

SERIAL STORY

THE MAKER OF MOONS

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Illustrations by J. J. Sheridan

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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in New York. Roy Carden, the smart-tober, inspecting a queer reptile owned by George Godfrey of Tiffany's, Roy, and Barris and Pierpont, two friends, depart on a hunting trip to Cardinal Woods, a rather obscure locality. Barris revealed the fact that he had joined the secret service for the purpose of running down a gang of gold makers. Prof. LaGrange, on discovering the gang's formula, had been mysteriously killed.

CHAPTER II.

We had been at the shooting box in the Cardinal Woods five days when a telegram was brought to Barris by a mounted messenger from the nearest telegraph station, Cardinal Springs, a hamlet on the lumber railroad which joins the Quebec & Northern at Three Rivers Junction, 20 miles below. Pierpont and I were sitting out under the trees, loading some special shells as an experiment. Barris stood beside us, bronzed, erect, holding his pipe carefully so that no sparks should drift into our powder box. The beat of hoofs over the grass aroused us, and when the lank messenger drew bridle before the door Barris stepped forward and took the sealed telegram. When he had torn it open he went into the house and presently reappeared, reading something that he had written.

"This should go at once," he said, looking the messenger full in the face. "At once, Col. Barris," replied the shabby countryman.

Pierpont glanced up and I smiled at the messenger, who was gathering his bridle and settling himself in his stirrups. Barris handed him the written reply and nodded good-by; there was a thud of hoofs on the greenward, a jingle of bit and spur across the gravel and the messenger was gone. Barris' pipe went out and he stepped to windward to relight it.

"It is queer," said I, "that your messenger—a battered native—should speak like a Harvard man."

"He is a Harvard man," said Barris. "And the plot thickens," said Pierpont; "are the Cardinal woods full of your secret service men, Barris?"

"No," replied Barris, "but the telegraph stations are. How many ounces of shot are you using, Roy?"

I told him, holding up the adjustable steel-measuring cup. He nodded. After a moment or two he sat down on a camp stool beside us and picked up a crimper.

"That telegram was from Drummond," he said; "the messenger was one of my men, as you two bright little boys divined. Pooh! If he had spoken the Cardinal county dialect you wouldn't have known."

"His make-up was good," said Pierpont.

Barris twirled the crimper and looked at the pile of loaded shells. Then he picked up one and crimped it. "Let 'em alone," said Pierpont; "you crimp too tight."

"Does his little gun kick when the shells are crimped too tight?" inquired Barris tenderly; "well, he shall crimp his own shells then—where's his little man?"

"His little man" was a weird English importation, stiff, very carefully scrubbed, tangled in his aspirates, named Howlett. As valet, gilly, gun-bearer and crimper he aided Pierpont to endure the ennui of existence by doing for him everything except breathing. Lately, however, Barris' taunts had driven Pierpont to do a few things for himself. To his astonishment he found that cleaning his own gun was not a bore, so he timidly loaded with himself, loaded some more, crimped them and went to breakfast with an appetite. So when Barris asked where "his little man" was, Pierpont did not reply, but dug a cupful of shot from the bag and poured it solemnly into the half-filled shell.

Old David came out with the dogs, and of course there was a pow-wow when Voyou, my Gordon, wagged his splendid tail across the loading table and sent a dozen unstopped cartridges rolling over the grass, vomiting powder and shot.

"Give the dogs a mile or two," said I; "we will shoot over the Sweet Fern Covert about four o'clock, David."

"Two guns, David," added Barris.

"Are you not going?" asked Pierpont, looking up, as David disappeared with the dogs.

"Blazer game," said Barris, shortly. He picked up a mug of ale from the tray which Howlett had just set down beside us and took a long pull. We did the same, silently. Pierpont set his mug on the turf beside him and returned to his loading.

We spoke of the murder of Prof. LaGrange, of how it had been concealed by the authorities in New York at Drummond's request, of the certainty who had done it, and of the possible alertness of the gang.

"Oh, they know that Drummond will be after them sooner or later," said Barris; "but they don't know that the mills of the gods have already begun to grind. Those smart New York papers builded better than they know when their ferret-eyed reporter poked his red nose into the house on Fifty-eighth street and sneaked off with a column on his cuffs about the 'suicide' of Prof. LaGrange. Billy Pierpont, my revolver is hanging in your room; I'll take yours too—"

"Help yourself," said Pierpont. "I shall be gone over night," continued Barris; "my poncho and some bread and meat are all I shall take except the 'barkers.'"

"Will they bark to-night?" I asked. "No, I trust not for several weeks yet. I shall nose about a bit. Roy, did it ever strike you how queer it is that this wonderfully beautiful country should contain no inhabitants?"

"It's like those splendid stretches of pools and rapids which one finds on every trout river and in which one never finds a fish," suggested Pierpont.

"Exactly—and heaven alone knows why," said Barris; "I suppose this country is shunned by human beings for the same mysterious reasons."

"The shooting is the better for it," I observed.

"The shooting is good," said Barris; "have you noticed the snipe on the meadow by the lake? Why, it's brown with them! That's a wonderful meadow."

"It's a natural one," said Pierpont; "no human being ever cleared that land."

"Then it's supernatural," said Barris; "Pierpont, do you want to come with me?"

Pierpont's handsome face flushed as he answered slowly: "It's awfully good of you—if I may."

"Hosh," said I piqued because he had asked Pierpont; "what use is little Willy without his man?"

"True," said Barris, gravely; "you can't take Howlett, you know."

Pierpont muttered something which ended in "d-n."

"Then," said I, "there will be but one gun on the Sweet Fern Covert this afternoon. Very well, I wish you joy of your cold supper and colder tea."

"This should go at once," he said, looking the messenger full in the face. "At once, Col. Barris," replied the shabby countryman.



"A Telegram Was Brought to Barris by a Mounted Messenger."

bed. Take your night-gown, Willy, and don't sleep on the damp ground."

"Let Pierpont alone," roared Barris; "you shall go next time, Roy."

"Oh, all right—you mean when there's shooting going on?"

"And I?" demanded Pierpont, grieved.

"You too, my son; stop quarreling! Will you ask Howlett to pack our kits—lightly, mind you—no bottles—they clink."

"My flask doesn't," said Pierpont, and went off to get ready for a night's stalking of dangerous men.

"It is strange," said I, "that nobody ever settles in this region. How many people live in Cardinal Springs, Barris?"

"Twenty, counting the telegraph operator and not counting the lumbermen; they are always changing and shifting. I have six men among them."

"Where have you no men? In the Four Hundred?"

"I have men there also—chums of Billy's, only he doesn't know it. David tells me that there was a strong fight of woodcocks last night. You ought to pick up some this afternoon."

Then we chatted about alder-cover and swamp until Pierpont came out of the house and it was time to part.

"Au revoir," said Barris, buckling on his kit; "come along, Pierpont, and don't walk in the damp grass."

"If you are not back by to-morrow noon," said I, "I will take Howlett and David and hunt you up. You say your course is due north?"

"Due north," replied Barris, consulting his compass.

"There is a trail for two miles and a spotted lead for two more," said Pierpont.

"Which we won't use for various reasons," added Barris pleasantly; "don't worry, Roy, and keep your confounded expedition out of the way; there's no danger."

He knew, of course, what he was talking about, and I held my peace.

When the tip end of Pierpont's shooting coat had disappeared in the Long Covert I found myself standing alone with Howlett. He here my gaze for a moment and then politely lowered his eyes.

"Howlett," said I, "take these shells and implements to the gun room, and drop nothing. Did Voyou come to any harm in the briars this morning?"

"Then be careful not to drop anything else," said I, and walked away leaving him decorously puzzled. For he had dropped no cartridges. Poor Howlett!

CHAPTER III.

About four o'clock that afternoon I met David and the dogs at the spinney which leads into the Sweet Fern Covert. The three setters, Voyou, Gamin and Mioche were in fine feather—David had killed a woodcock and a brace of grouse over them that morning—and they were thrashing about the spinney at short range when I came up, gun under arm and pine lighted.

"What's the prospect, David," I asked, trying to keep my feet in the tangle of waggings, whinnings dogs; "hello, what's amiss with Mioche?"

"A brier in his foot, sir; I drew it and stopped the wound, but I guess the gravel's got in. If you have no objection, sir, I might take him back with me."

"It's safer," I said; "take Gamin, too; I only want one dog this afternoon. What is the situation?"

"Fair, sir; the grouse lie within a quarter of a mile of the oak second-growth. The woodcock are mostly on the alders. I saw many number of snipe on the meadows. There's something else in by the lake—I can't just tell what, but the wood-duck set up a clatter when I was in the thicket and they come dashing through the wood as if a dozen foxes was snapping at their tail feathers."

"Probably a fox," I said; "leak those dogs—they must learn to stand it. I'll be back by dinner time."

"There is one more thing, sir," said David, lingering with his gun under his arm.

"Well," said I. "I saw a man in the woods by the Oak Covert—at least I think I did."

"A lumberman?"

"I think not, sir—at least—do they have Chinamen among them?"

"Chinese? No. You didn't see a Chinaman in the woods here?"

"I—I think I did, sir—I can't say positively. He was gone when I ran into the covert."

"Did the dogs notice it?"

"I can't say—exactly. They acted queer like. Gamin here lay down and whined—it may have been colic—and Mioche whimpered—perhaps it was the brier."

"And Voyou?"

"Voyou, he was most remarkable, sir, and the hair on his back stood up. I did see a groundhog makin' for a tree near by."

"Then no wonder Voyou bristled. David, your Chinaman was a stump or tussock. Take the dogs now."

"I guess it was, sir; good afternoon, sir," said David, and walked away with the Gordons leaving me alone with Voyou in the spinney.

I looked at the dog and he looked at me.

"Voyou!"

The dog sat down and danced with his fore feet, his beautiful brown eyes sparkling.

"You're a fraud," I said; "which shall it be, the alders or the upland? Upland? Good!—now for the grouse—heel, my friend, and show your miraculous self-restraint."

Voyou wheeled into my tracks and followed close, nobly refusing to notice the impudent chipmunks and the thousand and one alluring and important smells which an ordinary dog would have lost no time in investigating.

The brown and yellow autumn woods were crisp with drifting heaps of leaves and twigs that crackled under foot as we turned from the spinney into the forest. Every silent little stream, hurrying toward the lake was gay with painted leaves afloat, scarlet maple or yellow oak. Spots of sunlight fell upon the pools, searching the brown depths, illuminating the gravel bottom where shoals of minnows swam to and fro, and to and fro again, busy with the purpose of their little lives. The crickets were chirping in the long brittle grass on the edge of the woods, but we left them behind in the silence of the deeper forest.

"Now!" said I to Voyou.

"TO BE CONTINUED."

NOTE HAD PERSONAL FLAVOR.

Directions Considerably Astonished Good Man in Pulpit.

The minister had just finished a little opening talk to the children, preparatory to the morning service, when Mrs. Berkeley suddenly realized, with all the agony of a careful housewife, that she had forgotten to turn the gas off from the oven in which she had left a nicely-cooked roast, all ready for the final reheating. Visions of a ruined dinner and a smoky kitchen roused her to immediate effort, and, borrowing a pencil from the young man in front, she scribbled a note. Just then her husband, an usher in the church, passed her pew. With a murmured "Hurry!" she thrust the note into his hand, and he, with an understanding nod, turned, passed up the aisle, and handed the note to the minister. Mrs. Berkeley saw the act in speechless horror, and shuddered as she saw the minister smilingly open the note and begin to read. But her expression of dismay was fully equalled by the look of amazement and wrath on the good man's face as he read the words: "Go home and turn off the gas!"—Lippincott's.

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However conservative the farmer is about his politics and his religion and his views on morality, he has rid himself of most of his old-time fixed ideas about agriculture and is leading the professional state experimentalists in the search for new methods.—Toledo Blade.

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A Facer.

Mr. Oldhatch—So this is your wedding anniversary, and you and your wife have for 20 years fought life's battle side by side.

Mr. Knag—No, face to face.—Pick Me-Up.

Asthmatics, Read This.

If you are afflicted with Asthma write me at once and learn of something for which you will be grateful the rest of your life. J. G. McBride, Stella, Neb.

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The hand can never execute anything higher than the heart can aspire.—Emerson.

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A light heart lives long.—Shakespeare.

No Links.

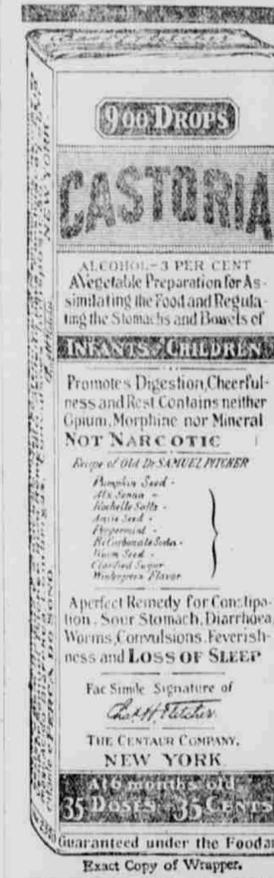
Hixon—When he got a divorce from his wife he resigned from the golf club.

Dixon—So now he's entirely unlinked.

Silly Question.

Him—Am I the first man you've ever engaged to?

Her—Don't insult me. You know perfectly well that I am 25 years old. Do I look like a lemon?



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