

# The Doom Trail

— By —  
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 Author of PORTO BELLO GOLD, Etc.  
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"I am not surprised," he commented "I am free to say, your excellency, that I have noted hitherto a laxness on the part of the provincial authorities in administering the free-trade requirements of their lordships."

"You charge that?" inquired the governor coldly.

"I do, sir. And I give fair warning that, with a view to the best interests of the province and in response to the wishes of the majority of the merchant, I purpose to carry my complaint before the privy council at the earliest opportunity."

Governor Burnet rose from his chair. The cordiality was gone from his manner.

"This meeting is dissolved," he pronounced. "No, not a word gentlemen"—this as several undertook to object—"I still hold his majesty's commission as governor, and I purpose to secure assent to my authority by one means or another. I have striven to reason with you. I shall now proceed as seems best to me. Master Murray file your charges in writing and be prepared to bear testimony in their defense. You may go."

The door closed on the last of the turbulent group.

"But, your excellency," I protested "why do you permit Murray to make such charges without bringing up against him the information we gathered at La Vierge du Bois? Sure, 'tis some measure of offense to apply torture to a fellow-countryman; and for the rest, there is the testimony of Ta-wan-ne-ars to corroborate me."

Governor Burnet shook his head sadly.

"You forget that unfortunately your own past is somewhat clouded in the eyes of the law. Did I charge him with anything on your evidence, he would assail you for a known Jacobite and outlaw, and whatever counter-charges we might make he would dismiss as mere efforts to offset your guilt."

"Why, 'tis incredible, your excellency," I cried with heat. "Here we have beside myself, Peter Corlaer, who is surely known for trustworthy, if I am not. And Ta-wan-ne-ars is a chief as well as a man of education, even ac-



ording to white men's standards. Must we suffer this self-confessed traitor to escape scot-free?"

The governor shook his head again. "I dare not, Master Ormerod. Unfortunately, as I have said, and through no fault of your own, you are discredited in advance as a witness. Peter is known for a sturdy hater of the French and devoted to me and to those who think as I do, notably your friend Master Juggins in London."

"Ta-wan-ne-ars is an Indian. He will acquit me of intent to offend if I say openly that my enemies will refuse to accept his word against that of a great merchant like Murray."

He hesitated a moment, deep in thought.

"There is no other way," he decided suddenly. "Draw up your chairs, have much to ask of you, and 'tis more than fair that I should present for you all the facts in the case."

"Advices from Paris," continued the governor, "state that the Pretende has been called to the Louvre on two occasions for secret conferences. The duke of Berwick is gone to Spain—'tis reported to arrange for contingents of troops. Master Ormerod will understand the seriousness of such news."

"I need not acquaint you with the preparations the French are making upon this continent, but it may interest you to know that the duke of Newcastle has been pleased to write me remonstrating over my inability to get along better with the prominent men of the province. This I deem most significant, for it is no more than the voice of Murray speaking through the medium of his grace's pen."

— am in an immense gentlemen in London a corrupt ministry is more interested in the spoils of office than in intelligent rule. In New York a powerful coterie of merchants, who have discovered a way by which they are persuaded, they can all grow rich in a few years, have permitted themselves to become the active tools of an invidious mind which would purchase the return of the Stuarts at the price of handing over to French rule the British domain in North America.

"My sole reliance today is upon a few personal friends like yourselves—and the political keenness and military energy of the Iroquois."

"What I am about to say is of the utmost importance to Ta-wan-ne-ars and his race. You have heard me admit my impotence. You know that the rule of the English is in danger. Will you, Ta-wan-ne-ars, go with my ambassador, Master Ormerod and Peter Corlaer, to the Ho-yar-na-go-war, the council of the roy-an-ehs, and support them in asking for the intervention of the Long House to smash the Doom Trail and Murray's conspiracy to win control of that fur-trade from our hands?"

Ta-wan-ne-ars rose and his right arm went up in the Iroquois salute.

"Ta-wan-ne-ars will do as Ga-en-gwa-ra-go asks," his deep voice boomed.

Governor Burnet drew a deep breath of relief.

"I thank you, my brother," he said. "You have relieved the load of sorrows I have carried. I ask you this you understand, not alone as a favor an act of friendship, but because, as I think, your people will come to believe when they consider it that the success of Murray's plot will mean the crushing of the Long House by the French. By the way, Colden, where is the Belt of the Covenant Chain?"

The surveyor-general drew from a traveling trunk in a corner a band of wampum about three feet long and eight inches wide. Crudely woven into it in different colored beads were the figures of an Indian and a white man with hands joined. The governor examined it curiously.

"This belt was given to me by To-do-da-ho," he said, turning to me. "He bade me, at any time I required speech with him or desired his friendship and assistance, to send it to him as a reminder of his pledge of alliance. I entrust it in your hands, Master Ormerod."

Several hours later, when the lights of Albany were gleaming through the night, the governor said good-by to us at a sally-port. He offered no parting advice, indulged in no rounded homilies. That was not his way. He had laid all his cards before us on the table; he had taken us completely into his confidence; he had told us how much depended upon our effort. He was content with that.

We set our feet to the Great Trail and made camp toward morning in the woods beyond Schenectady, deeming 't best not to show ourselves in the settlements.

Our journey was uneventful. We rapidly traversed the Mohawk and Oneida countries, and came presently to Ka-na-ta-go-wa, the seat of the council fire of the Great League, where To-do-da-ho dwelt. To-do-da-ho himself was a wrinkled wisp of a man who would have seemed a corpse as he crouched down, burdened with heavy robes, but for the warm brightness of his eyes that glowed from under befitting brows.

He made me welcome in a speech of high-sounding phrases, which Ta-wan-ne-ars translated; and I replied as best I could through the same medium, confining my remarks to expressions of the honor I felt in being so received and the affection in which the roy-an-eh and his people were held by the governor. We smoked the ceremonial pipe as usual, and the council broke up.

The real business was transacted the next day when we three had speech privately with To-do-da-ho, and I gave him the Belt of the Covenant Chain and the message of the governor. He heard me out in silence, and sat for a while smoking, his eyes fixed on vacancy. This was his answer:

"What Ga-en-gwa-ra-go says by your mouth is so. I have watched with uneasiness the efforts of the French to control the fur trade. So have many of our wise men, but most of our people are busy with their hunting and other affairs and they do not consider such matters. In this they are much like the white people."

"Ga-en-gwa-ra-go says that it is to the interest of the people of the Long House to break down the Doom Trail. I agree with him. But Ga-en-gwa-ra-go is a ruler of men, and he knows it is always difficult to induce a people to take a difficult course of action unless the suggestion comes from their midst. My counsel to you is that you continue along the Great Trail to the country of the Senecas, and give the message of Ga-en-gwa-ra-go to Do-ne-ho-ga-neh, the Guardian of the Western Door."

(Continued Next Week.)

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