SERIAL STORY

THE MAKER OF MOONS

By

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Illustrations by J. J. Sheridan

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CHAPTER I.

Concerning Yue-Laou and the Xia I know nothing more than you shall know. I am miserably anxious to clear the matter up. Perhaps what I write may save the United States government money and lives, perhaps it may arouse the scientific world to action; at any rate it will put an end to the terrible suspense of two people. Certainty is better than suspense.

If the government dares to disregard the warning and refuses to send a thoroughly equipped expedition at once, the people of the state may take swift vengeance on the whole regions and leave a blackened, devastated waste where to-day forest and flowering meadow land border the lake in the Cardinal Woods.

You already know part of the story; the New York papers have been full of alleged details. This much is true: Barris caught the "Shiner," red-handed, or rather yellow handed, for his pockets and boots and dirty fists were stuffed with lumps of gold. I say gold advisedly. You may call it what you please. You also know how Barris was—but unless I begin at the beginning of my own experiences you will be none the wiser after all.

On the 3d of August of this present year I was standing in Tiffany's chatting with George Godfrey of the designing department. On the glass counter between us lay a coiled serpent, an exquisite specimen of chiseled gold.

"No," replied Godfrey to my question, "it isn't my work; I wish it was. Why, man, it's a masterpiece!"

"Whose?" I asked.

"Now, I should be very glad to know also," said Godfrey. "We bought it from an old jay who says he lives in the country somewhere about the Cardinal Woods. That's near Starlit lake, I believe—"

"Lake of the Stars?" I suggested.

"Some call it Starlit lake—it's all the same. Well, my rustic Reuben says that he represents the sculptor of this snake for all practical and business purposes. He got his price, too. We hope he'll bring us something more. We have sold this already to the Metropolitan museum."

I was leaning idly on the glass case, watching the keen eyes of the artist in precious metals as he stooped over the gold serpent. "A masterpiece!" he muttered to himself, fondling the glittering coil; "look at the texture! whew!" But I was not looking at the serpent. Something was moving—crawling out of Godfrey's coat pocket—the pocket nearest me—something soft and yellow with crab-like legs all covered with coarse yellow hair.

"What in heaven's name," said I, "have you got in your pocket? It's crawling out—it's trying to creep up your coat, Godfrey!"

He turned quickly and dragged the creature out with his left hand.

I shrank back as he held the repulsive object dangling before me, and he laughed and placed it on the counter.

"Did you ever see anything like that?" he demanded.

"No," said I, truthfully, "and I hope I never shall again. What is it?"

"I don't know. Ask them at the Natural History museum—they can't tell you. The Smithsonian is all at sea, too. It is, I believe, the connecting link between a sea-urchin, a spider and the devil. It looks venomous, but I can't find either fangs or mouth. Is it blind? These things may be eyes, but they look as if they were painted. A Japanese sculptor might have produced such an impossible beast, but it is hard to believe that God did. It looks unfinished, too. I have a mad idea that this creature is only one of the parts of some larger and more grotesque organism—it looks so lonely, so hopelessly dependent, so cursedly unfinished. I'm going to use it as a model. If I don't cut Japanese the Jays my name isn't Godfrey."

The creature was moving slowly across the glass case towards me. I drew back.

"Godfrey," I said, "I would execute a man who executed any such work as you propose. What do you want to perpetuate such a reptile for? I can stand the Japanese grotesque, but I can't stand that—spider—"

"It's a crab."

"Crab or spider or blind worm—ugh! What do you want to do it for? It's a nightmare—it's unclean!"

I hated the thing. It was the first living creature that I had ever hated.

For some time I had noticed a damp, acrid odor in the air, and Godfrey said it came from the reptile.

"Then kill it and bury it," I said; "and, by the way, where did it come from?"

"I don't know that, either," laughed Godfrey; "I found it clinging to the box that this gold serpent was brought in. I suppose my old Reuben is responsible."

"If the Cardinal Woods are the lurking places for things like this," said I, "I am sorry that I am going to the Cardinal Woods."

"Are you?" asked Godfrey; "for the shooting?"

"Yes, with Barris and Pierpont. Why don't you kill that creature?"

"Go off on your shooting trip and let me alone," laughed Godfrey.

I shuddered at the "crab" and bade Godfrey good-by until December.

That night Pierpont, Barris and I sat chatting in the smoking car of the Quebec express when the long train pulled out of the Grand Central depot. Old David had gone forward with the dogs; poor things, they hated to ride in the baggage car, but the Quebec & Northern road provides no sportsmen's cars, and David and the three Gordon setters were in for an uncomfortable night.

Except for Pierpont, Barris and myself the car was empty. Barris, trim, stout, ruddy and bronzed, sat drumming on the window-ledge, puffing a short fragrant pipe. His gun-case lay beside him on the floor.

"When I have white hair and years of discretion," said Pierpont, languidly, "I'll not flirt with pretty serving-maids; will you, Roy?"

"No," said I, looking at Barris.

"You mean the maid with the cap in the Pullman car?" said Pierpont.

"Yes," said Pierpont.

I smiled, for I had seen it also.

Barris twisted his crisp gray mustache and yawned.

"You children had better be toddling off to bed," he said. "That lady's maid is a member of the secret service."

"Oh," said Pierpont, "one of your colleagues?"

"You might present us, you know," I said; "the journey is monotonous."

"Except for Pierpont, Barris and Myself, the Car Was Empty."

Barris had drawn a telegram from his pocket, and as he sat turning it over and over between his fingers he smiled. After a moment or two he handed it to Pierpont, who read it with slightly raised eyebrows.

"It's rot—I suppose it's cipher," he said; "I see it's signed by Gen. Drummond—"

"Drummond, chief of the government secret service," said Barris.

"Something interesting?" I inquired, lighting a cigarette.

"Something so interesting," replied Barris, "that I'm going to look into it myself—"

"And break up our shooting trio—"

"No. Do you want to hear about it? Do you, Billy Pierpont?"

"Yes," replied that immaculate young man.

Barris rubbed the amber mouthpiece of his pipe on his handkerchief, cleared the stem with a bit of wire, puffed once or twice, and leaned back in his chair.

"Pierpont," he said, "do you remember that evening at the United States club when Gen. Miles, Gen. Drummond and I were examining that gold nugget that Capt. Mahan had? You examined it also, I believe."

"I did," said Pierpont.

"Was it gold?" asked Barris, drumming on the window.

"It was," replied Pierpont.

"I saw it, too," said I; "of course it was gold."

"Prof. La Grange saw it also," said Barris; "he said it was gold."

After a silence Pierpont asked what tests had been made.

"The usual tests," replied Barris. "The United States mint is satisfied that it is gold, so is every jeweler who has seen it. But it is not gold—and you—it is gold."

Pierpont and I exchanged glances.

"Now," said I, "for Barris' usual coup de theatre; what was the nugget?"

"Practically it was pure gold; but," said Barris, enjoying the situation intensely, "really it was not gold. Pierpont, what is gold?"

"Gold's an element, a metal—"

"Wrong! Billy Pierpont," said Barris, coolly.

"Gold was an element when I went to school," said I.

"It has not been an element for two weeks," said Barris; "and, except Gen. Drummond, Prof. La Grange and myself, you two youngsters are the only people except one in the world who know it—or have known it."

"Do you mean to say that gold is a composite metal?" said Pierpont, slowly.

"I do. La Grange has made it. He produced a scale of pure gold day before yesterday. That nugget was manufactured gold."

Could Barris be joking? Was this a colossal hoax? I looked at Pierpont. He muttered something about that setting the silver question, and turned his head to Barris, but there was that in Barris' face which forbade jesting, and Pierpont and I sat silently pondering.

"Don't ask me how it's made," said Barris, quietly; "I don't know. But I do know that somewhere in the region of the Cardinal Woods there is a gang of people who do know how gold is made, and who make it. You understand the danger this is to every civilized nation. It's got to be stopped, of course. Drummond and I have decided that I am the man to stop it. Wherever and whoever these people are—these gold-makers—they must be caught, every one of them—caught or shot."

"Or shot," repeated Pierpont, who was owner of the Cross-Cut gold mine and found his income too small; "Prof. La Grange will of course be prudent—science need not know things that would upset the world!"

"Little Willy," said Barris, laughing, "your income is safe."

"I suppose," said I, "some flaw in the nugget gave Prof. La Grange the tip."

"Exactly. He cut the flaw out before sending the nugget to be tested. He worked on the flaw and separated gold into its three elements."

"He is a great man," said Pierpont "but he will be the greatest man in the world if he can keep his discovery to himself."

"Who?" said Barris.

"Prof. La Grange."

"Prof. La Grange was shot through the heart two hours ago," replied Barris, slowly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WORKER MUST LOVE VOCATION.

First Requisite for the Attainment of Success in Any Line.

A prime qualification for success in any art, trade or profession is the love of it, though love alone will by no means bring success in it. The love must be reciprocal; that is, the vocation must desire its follower, for reasons which must remain as much a mystery to him as to any of his witnesses. "She was love-worthy," says Heine, in treating of a more passional case, "and he loved her; but he was not love-worthy, and she loved him not." The fond youth, university-bred or self-made, may have ever so great a desire for journalism, but journalism will have no desire for him, unless he has the peculiar charm for it which commands affection in all cases. He can only prove the fact by trying and by longing to try with a longing that excludes the hope of every other reward beside the favor of the art he wishes to espouse. Riches, fame, power may be in the event, but they are not to be in the quest. The wish to succeed in it for its own sake must be his first motive, and the sense of success in it must be left to add themselves, without his striving for them. So far as he strives for them, they will alloy and dilute his journalistic success.—W. D. Howells, in Harper's Magazine.

I look upon the simple and childish virtues of veracity and honesty as the root of all that is sublime in character.—Carlyle.

WESTERN CANADA'S 1908 CROP

WILL GIVE TO THE FARMERS OF WEST A SPLENDID RETURN.

The following interesting bit of information appeared in a Montreal paper:

"Last December, in reviewing the year 1907, we had to record a wheat harvest considerably smaller in volume than in the previous year. Against ninety millions in 1906 the wheat crop of the West in 1907 only totaled some seventy-one million bushels, and much of this of inferior quality. But the price averaged high, and the total result to the farmers was not unprofitable. This year we have to record by far the largest wheat crop in the country's history. Estimates vary as to the exact figure, but it is certainly not less than one hundred million bushels, and in all probability it reaches one hundred and ten million bushels. The quality, moreover, is good, and the price obtained very high, so that in all respects the Western harvest of 1908 has been a memorable one. The result upon the commerce and finance of the country is already apparent. The railways are again reporting increases in traffic, the general trade of the community has become active after twelve months' quiet, and the banks are loosening their purse strings to meet the demand for money. The prospects for 1909 are excellent. The credit of the country never stood as high. The immigrants of 1907 and 1908 have now been absorbed into the industrial and agricultural community, and wise regulations are in force to prevent too great an influx next year. Large tracts of new country will be opened up by the Grand Trunk Pacific both in East and West. If the seasons are favorable the Western wheat crop should reach one hundred and twenty million bushels. The prospects for next year seem very fair." An interesting letter is received from Cardston, Alberta (Western Canada), written to an agent of the Canadian Government, any of whom will be pleased to advise correspondents of the low rates that may be allowed intending settlers.

"Cardston, December 21st, 1908.

"Dear Sir: Now that my threshing is done, and the question 'What Will the Harvest Be,' has become a certainty, I wish to report to you the results thereof, believing it will be of interest to you. You know I am only a novice in the agricultural line, and do not wish you to think I am boasting because of my success, for some of my neighbors have done much better than I have, and I expect to do much better next year myself. My winter wheat went 53 bushels per acre—and graded No. 1. My spring wheat went 48¾ bushels per acre, and graded No. 1. My oats went 97 bushels per acre, and are fine as any oats I ever saw. My stock is all nice and fat, and are out in the field picking their own three square meals a day. The weather is nice and warm, no snow—and very little frost. This, in short, is an ideal country for farmers and stockmen. The stock requires no shelter or winter feeding, and cattle fatten on this grass and make the finest kind of beef, better than corn fed cattle in Ills. Southwestern Alberta will soon be known as the farmers' paradise; and I am only sorry I did not come here five years ago. Should a famine ever strike North America, I will be among the last to starve—and you can count on that.

"I thank you for the personal assistance you rendered me while coming in here, and I assure you I shall not soon forget your kind offices."

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Patriotic Gentleman—My lad, every American boy has the chance of becoming president, just as every English boy has the opportunity of being prime minister.

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Inconsistency.

"Isn't that Jones over there—the man who writes the bitter articles about abolishing the tipping nuisance?"

"Yes, that's Jones."

"What's he talking about?"

"He is raising a sarcastic howl over the fact that a noted millionaire is alleged to have given a waiter a nickel tip."

There is more Catarrh in this section of the country than all other diseases put together, and until the last few years was supposed to be incurable. For a great many years doctors pronounced it a local disease and prescribed local remedies, and by constantly failing to cure with local treatment, pronounced it incurable. Science has proven Catarrh to be a constitutional disease, and therefore requires constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, Ohio, is the only Constitutional Cure on the market. It is taken internally in doses from 10 drops to a teaspoonful. It acts directly on the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. They offer one hundred dollars for any case it fails to cure. Send for circulars and testimonials.
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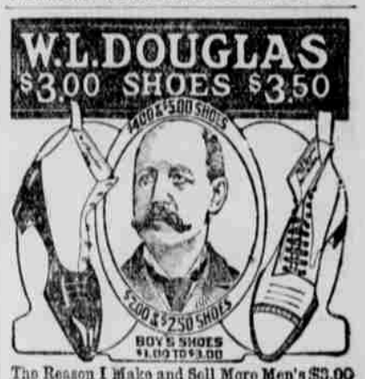

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W. N. U., OMAHA, NO. 4, 1909

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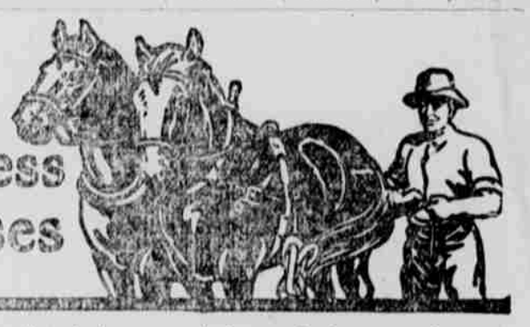

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