

# The Doom Trail

— By —  
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*Author of PORTO BELLO GOLD, Etc.*  
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## THE STORY

CHAPTER I—Harry Ormerod, proscribed traitor to King George as a Stuart partisan, returning from France to London, rescues Alderman Robert Juggins from a band of assassins. Juggins proves to be the grandson of a former steward of Ormerod's father, to whom Juggins feels himself indebted. Ormerod tells Juggins he has abandoned the Stuart cause.

(Continued from last week)

"After the passage of the law, in spite of efforts to enforce it, Murray contrived to build up a clandestine means of shipping goods to Canada, and while the French are more pressed for cheap trade goods than they were, nevertheless they are better off than they should be, and our traders are put at a disadvantage. Now the time for which the law was passed is expired, and the provincial government hath enacted it again. It comes up this afternoon before the lords commissioners for trade and plantations, when Murray will petition for its rejection."

"But surely he will lose," Juggins shook his head.  
 "I fear not. The best we can hope for is a compromise."  
 "Yet you say he is in alliance with the French and the Jacobites?"  
 "I say that, Master Harry, but I cannot prove it. Remember, even you, who have recently come from St. Germain, had never heard of him. Moreover, he is hand in glove with the Pelhams and all the corrupt officials in Whitehall. He hath buttered many a grasping hand, and if he can secure his operations a few years longer he will have laid the groundwork for England's overthrow in the New world."  
 "I leave to your imagination the effect upon our people at home of a disastrous war with France at this juncture. King George is scarce settled on his throne, and so good an excuse would pave the way for the Stuarts' return."  
 "Yes, that is true," I assented. "Tis a dangerous plot."  
 Juggins looked at me keenly.  
 "You are still desirous to join in thwarting it?"  
 "More so than ever. But I see not how I can be of service to you."  
 "If the lords of trade have received the orders I expect, then you can be of great service to me and to your coun-

try. Come, you must have your first lesson. You may attend me to the hearing before the lords of trade. I wish you to observe what passes at the hearing, and to study Murray. For if he wins his stay, as I fear he will, then it is my purpose to send you to New York for such evidence as will wreck his conspiracy."

"And I will go gladly," I said, a thrill of excitement in my heart at the bare thought of a man's part to play. He collected some documents and maps, placed them in a green scribe bag and gave it to me to carry.

"And remember," he cautioned me at the door, "do you keep at least two paces behind me. Speak only when I speak to you and hold your head low and your shoulders stooped. Sioch if you can. If any address you look stupidly at them and mumble an answer. I will explain that you are slow witted."

But none of the men who stopped Master Juggins during our walk deigned to notice the humble 'prentice lad who followed him. I avoided all scrutiny and reached Whitehall with considerable more self-confidence than I had started with.

The lords of trade sat in a lofty chamber of a dirty gray stone building



over against the river. At one end was a dais with a long, closed-in desk across it. Behind this nodded my lords in periwigged majesty, five of them, two fat and pompous, one small and birdlike, one tall and cadaverous and one who looked like nothing at all.

"That is Tom Pelham," whispered Master Juggins, pointing at the last as we took our seats.

But I had already transferred my gaze to an extraordinary creature who stood by a window on the opposite side of the room. It was a black man, squat and enormously broad, whose long, powerful arms reached almost to the floor.

As I watched him, fascinated, his eyes found my face and he surveyed me, apparently without any human interest whatsoever, but as a wild beast might consider a fat stag when too

full to care about a kill. He was dressed in a bright-red livery coat with gold lace, and the cocked hat which he held was covered with silver embroidery.

I felt Juggins tugging at my arm. "Do you see him?" he whispered. "I never saw anything so hideous in my life," I answered.

Juggins laughed, as his eyes followed mine.

"No, I meant not the negro. 'Twas Murray I spoke of. He sits several seats farther on."

I looked as directed and picked out a man who lounged back comfortably in a chair, talking with a group of merchants who seemed to hang on his words. He was elegantly clad, yet very quietly, rather in the fashion of a fine gentleman than a rich trader.

Though sitting, he showed himself to be a large man of massive frame. He wore an immense perwig in the prevailing mode, and there was about him an air of pride and self-confidence. Though he must have been middle-aged, he carried himself like a young man or a soldier.

"He is no enemy to be slighted," I said.

"No, he thrives upon opposition; but—"

A secretary rapped for order. "To the king's most excellent majesty in council," he recited from a document he held, "the humble petition and representation of Samuel Baker, Samuel Storke, Richard Janeway and others, merchants of London, trading to New York, in behalf of themselves and the rest of the persons concerned in the New York trade; which petition having been considered by his majesty's council, hath been referred, with his gracious consent, to the lords commissioners for trade and plantations."

"You will note," whispered Master Juggins in my ear, "that the name of Murray is not included in the list. He appears here, not as the principal, which he is, but at the request of these merchants, who are his decoys, and ostensibly in their interest."

"You have heard the petition and reference of the council read," gabbled Pelham in whining voice. "We will now hear arguments by the opposing sides. Who appears against the petition?"

Master Juggins rose beside me. His arguments were substantially those he had used with me, but marked additionally by a mass of facts and statistics. When he sat down it seemed to me that no Englishman who thought of his own country's interest could resist the logic of his appeal.

There was a smattering of applause and then a merchant introduced Murray, with the remark that he had kindly consented to give his opinion, as he had recently come on a visit to London from the province of New York where he was in residence.

"The gentleman who preceded me," began Murray, "and who, I am told, once spent some time in our province many years ago, is unfortunately laboring under a misapprehension of the situation. It is not, my lords, as they would have the misfortune to be a Frenchman. Through the grace of God the two countries have not been for some years at peace with one another, and their subjects in the New world have striven not to be behind

and in drawing closer the bonds of trade which in themselves are the best preventative of war.

"We manufacture in this country more goods of a certain kind than we can consume ourselves. These goods are in great demand amongst the savage tribes which inhabit the interior of North America.

"Both the French and our own traders have use for these goods in the fur trade, which is growing to be of increasing worth to the London merchants. If we withhold from the French the goods they require for trading with these tribes they will seek them from the manufacturers of the Low Countries and Germany. Thus our merchants at home will be deprived of a profitable trade, and we provincials will not be bettered. Also, the supply of furs for the London market, much of which comes from the French posts, will be reduced. It seems to me, your lordships, that this prohibitory legislation will only have crippling effects upon trade and hinder the good relations between France and England and their colonies."

He said much more in the same vein, whilst Juggins twisted uneasily in his seat and the attending merchants and even their sleepy lordships hung upon his words. For he was a ready speaker. When he sat down the merchant who acted as master of ceremonies caused a start of surprise, in which I joined, by bringing forward a handsomely dressed gentleman, whose laced coat and gold-lilted sword showed conspicuously in such drab surroundings.

"Twas Raoul de Veuille; yes, Raoul de Veuille, whose mad exploits and escapades, love affairs and gambling debts, had kept all Paris gossiping these past three years and had just driven him into an exile, the facts concerning which had been mysteriously secret. I had known De Veuille well."

Now he stood before us, his handsome face smiling, bowing low before their interested lordships. In charming, broken English he repeated his brief message. He had been requested by his excellency the French ambassador to appear in this matter in answer to a plea offered by the petitioners to the ambassador for corroborative testimony to the justice of their assertions from a responsible French source.

He himself—he shrugged apologetically—as it happened was Canadian born; he was just starting upon his way to take up an appointment in the Canadian government. He agreed unhesitatingly with what Monsieur Murray had stated. On behalf of the French government and of the Canadian authorities he begged to say that such legislation as New York wished to have perpetuated would have most unhealthy effects upon the trade and politics of their two countries.

Master Juggins sprang to his feet, his honest face afire.

"Many of the assertions of Master Murray and—"

Pelham waved him to his seat. "We have heard enough," pronounced the whining voice. "You have no other first-hand witnesses from overseas?"

"No, your lordships," admitted Juggins, reluctantly.

Continued Next Week

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Send list to Contest Editor, Lake Theatre, 2410 Lake St.