have hav: he had no wife to bother his life and he paddled his own canoe; also, he enjoyed excellent health.

It pleased William B. Latham this late afternoon to pretend to be asleep in order that he might, from under the drawn-down rim of his hat, watch his late wife's niece engaged in a pastime peculiarly dear to that most attractive young woman, to wit, snaring and breaking the heart of a youth whose manifest decencies appeared, to Crooked Bill, sufficient justification for receiving from the young lady in question what her uncle and guardian described as "a whole lot of letting

With the ordinary run of young gentlemen who laid their vealy hearts at the feet of Miss Roberta Antrim, Crooked Bill had little sympathy and less patience. The majority of them were he-flirts, amusing themselves with Roberta as outrageously as she amused herself with them, or else frankly attracted to her as a moth is attracted to a candle flame. Up to the present none of Roberta's rejects had committed suicide, although not less than four had vowed so to do. Crooked Bill had more than a suspicion, too, that, in addition to Roberta's undoubted charms, the fact that she was his heir was not a negligible attraction to her continuous and shifting entourage.

In the case of the young gentleman who sat with Roberta on the stone bench under the elm, Crooked Bill could find no extenuating circumstances to adduce as to why Roberta should not be convicted of inflicting cruel and unusual punishment. Glenn Hackett, to begin with, was of good family where brains and money, in evidence for three generations, had always been used wisely. He was rather tall, loose-jointed and angular, with a plain honest face like a kind horse. He was thirty years old, a lawyer and a good one, which is to say that Crooked Bill gladly paid him a large annual retainer. The old man's highest compliment for Glenn Hackett was that he had horse sense. and was the only man he knew who appeared to be as common and comfortable as an old shoe and yet wasn't

Crooked Bill wished he might have been privileged to hear what Glenn Hackett and Roberta were saying. However, he was a fairly accurate reader of gesture, facial expression and nods, so he was assured that Hackett was proposing marriage to his niece.

"It'll be like her to refuse him." he decided, "and him the only real man I've ever seem on the premises. And for once in his life he's doing all the talking while Roberta does the listening. I know that meek, sad resigned bend of her head while she tugs at her handkerchief and tries to appear surprised. She must have admiration from men or life is a delusion and a snare! And now she's picked on a victim that's bound to back-fire on her. or I'm no judge of men. Hello, he's talking too much! He's getting oppressive. She's finding the going not to her liking-ah, I thought so!"

Crooked Bill drew his hat brim down over his nose, opened his mouth a little and commenced to breathe in long even respirations. He heard the rapid patter of Roberta's little feet as she passed him and entered the house. In about five minutes he heard the firm, leisurely tread of Glenn Hackett following, and was aware, presently, that the young man had sat down in a chair beside him. So he pretended to sleep on for five minutes. then he stirred uneasily, gritted his teeth, sighed, opened his eyes, and yawned pleasurably.

"Well, now that you haven't had your forty winks," Hackett observed quietly, "what's your opinion as to what my next move should be? I've just filted Roberta!"

Crooked Bill sat up with the abruptness of a Jack-in-the-box, which, in all fairness, he resembled not a little. "Shoot me for a horse-thief!" he ejaculated. "Played fast and loose with you, eh, boy?"

'No. Just tried to." "So, you threw the dally over your | Continue to come out uninvited and | fallen into very great errors; for by

pommel and gave her the bust, eh? Three cheers for our side." "Cheer to your heart's content.

This poor devil isn't dying," Glenn Hackett retorted savagely. Crooked Bill looked cautiously

around to make certain the door from the veranda to the living room was closed, for it was instinct with him never to make a move until all the conditions were propitious. "I hadn't any idea you two were engaged, son." "We weren't, although I think we could have been if I had been fool

enough to insist. Bobby likes me tremendously. I'm sure of that." "Like is right. I doubt if she'll ever love anybody, but if she should I'm certain he'll be a married man with a large family and unavailable from every point of view. You interested her, son, far more than any of your

predecessors, and I've seen them all

come and go. I reckon that's because you were a mite harder to land than the others."

"She's been expecting me to propose for a month, and just a little while ago I was fool enough to do it. She looked so infernally proposable today! And while I was doing it I looked at her steadily and noted the triumphant glint in her eyes, and a little self-satisfied smile on her lovely lips. Something told me she was preparing the skids for me. So, no sooner had I popped the question and no sooner had she commenced to assure me that she hadn't remotely suspected this attachment, than I interrupted her and withdrew my proposition. I begged her not to think any more about it."

"H-l's fire!" Crooked Bill was steeped in reverential awe. "That got her blazing mad," Hackett

continued. "It would anger a sheep," Crooked Bill agreed. "Roberta's mighty high

and handsome in her ideas." "I told her it had suddenly occurred to me that she could never possibly consider marrying a lawyer who grubbed for a living in the heart of New York's financial quarter. I told her I was quite certain that what she was seeking was a knight-errant and I wasn't it. I told her I had suddenly made up my mind that it was all a hideous mistake and-But that's as

far as I got." "She up and left you then, son? She was crying as she passed me. I didn't see her, but my hearing's right good for my years. Boy, you're a gift from God! Continue to play your cards like that and she's yours without a flicker. That girl requires a whole lot o' lickin', but she's only got to be licked once!"

"I'm wondering if I overplayed my

"What if you did? She didn't have even a dirty little deuce to trump your ace, did she?"

"I suppose I startled her. I'm a little bit afraid, Mr. Latham. She plays fast and loose with a man. She's a confirmed flirt."

"They make awful good wives once you halter-break 'em," Crooked Bill

suggested.

"How do you know?" "I married one-and she was that girl's aunt. Roberta comes by her misfortune honestly. All the Barrows women were romantic. In fact Roberta's mother ran away with an end man in a minstrel show. She adored the jokes that boy used to crack until he cracked one on her by marrying her. She bore him Roberta and from that day until he died Roberta ran him ragged and made the poor devil like it. He was a good end man but a poor judge of investments, and when he and his wife were killed in a train wreck, my wife and I fell heir to Roberta. She was eleven then. My wife died ten years ago and I've been riding herd on Roberta ever since."

"I fear you've made a bad job of it, Mr. Latham."

"Well, you can't bar me for tryin'," Crooked Bill responded calmly. "The girl's sound at heart, but cursed with a face and figure that'd make Helen of Troy look like a Navajo squaw in comparison. She has brains, she has poise_"

"Not any more," Glenn Hackett interrupted gloomily. "I've just upset her poise!"

Crooked Bill indulged himself in a very mirthful little chuckle. "Well, at any rate, she's a very good dear sweet

girl," he defended finally, "She can't coquet with me. She wants to be pursued. I'm a busy man and I've pursued her for a year, and you know, Mr. Latham, as well as I do, that whenever she has another swain on hand she always devotes

herself to him and ignores me." "Wants to see if you'll get jealous."

Crooked Bill stroked his chin and spat a thin amber stream over the veranda railing. "Tell you what you do, son," he announced presently, and Glenn Hackett leaned forward to listen to the words of wisdom from the oracle, "You stay to dinner just as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. Roberta'll dine in her room, if she has any appetite at all, which I doubt, because the maid'll tell her you're still here and she'll think that's indecent of you. Let her think it.

you, when she gives you the dead face you grin at her like a Chinese idol and tell her how winsome she looks in that new dress. Continue to advertise yourself, son."

. Pausing not an instant in her precipitate flight from the most amazing and impossible male biped she had ever encountered, Roberta Antrim fled to her room, locked the door, lay down on her bed and indulged herself for ten minutes in that delight of her sex customarily known as a good cry.

"The wretch!" she soliloquized. "The odious boor! He had the effrontery to talk to me exactly as if I were a refractory client instead of the girl he had but a moment before assured he loved to distraction. Oh, dear, what humiliation! I hate him, I hate him. I'll never speak to him again as long as I live."

When a woman has come to that conclusion, quite usually she finds it time to cease vain repining and weeping, lave her inflamed eyes with some soothing lotion and powder her nose. So presently Roberta did all of these things and while doing them appraised herself very critically in her



He Heard the Rapid Patter of Roberta's Little Feet.

mirror. She knew she had a medium sized, well-shaped head covered with the sort of golden-tinted auburn hair which so many women attempt, but which few achieve. She had the sort of rich creamy skin that goes with such hair; her eyebrows and eyelashes were darker than her hair. their luxuriance conveying a hint of Celtic blood.

Her eyes, large, brown and a trifle sleepy, owing to her acquired trick of gazing up at men from under the lids, were ideal for setting the reason of an impressionable male tottering on its throne. Her nose had just escaped being snubby and was tilted at so gentle an angle as to confer upon her a faintly haughty expression when her face was in repose. She had a short, beautifully curved upper lipwhich adorable malformation permitted much too easy a display of even, hard white teeth. Her lower lip was full, tender and just a shade willful. Her chin was full and aggressive, her body beautifully formed. lithe as a cat's and suggestive of abounding health and much outdoor

Despite her almost startling beauty one realized instinctively that Roberta was not (sentimentally speaking) a clinging vine. One felt, too, that she had a healthy temper, despite her perennial good nature and her tolerance for her own sex. As a matter of fact Roberta did possess a temper readily aroused, but she had the saving grace of refusing to admit it except under extraordinary circum-

stances. Appraising herself in her mirror. Roberta reflected with a sort of sweet bitterness that she had dressed that afternoon with an eye single to impinging herself upon the cool, quietly impersonal glance of Glenn Hackett. "If I were a girl who wore diamonds to the breakfast table," she told her reflection, "there might have been some excuse for his gauche conduct. One moment he had proposed and the next he was withdrawing the proposal. I wouldn't have accepted him on a bet, nice as he is and comfortable as he is to have around, but he might | and now the ingrate was running out

power, or rather those powers of the

mind, which are capable of penetrating

into all things within our reach and

knowledge, and of distinguishing their

essential differences. These are no

other than invention and judgment;

and they are both called by the col-

lective name of genius, as they are of

those gifts of nature which we bring

with us into the world; concerning

each of which, many seem to have

so! He was terrible! He gave me the impression that, in one revealing moment, he had seen something in me that revolted him-and I'm not revolting, I'm not, I'm not-"

Once more she gave way to tears. but not for long. She dried her eyes and applied the powder rag. And then the real reason for her charmthe reason men adored her and made love to her-presented itself. Roberta was a good sport-none better, and hated a quitter with all the strength of her vital, intelligent soul. She made a little grimace at herself.

"Well, Bobby Antrim, you took a man's-size beating, didn't you? That Hackett imbecile isn't dull, at any rate. And I did start to say something banal-all about never having suspected his attachment! I see it all very clearly now. Right there little Bobby went blah! Yes, that was a sour note-and he has an ear for music. That man-animal has some pride-and I had thought they all

had ego!" She sat down in a low rocker to think it over very carefully. As usual, her resentment and rage were disappearing at the double; she was only sensible now of a feeling of humiliation, not so much because of what Glenn Hackett had said and done as because she had failed so miserably in feminine adroitness to meet an extraordinary situation. In a way of speaking he had demolished her. Paralyzed her powers of initiative and inventiveness and left her helpless to defend herself! ground her to a pulp! He had proved to her what a monumental failure she had turned out to be in an art where, to quote Crooked Bill, she was supposed to be 150 per

cent perfect! Suddenly Roberta began to laugh. "Thinks he's won a great victory." she decided. "Well, like John Paul Jones, I have not yet begun to fight. I'll bring that unusual man to his knees and when I have him there I'll-well. I'll not do anything so unladylike as to put my foot in his face, but I'll laugh at him! I swear I will. I'll laugh out loud!"

There is always a feeling of comfort when one has come to a decision after wrestling with a knotty problem. Roberta had her polse back again; she felt again that she was ready to conquer new worlds and make them like it. She went downstairs and found Glenn Hackett and Crooked Bill in the library enjoying

cocktails. "Have one, honey?" her guardian asked coaxingly. "A tiny one?" "No, thank you, Uncle Bill. Give my share to Mr. Hackett. He's going

to need it to give him courage to face the future." "Bah!" Mr. Hackett replied rudely.

He caught a wildly approving wink from Crooked Bill and decided to leap in over his head. "Sour grapes," he added-a bit viperishly, Roberta thought.

Roberta smiled with exceeding politeness, but there was coolness in the smile. Crooked Bill noticed her chin had gone up about a quarter of an inch. "Let's be good friends, Glenn," she said in her most ingratiating and fascinating manner. "You are so intelligent one can't help being attracted to you, and usually you're very nice. Really, if your bank account should ever be brought to the sear and yellow leaf you should set up as a fortune-teller and mind-reader."

"I thought I had read yours correctly. I see now I did not." "Indeed, you did. You're marvelous."

"You'll marry me when I get ready to marry you," he charged amiably. "Why, you tell jokes, don't you?"

"Time!" Crooked Bill saw that the issue was far from clarifying. "No more of these lovers' quarrels, Roberta. Glenn is staying for dinner. You'll join us, of course, honey?" "Why, certainly, Uncle Bill. How

delightful, Glenn!" Any man who thinks he can outfence a woman is a fool, and suddenly Glenn Hackett realized he was all of that. Such realizations always disturb a manly man. "If I remain for dinner, Mr. Latham, I fear I'll not be able to do justice to your excellent cuisine. Therefore, with your permission, Bobby, and yours, sir, I'd like to motor

back to town." Crooked Bill was upset. "H-l's fire!" he exclaimed, using his most formidable oath. He had placed his money, so to speak, on young Hackett

derstood a creative faculty, which

would indeed prove most romance

writers to have the highest pretentions

to it; whereas by invention is really

meant no more, and so the word sig-

nifies, than discovery, or finding out;

or, to explain it at large, a quick and

sagacious penetration into the true es-

sence of all the objects of our con-

Being happy is largely forgetting.

templation.—Henry Fielding.

Genius as Understood by Old English Writer

By genius I would understand that I invention, I believe, is generally un-

unexpected whenever the notion grips | have given me an opportunity to say | on him, to employ a colloquialism. He was prepared to enter a vigorous protest, but the maid, entering with a telegram, rendered that impossible. "A telegram for you, Miss Roberta!"

> "Thanks, Minna. May I?" With uplifted brows to her uncle and his guest, she commenced to tear the en-"She's very polite, no matter what

marked to Crooked Bill. Roberta ignored him and read aloud: "Los Algodones, Texas,

her other faults may be," Hackett re-

"June 21, 1925. 'Miss Roberta Antrim, Hillcrest, Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.

"Your uncle Tom had an argument with a cowman yesterday stop There will be a funeral tomorrow stop I got your address by frisking Uncle Hom on whose person I found your letter to him of the second instant stop If you insist I will send him to you charges prepaid stop However if you will take the advice of a well-intentioned stranger you will permit him to await the trump of resurrection in the land his sheep made fallow stop If you have any interest in his estate I suggest you take steps to protect it stop If unable to do this immediately wire me authority and I will take charge of it stop Most usually I am honest stop Reference Federal Trust company El Paso.

"JAIME MIGUEL HIGUENES." "H-l's fire!" Crooked Bill's voice was the first to break the silence when Roberta had finished reading this remarkable communication. "It's true. There is a God that marks the sparrow's fall-and your Uncle Tom was a

"Well, now that he's dead. Uncle Bill, you might be charitable and speak kindly of him. At least he was my last of kin," Roberta chid the old

"All right, honey, I'll not say another word." Glenn Hackett thought the situa-

tion, while a bit clouded, deserved the customary consideration. "I'm very sorry, Bobby," he said.

"That's kind of you, Glenn. Unfortunately I never knew Uncle Tomhad never seen him, that is. It's too bad, of course, but really poor Uncle Tom wasn't a very lovable character, I'm afraid."

"He was a turkey buzzard," Crooked Bill declared with finality. "Roberta's paternal uncle," he went on to explain for the benefit of Hackett. "He took to associating with sheep. I reckon the old bandit must have been worth considerable, and so far as I know, Roberta, you're his next of kin. So it looks as if you're in the sheep busi-

ness in Texas." Roberta read the letter again. "Judging by the name of the sender of this telegram, Jaime Miguel Higuenes, it would appear that Texas boasts at least one very intelligent, very thoughtful, very frank and very humorous Mexican. He expresses himself like an educated American. Uncle Bill, you spent a great many years down there. Do you happen to know

the Higuenes family?" Crooked Bill's face had worn his most crafty smile while Roberta was speaking, but now it was blank and expressionless. "It's been twenty-five years since I operated in Texas, Roberta. Higuenes! Higuenes! I can't seem to remember anybody by that name,"

"It would appear," Roberta decided presently, "that I have need to engage a lawyer to investigate Uncle Tom's estate." She glanced with frank interest and approval at Hackett.

"Certainly. Of course," Crooked Bill agreed, and thought more kindly of Uncle Tom for having provided an opportunity for these two to forget their recent differences and be friendly again in the name of business. "Hackett is the very man."

"Hackett isn't," that harassed person declared with finality. "Jaime Miguel Higuenes is. That man is honest and fearless. I can tell that much from his telegram. Also he gives bank references. If you desire, Roberta, I shall telegraph the bank he mentions. If the bank's reply would seem to indicate the advisability of requesting Higuenes to take charge of your Uncle Tom's estate for the present, may I send him a telegram, signing your name, and requesting him

to do so?" Roberta was rereading the telegram. "I think," she declared, "that Jaime Miguel Higueres must be a perfectly fascinating person. In twenty-three words he gives one the whole dramatic story of a bloody shooting scrape out on the range and gives one the impression-in fact, the conviction-that the result was no surprise to him and that he is not sorry the tragedy occurred! He is resourceful, not squeamish and has initiative, because in the pursuit of information he dared to pick a dead man's pocket. He is kind and friendly and thoughtful and wants to help a person he has never seen, and he is a man of substance and takes a justifiable pride in his

personal and financial standing." "Oh, those Spanish dons are as proud as Lucifer," Crooked Bill assured her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Denver Boy is a Winner



Every mother realzes how important it is to teach children good habits of conduct but many of them fail to realize the importance of teaching their chil-

dren good bowel habits until the poisons from decaying waste held too long in the system have begun to affect the child's

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Bailiff-No, the petit jury. Mrs. O'Noodle-Then I shall not serve. You put Mrs. Umtiddle on the grand jury, and I'm just as good as she is.

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