

The Doom Trail

—By—

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Author of *PORTO BELLO GOLD, Etc.*

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"Master Ormerod, this could not have been better! I wished above all things for speech with you. Corlaer, I am deeply in your debt. Ta-wan-ers, you have again incurred the gratitude of the province."

"Did you receive my report from Oswego, sir?" I asked.

"Certes, 'twas that—and this"—he tapped a document which lay before him on the table—"which brought me here."

He proffered it. 'Twas a report from a secret agent at Montreal, quoting the decision of the French fur dealers, acting in conjunction with their government, to raise the price of beaver from two livres, or one shilling six-pence in English currency, the pound, to the level of four livres, or three shillings, the established price then prevailing at the English trading posts.

"That, mind you," continued the governor as I returned the paper to him, "was the first reaction in Canada to the tidings that Murray had succeeded in legitimizing his trade over the Doom Trail. But come with me. It may be I shall appeal to you for first-hand testimony."

We deposited our muskets in a corner of the room, and filed into the larger chamber adjoining where some thirty men awaited him. Several were gentry who were members of his council. Three were officers in command of the frontier garrisons. The remainder were merchants, dealing to greater or lesser extent in the fur-trade, the great export staple of the province.

His excellency wasted no time in preliminaries or generalities. He deposited several papers on the table in front of him, and addressed himself to his task.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I have summoned you to meet me here because a situation has arisen which is of the utmost gravity to the welfare of the province and the larger interests of his majesty's realm. Recently I have been in receipt of a communication in the form of a petition signed by many of the chief merchants of the province, beseeching me to abandon my opposition to the retention of the free trade with Canada which is now temporarily secured to them by the action of the lords of trade in suspending decision upon the law prohibiting the trade in Indian goods which I secured to be passed last year."

That petition represented the sober thought of a majority of the merchants and traders, your excellency," spoke up a prosperous-looking man.

"It may be so," replied the governor. "But I would suggest to you, my friends, that certain knowledge hath come to me which compels me to wonder whether you would persist in this attitude were you acquainted with it. Briefly, I have lately obtained definite information that the French are beginning the erection of a stone fort at Jagara. The territory this side of the falls of Jagara is secured to us by the Peace of Utrecht. 'Tis not only that the French have no right to construct a fort there. They have no right to maintain a trading post there."

"Yet my agent talked with the officers in charge, Monsieur de Jolncaire and Monsieur de Lery, and they boasted of their intent to erect such a fort as would be a curb on our Indian allies, the Iroquois, and divert to their posts farther up the Cadaraku lake the fur trade which now comes to us at Irondequoit and Oswego. Schenectady and New Albany."

"At the time I received word of the building of the fort at Jagara, I received also this report from an agent in Montreal, announcing the doubling of the price paid for beaver at the French posts, so that now they are on a par with us."

"We can afford to pay more than we do. London will still take it from us at a profit," rejoined the merchant who had first spoken.

"Trade is trade," cried another. "It goes where the money is."

"Aye, we have no fear," clamored others.

"Let us suppose," resumed the governor, "that the French permit you to draw supplies of furs through them. I can conceive they might do so if it netted them the prices they desire. Does that mean that you will always be safe in expecting to have your wants so filled?"

"To be sure," answered three or four men at once.

"I differ with you," replied Master Burnet. "The fur trade is not only a means to earn profits. 'Tis a most important stake in securing military success. The nation which controls the fur trade, my masters, will have the interest of the larger numbers of savages. The nation which owns the support of the most Indian tribes will be the nation superior in extending its territories in time of peace and superior in battle in time of war."

"It ill becomes a plain merchant to take issue with your excellency," re-

marked a hard-featured merchant, "but it seems to me you attach overmuch importance to savage tribes and war. There is enough land in North America for French and English and Indians, too. Trade is everything."

"So long as 'tis rightly conducted," amended Master Burnet. "Bear in mind, my masters, that the whole history of our possessions on this continent disproved the statement that there is land enough for ourselves and the French. The French are the first to dispute this view."

"They plan openly to drive us into the sea. The New France they see in the future will embrace all the settlements of the Atlantic coast together with the inland wilderness."

"But they know not our English breed if they think to do so," cried a neighbor.

"Or the Dutchman, either," said a third.

"Good! That is the spirit I want to arouse," acknowledged the governor, quick to seize what he thought an advantage. "Gentlemen, what I desire from you especially today is your support in a plan I have been considering for moderating the exit of goods to Canada. The volume reached in recent weeks passes all reason. If permitted to continue 'twll exhaust our supplies. It plays directly into the hands of—"

But he was not suffered to continue. "Free trading!" shouted a group.

"Stick by the law, governor!" warned one.

"The law is the law!" cried a third. The prosperous-looking merchant stood up and made himself heard by pounding his stick on the floor.

"Do I understand your excellency to mean that you would alter the instructions received from the lords of trade?" he asked.

"My plan is rather to amend the carrying out of the law by certain restrictions until I can forward representations on the situation to their lordships," replied Master Burnet steadily.

"But as one of my brethren has just remarked, the law is the law."

"The trouble here, sirs, is that there is no law," declared the governor. "We have the suspension of the law, and in the interim there is no provision for a substitute statute."

"Tush, we want no such law," proclaimed the hard-featured merchant. "Let us not quibble. His excellency might as well know the truth. Since Master Murray won his case we have been able to sell and buy as we chose. And our coffers have swollen thereby."

"The law was an ill-judged law. It restricted trade, reduced profits. Let the French secure furs if they wish. They may do the dirty work. We will sit back and reap the profits. Better have free trade under France than limited trade under England or any other country."

"You talk treason, sir," said the governor coldly. "Moreover, you talk foolishly. There is no freedom of trade in Canada—"

"Well, we have it here; and by—, we'll keep it as long as we can," replied the merchant.

"That is not like to be very long, my masters," announced a new voice.

All eyes were turned to the door. There stood Andrew Murray, laced and cocked hat tucked under his arm. He bowed low to the governor.

"I must beseech your excellency's pardon for my unheralded entrance," he said. "I am but just arrived in town, and I hastened here to present my case to you."

He swept his eyes over the room as he spoke and fastened them upon my face.

"You are welcome, Master Murray," returned the governor. "Had I known where to reach you I should have invited your attendance."

"I am honored, sir. I venture to intrude upon you because of information I possess which I am sure will be of interest to you and all others who have the prosperity of the province at heart."

"I am interested," said the governor impartially. "Pray state your case, Master Murray."

"I shall do so all the more readily, your excellency, because I am persuaded you can have no knowledge of the crimes recently committed by persons who represent themselves to be your agents."

"I see in this room three men whom I charge with the wanton destruction of a large quantity of furs and the murder of two of my servants and a number of friendly Indians."

And that there might be no mistaking the objects of his accusation Murray pointed his forefinger at my comrades and me. Murmurs arose and hostile glances were bent upon us.

"Be explicit, if you please," said the governor.

"I will, sir," replied Murray boldly. "The young man known as Harry Ormerod, with Peter Corlaer and a Seneca chief called Ta-wan-ers, raided a fleet of canoes on the shore of the Cadaraku lake near Oswego and burned hundreds of packs of valuable furs which the far-western savages were bringing in for trade."

"I have heard something of this matter," admitted Master Burnet. "But I understood the savages were in charge of Monsieur de Jolncaire, and the French commandant at Jagara, and bound for Montreal."

"Monsieur de Jolncaire was accompanying them, 'tis true," admitted Murray. "But the savages were bound for my own trading stations. The loss, which will run into thousands of pounds, will fall upon our New York markets."

The murmurs grew into an outburst of indignation which the governor quelled with difficulty.

"I shall look into Master Murray's charges," he said. "So much, at least,

he is entitled to. But first I wish to acquaint him with what I have laid before this gathering, all the more so because he is more vitally interested perhaps than any other."

"Master Murray, I am concerned over the extent to which the fur trade is passing into French hands, and I am bound to say my information indicates that the French have your assistance in the matter. The quantities of trade goods going up-river have enormously increased this summer. They are hundreds of tons in excess of what formerly passed through Albany."

"Doubtless our trading posts have profited thereby," suggested Murray blandly.

"On the contrary," returned Master Burnet with decision. "Our trading posts have fared worse. If anything Aside from the Iroquois, the savages are patronizing more and more the French traders. Briefly Master Murray, I am canvassing the sentiment of our merchants on the advisability of suspending for the time being, to some degree at any rate, the proclamation I issued in response to the action of the lords of trade in withholding the assent of his majesty's government to our law prohibiting the trade in Indian goods with Canada."

Murray took snuff deliberately.

(Continued Next Week)

URBAN LEAGUE TO DISCUSS SOCIAL RESEARCH

Delegates from the National Urban League and its forty branches are to meet in St. Louis, March 29th to April 2nd to discuss the subject, "Readjustment of Social Programs in the Light of Research." This, the sixteenth annual conference of the Urban League, is to be participated in by leading white and colored public welfare workers in addition to the executive secretaries, industrial secretaries and other Urban League field workers.

Reports on social studies will be made by investigators who have made social surveys in many cities and programs to meet the social needs revealed will be presented and discussed.

Among the speakers for the evening sessions are: John W. Davis, president of the West Virginia Collegiate Institute; Howard R. Knight, general secretary of the National Conference of Social Work; Judge Albert George, of the Chicago Municipal Court; Professor J. R. E. Lee, of A. and M. College, Tallahassee, Florida; John Hope, president of Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia; Lloyd Garrison (the great-grandson of Garrison, the liberator), treasurer of the National Urban League; Eugene Kinckle Jones, executive secretary of the National Urban League; and A. Philip Randolph, general organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

Professor Ellsworth Faris, head of the department of sociology of the University of Chicago, will discuss "The Relation of Biological Experiments to Sociology of the Negro." Charles S. Johnson, director of the department of research and investigations of the National Urban League, will outline the principal social studies of the past year or two with an analysis of the results obtained therefrom. Forrester B. Washington, executive secretary of the Armstrong Association of Philadelphia, will present the findings of the recent survey of the Negroes of Detroit which study he supervised; and T. Arnold Hill, director of the department of industrial relations of the National Urban League, will present the industrial needs of the Negro on the Pacific coast as he observed them on his recent tour.

The league is inviting representatives of social service organizations and students interested in Negro welfare to join its staffs and board members in a discussion of plans and methods for improving the social work among Negroes and in meeting the new demands of the fields of industry.

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