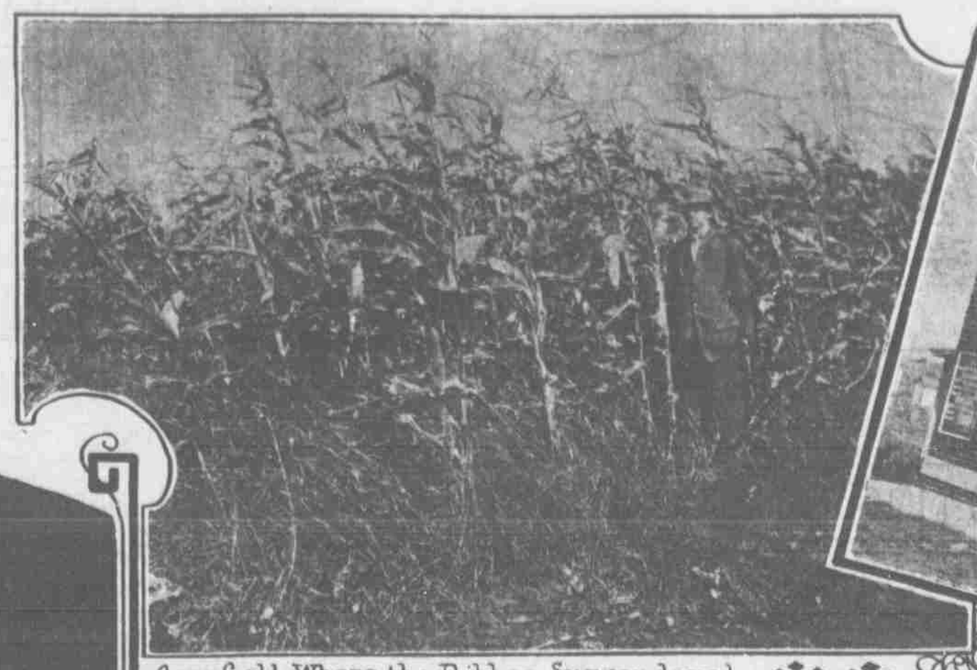
Where an Iowa Boy's Bravery Saved a Bank from Robbery

Walter Julius



Cornfield Where the Robber Surrendered

Exterior of Bank

Interior of Bank

WHILE Andrew Carnegie is distributing medals betokening his appreciation of bravery, citizens of Pottawatamie county, Ia., are dispatching preliminaries incident to presenting the name of a young son of Denmark—Walter Julius—as a worthy subject for honors. Some question may be raised as to whether the conditions governing the Carnegie medal fund will apply in the case of young Mr. Julius. No doubt exists as to his remarkable display of bravery, but the chief idea of the Carnegie medal is to reward those who risk their own lives to save the lives of others. Young Julius placed his life in jeopardy, no doubt as to that, but he did it for the purpose of protecting his employer's money from robber attack. One clause in the Carnegie stipulations says: "Those who risk their lives to save the lives of others, or those who risk their lives for the benefit of others."

It is the foregoing "benefit of others" phrase upon which admirers of young Julius depend to place him on the medal eligible list.

Ten days ago, Walter Julius, who will be 18 years old next December, employed as helper on the books and general utility man in the McClelland Savings bank, was unknown outside of a small area in Pottawatamie county. To him Council Bluffs is a big city. He was brought up in the midst of a narrow little world in and around the village of McClelland, a station on the Chicago Great Western railroad, fourteen miles out of Council Bluffs. Just a plain, sensible Danish lad—limited as to worldly education, but plethoric of horse sense—there was no reason why he should be known beyond the limits of his restricted horizon. He was, in fact, living in all of the obscurity that comes of pastoral environment.

Today the name of Walter Julius is known and talked about in every daily newspaper office in the United States. Bankers' associations are discussing him. Sheriffs and police chiefs are writing him congratulatory letters. Photographers from every direction are besieging him to pose before the camera. Postcard manufacturers are after him. Moving picture men are seeking a rehearsal of the thrilling encounter that made the boy famous. He is, in short the cum laude lad of Iowa—and yet the head of the boy has not been turned, thanks to his phlematic Scandinavian temperament, and he is the same plain, unassuming Walter Julius he was before he shot and captured Tom Kirby, the man who admits that he entered the McClelland Savings bank for the purpose of looting it.

"Nogtern" is a Danish word, meaning "sober, steady and nervy," and in view of the effective manner in which young Julius guarded the bank when it was left in his charge while Cashier Maxfield went to a picnic, it appears obvious that the boy is abundantly endowed with "nogtern."

W. H. Quick, one of Pottawatamie county's big implement dealers, who sells the plows that tickle the hundred-dollar-an-acre land contiguous to McClelland, has taken the iniative in calling the attention of the Carnegie medal commission to the brave act of the young Dane. Mr. Quick hopes to bring the case within the stipulated conditions, but whether Walter Julius is granted a Carnegie medal or not, he will long be catalogued among the brave in western Iowa, and it is believed that the only possible barrier in the way of his securing the medal will be the possible interpretation of the Carnegie law to mean that medals shall be given only to those who risk their own life to save the life of another.

A movement is also under way by prominent Iowa bankers to raise a fund among the banks of the state, the same to be given to the boy who so ably defended his trust.

The Iowa Bankers' association does not make official provision for rewarding captors of bank robbers, but it is believed that a special dispensation will be made in this case.

Every mail that comes into McClelland brings letters to the Julius boy. Some of them are of a congratulatory nature, while others go stronger and discuss the timeliness of popular subscriptions by way of reward for heroism.

H. B. Boyles, president of Boyes College, Omaha, and Boyes Western Iowa College, Council Bluffs, has sent to young Julius an offer of a free scholarship in the Council Bluffs wing of his school, and it is probable that the youngster will obtain a furlough from his present position and spend a few months in school to round out his commercial education.

"I do not mind accepting a medal or a scholarship if any one feels disposed to give me such tokens, but I do not care to take money. I have no disposition to commercialize this affair," said the young man to a newspaper visitor who spent an hour with him in front of the little bank one evening last week.

ROY MAXFIELD,
Cashier McClelland Savings Bank.

"As a matter of fact," he continued, "I am satisfied to know that I winged the robber and that he is in jail, without taking any of the bank's money. When Mr. Maxfield left me alone in the bank, I felt that it was up to me to take care of it. Naturally then, when this man Kirby, or whatever his right name may be, came hustling into the bank ten minutes before closing time, and with a gun in his hand, said: 'Kid, its up to you,' and by the way, those are his exact words, I naturally wished to show him that it really was 'up to me' and that I was equal to the emergency."

Roy Maxfield, a bright young financier, who has charge of the bank as cashier, says he will take no active part in the effort to secure a Carnegie medal for the boy, for the reason that he feels so closely related to him, that he doubts the propriety of his taking active part in the proposition. "I will say, however," remarked Cashier Maxfield, "that a dozen gold medals would be only an inadequate reward for this lad. He did something that most men would have failed to do, and while our deposits fully were covered by burglar insurance, and there would have been no loss either to us or the depositors, if the man had carried off every cent in the bank, the fact remains that we are heartily glad that the robber was foiled. No bank likes to hear of a successful raid on its treasury, even though insurance protects against loss. Bank robbery is out of date in civilized communities, and since our boy has shown that Iowa has a way of its own in dealing with bank robbers, it is hardly probable that any further depredations will be attempted in this vicinity for a long while. We are proud of Walter for his act, and are rejoiced that he only wounded the robber instead of killing him outright, for it is better to let the law deal with him. However, even if he had killed Kirby, I consider the act would have been perfectly justifiable.

"One of the remarkable features of the case is the extreme coolness of the boy, immediately after wounding the robber and led him to jail. Inside of a few minutes after the lock clicked with Kirby on the inside, Walter was back in the bank adding up long columns of figures with an accuracy and precision that would do credit to a veteran bookkeeper. When I returned from the picnic, acutely concerned, of course, over the reports I had heard, Walter was much more calm than any of the men I met on the streets. That boy simply has an imperturable nerve, and with that nerve goes a sense of loyalty that makes him at once an ideal bank employe."

Walter Julius is not a native of Denmark. He was born in the village of Weston, Pottawattamie county, Iowa, but he is a Danish-American of clear strain, for his father and mother were born in Denmark, and although they are now thoroughly Americanized, they cling to the traditions of their fatherland, and the sturdy Danish characteristics are manifested in the boy to such extent that, barring his correct English speech, he might easily be taken for a native of the Norseman's country. The young man, although exceptionally modest, does not hesitate to proclaim pride in his Danish blood.

There is an old maxim in Denmark which, translated into English, means: "Do not sail out further than you can row back." In this case, the man who sought to rob the McClelland bank undoubtedly sailed out too far, and the Danish lad of the steel blue-gray eye and "nogtern" endowment brought him back.

Asked as to what he expects to do in the future, young Julius said: "First, I want to get all of this excitement quieted down. Then I want to keep on working at my job in the bank. I hope some day to be at the head of a bank. I think banking is a fine business. It teaches a young man habits of thrift just to be an employe in a bank, and I see no reason why, even without capital, if a young fellow once started in the business keeps a level head, why he shouldn't progress toward the top. I want more education, because I realize that I need it, and it may be that I can accept the offer of Mr. Boyles for a scholarship in his school. I am not certain what I shall do as to that. I must talk it over with my parents and with Mr. Maxfield, my present employer."

Antone Julius, father of the hero boy, is naturally very proud of his son. The elder Julius is employed by the Quick implement house of McClelland. Usually a mother would become frantic upon being informed that her son had shot a bank robber, but Mrs. Julian remained calm as the startling news was carried to her. A few minutes later she rang the bank telephone and briefly questioned her son concerning the affair. The keynote of her interrogation was to assure herself that the act was entirely justifiable and that no mistake had been made. Having received such assurance and being convinced that the boy had not been injured, she said: "All right, son," and closed the telephone.

Considerable discussion has been had as to why the robber did not shoot the boy either in the bank before he fled or in the cornfield, where the boy followed him. Kirby is quoted as saying that he could have killed the lad, but did not wish to do it. Cashier Maxfield, after making complete investigation, is of the opinion that young Julius would have been shot and possibly killed except for the fact that the robber's pistol failed to work. Originally he had two revolvers when he entered the bank, but as he fled he dropped one of them, which examination revealed was a splendid firearm. The other weapon was old and somewhat rusty. It is agreed that when confronted in the cornfield a quarter of a mile distant from the bank, Kirby tried to pull his gun on the boy. Therefore, Cashier Maxfield attributes his failure to shoot to the defective mechanism.

A New Airship Serial by

Herbert Quick

Author of "DOUBLE TROUBLE"

VIRGINIA of the AIR LANES

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

DEVIL FISH VS. BIRD.

"For Christ's sake," called the man, "bring her down a foot or so! I'm too weak to climb!"

"Cheer up!" called Theodore. "It's risky, but I'll try."

The man, who looked downward from weakness, or as if to conceal his features, was apparently in great distress, and in terror from the fact that his collapsible skiff was half deflated, as if by the bursting of her air chambers. If he was to be saved there was no time to be lost; so thought Carson as he depressed the Virginia more and more, holding her stationary by a slight windward thrust of the wing blades, like a swimmer who meets the current by a down stream kick, a feat quite beyond the power of any other airship; and speaking to the man in the water, as well as to him in the air, the triumphant success of the new machine. Wizner set his teeth in a fierce determination to put both man and ship out of the field at once. The thing became immense to him, swelling, as the astounding behavior of the Virginia grew upon him. He was the sole custodian of the secret of her construction, save for Carson. If he could drown her and master the secret of the glass globe, he could rebuild her, make his terms with Shayne, be the greatest in his line.

The lower works of the airship descended almost to his head, and Wizner, glancing upward, saw Virginia looking down and singing out their aerial "soundings" to Carson. The swell lifted Wizner as the Virginia sank to her lowest; and he seized the nacelle with fierce energy, drew himself up into the truss work, threaded a steel chain through an opening in the structure and dropped back into the water holding the chain in his hand. It ran around the aluminum beam with a sharp, rasping, startling rattle.

"He's fallen in!" cried Virginia. "He climbed up under and fell off! Oh, he'll drown, he'll drown!"

Theodore looked over the side. A small double chain ran down from the airship, its ends moving about in a most mystifying manner in the sea. And as he looked in astonishment, the dark blotch of sand rose to the surface, and defined itself as the rounded top of the Stickleback, on the black hull of which sat Wizner blowing brine from his mouth, his head shining with water. The manhole opened, Wizner snapped the chain into a ring, slipped into the submarine, and reappeared with something small and flat in his hand.

"I'll fix you, you damned whelp!" he yelled. "I'll show you what it means to choke me! Take that!"

He aimed at Carson, fired, and the bullet sang away into the sky. Theodore seized Virginia in his arms, and drew her down into the bottom of the car, where they lay panting in each other's arms, panic-stricken.

"I must put the ship out of range!" cried Carson, leaping to the lever, and throwing on full speed upward and ahead.

She rose like a feather—for just a moment, and then she swung about like a kite with its string fouled, anchored by some devilish contrivance, of the nature of which the bewildered Carson could not guess. He stepped to the side again and looked over. The Virginia hung some thirty above the water, and straining backward and downward ran the steel chain looped through her works and fastened by both ends to the submarine. The harsh, raucous laugh of Wizner rose with horrid significance from the Stickleback's manhole, which was again above water and open.

"Don't be in a hurry!" he shouted "Stick around with us a while! We're going out where it's deep! Come in, the water's fine! Got your bathing suits? If you hain't you'll have to let us lend you some. Sorry to incommode the lady, but we're goin' out where that chain won't put you up so high out o' water. When she draws short, telephone down. Don't yell, for there won't no one hear you. There won't no one hear either of you again in this world, except just you two. By-by! See you in Davy Jones'—damn you!"

And with this, as if pulled down from below, the man vanished into the dark interior, the manhole closed, and the chain, like a line taken by some titanic fish, started out to sea. The airship had been captured by the submarine! The mechanical devil fish was not running very deep; her round deck rose awash sometimes; but with the manholes closed, and with no sign, save the erection of her periscope, that she was more than an inert mass of steel, she swam on, remorseless, silent, the evil element in a battle unprecedented and undreamed of.

Still seated where Theodore had placed her, Virginia looked at him in questioning terror. He was white and horrified, but he was managing the Virginia with a set determination, which rose with and met the danger, to save her and her freight if possible. At this moment he was depressing her in her flight so as to get all possible slack in the chain, so that by a sudden upward rush he might break the tether. Once, twice, thice he did this; but the chain held.

"What is it, Theodore? What is it?" said she.

"I don't know," said he; "but I think it's the end!"

He was not looking at her—he was looking upward, like a man seeking for some sort of inspiration. His expression seemed to say that there was work to do; and as long as every tick of the watch might mean the difference between death and life, he had no time for her questions. She stood looking out over the great desolate sea, and back to the receding shore on which she saw a group of forms—the forms of their friends. Nothing could seem more helpless. They were chained to their fate—a dark fiend of a machine that was taking them out to sea, to deeps profound enough to drown them. It might be an hour—it might be the next moment. The immitigable cruelty of the plan by which they had been snared took away all hope of its abandonment by any softening of the demons who had devised it, down in that black, round hull.

Carson stood over her with a pistol in his hand. She looked up in wonder, thinking of those cases in which men kill the women they love, rather than allow them to fall into the hands of ruffians.

"Virginia, can you shoot?" he asked.

She took the pistol with the air of one who knows how to use it and nodded her head.

"I shall have to ask you to protect me," said he, "while I try to cut that chain. They can see with their periscope what I'm doing, and when it is necessary they will come up again into the open and fire. By pulling out to sea, I can get her at an angle that will force them into the open to shoot. I'll do that. When the manhole opens, shoot into it. Keep them back. If you should hit one of them, don't let it trouble you—you—"

"I shall kill one of them if I can," said she. "Never mind that! Tell me the things to do!"

"I shall take the pliers and a file," said he. "I don't think the pliers will cut it. It will take quite a while to file it. Even if I can hang on that long, I may be too weak to climb back. I don't know that I can do it, anyhow. You must take us back to land if I cut her free."

"I will," said she. "Never fear, I can do it. I know every lever."

"There's another thing," said he. "We came out with only a little gas. If we go much further, we haven't enough to get ashore with. I shall have to be the judge of that for you. I think I could soar her in with the aeroplane set of the blades, but I don't know. I think we had better fly low going back, and not waste fuel in vertical lift. That takes power. Keep her gliding about a hundred feet from the water; but if wou want the aeroplane set, this is the way to fix it."

With a swift movement he showed her the way to manage the mechanism. Then he required her to tell him how to turn, how to rise, how to fall, how to vary the speed, how to determine the thrust of the blades. He lashed a pair of pliers about his neck with a lanyard, thrust a couple of files into his pockets, took off his boots, his coat and waistcoat, pulled his little cap's visor far down over his eyes to shelter them from the glare, and stepped to the side.

"You may get ashore," said he, "while I may not. If so, goodby, and God bless you, dearest!"

She threw her arms about his neck and kissed him over and over again—he felt her warm tears on his lips. But he controlled himself sternly, almos fiercely.

"Don't cry!" said he. "Clear your eyes, and shoot straight! Goodby!"

She stepped to the rail and looked fixedly at the black shadow like a gigantic fish that represented the submarine. Carson had disappeared over the side, in a terrifying hand-under-hand descent, in which he swung over the swelling waves, until he reached the truss work of the nacelle, where he clung, now, trying his pliers on the chain. The submarine seemed in no way interested, at first; but presently her black shadow grew more distinct, the round deck broke water; and as the manhole opened, Wizner appeared and aimed at Carson, coolly, as at a target. Too hastily, Virginia fired; the bullet struck the edge of the deck with a vicious pat. Wizner's pistol spoke, the bullet striking metal, flew singing away, but the girl replied with a third shot of this strange duel. She braced herself against the rail, aimed conscientiously at the middle of the mark presented by the villian below, and fired—fired with the curious certitude the marksman feels when he is making a good shot. Wizner had just lifted his arm to fire again; but his hand fell as if struck down by a giant's blow; he dropped back into the darkness like a shot wood chuck, the manhole closed, and the submarine went on toward deep water as grimly as before.

"All right down here!" sang out Carson. "How are you on deck?"

"All right here," said she. "Do you think they'll shoot any more?"

"No," said Theodore. "But watch the manhole just the same. I shall have to file the chain. The pliers won't do!"

The girl waited. It was well for her that she had something to do; otherwise her reason might have given way. She stood by the rail with the pistol in her hand, listening to the "screek, screek" of the file on the chain. Suddenly this sound stopped, and she heard Carson calling.

"They've hove to," said he. "I think they're going to try drowning us here. Don't lose control of yourself—remember, this is a fight, and we aren't whipped yet. Do you hear?"

"Yes," said she. "But it's so awful! So awful! If you were only up here where you could— Tell me what to do! Tell me what to do!"

"Do you see how the chain shortens?" asked Carson. "She's going down. If the water's deep enough she can drown us, unless we can overcome her gravity. Turn the index so as to show a dead-down thrust of the blades—and then full power on the last speed. It will take fuel, but it's the only way! Hurry!"

The airship sank, sank, nearer and nearer to the water; but without waiting to learn how the girl was carrying out his orders, Carson again attacked the chain, and the shrill "screek" of the file greeted Virginia's ears again, as she turned the indicator and threw on the power. As they had never done before, the great engines purred, the wing blades trod the air with a terrific roar; but with remorseless suction-like force the submarine drew her down closer, closer to the water, and she seemed lost. The sinking was slower, now; but nevertheless more and more of the chain disappeared in the sea every moment. Virginia looked and despaired. The waves were so terrifyingly near; death in their cold depths seemed so unthinkable horrible * * * she bowed her face in her hands. The "screek, screek, screek" of the file kept on with the regularity of a machine. Carson was at work. He might be drowned; but when he went under, he would go fighting. He was a man! And suddenly Virginia felt herself strengthened and comforted. Death was due every one at some time. Why not now? Why whimper and shrink from what must be some time anyhow?

She stepped to the side, and called to him.

"I think," said she, "that we are doomed. Is there anything I can do?"

"You might advance the spark," said he. "Not much. Just the least trifle * * * Yes, I reckon they've got us."

She sprang to the machinery, and did this last thing ordered by her commander—did it with unshaking hands, as a soldier might take up the weapon of his comrade killed at his post. By the faintest trifle she advanced the spark; and went to the side to see the effect. They were lower, now, and the truss work in which Carson hung must be in or near the crest of the swells; but the "screek" of the file went on—not so strong, perhaps, but steadily still, and the pace of the unconquerable spirit of the man clinging to the truss work beneath her. It was grand. It was immense. Her spirit rose to the occasion, rose to the prosaic "screek, screek" of a file in a hand that was dabbled in the waves at every lifting swell of the stolid ocean that rolled on just the same where its prey dangled within the lapping of its tongue, and out yonder where, perhaps, no man had been since creation's morn.

"Theodore!"

The file stopped for a minute.

"Keep her as she is," said he. "We've got the submarine stopped. I've got the chain about filed through—but—I'm a little tired. Keep her as she is—for just a little while!"

Again the file began its work. The immediate danger was over; but both the man below and the girl in the car knew that the terrific consumption of gas in the engines made the seconds too precious for use in conversation. A minute's supply of gas, ten seconds' supply, one second's supply, might save their lives in the home stretch, when the chain should be filed through, and they should take their flight toward land—to make triumphant landing after this deadly peril, or to sink in the waves from which they were now fighting to save themselves. The roar of the machinery filled the air with tempest; the wind from the wing blades driven down on the water set it boiling like a whirlpool; one moment the straining submarine drew them down by a link or two of the chain; the next the struggling airship lifted the submarine up an inch or so from her dark lair in the depths. At last, at the very height of the fierce struggle, the airship shot up with the jingle of dropping chains, a worn file fell into the foam of a white-capped wave, and the girl leaped to the levers in obedience to the voice of Carson telling her to make haste, for God's sake, and set the wings for a forward fight; to cut the speed down one-third, and to steer straight for shore.

She obeyed. They had risen to a height of perhaps 200 feet before her inexperienced hands could change the propellers; and Carson told her to keep the height. She asked if she might not use a little higher speed, but he said no, economy in gas was in the moderate speed. "Keep her as she is," said he.

"Can you come up?" she asked. "Have you the strength?"

She asked this two or three times, and got no reply. Suddenly she screamed with the fear that he had fainted, and as if aroused from a stupor he asked her to advance the spark a little, and, when she had done so, to retard it again.

"Are you in danger?" she asked. "Can you hang on?"

"I'm all right," said he, "only my hands. Can you see shore? Is it far?"

The shore was rising fast, she told him. It was not so very far, now, but the gas was almost gone. Could she do anything? Was there nothing to be done to eke it out so as to bring them a little closer before they fell into the sea? Could he do anything if he were in the car?

"Keep her as she is," said he. "When we get close enough so she can glide in, I'll lighten her."

"How lighten her?" she asked.

"It's easy," said he, from down here. Keep her as she is!"

The dunes lifted white in the sun, shimmering in the heat, swelling as the Virginia darted nearer and nearer to shore. The horror stricken people on the beach saw her coming, like an albatross before a gale. The girl on the deck prayed fervently for the miraculous renewing of the little cruse of oil from which she made the gas that kept them up—and the man underneath hung on grimly, awaiting the cessation of stroke, which would prove that the mixture which was the breath of the life of the great engines was exhausted at last. Once, twice, thrice, came the halting in the machinery that was the death rattle of the motors.

"Virginia!" said he.

"Yes," she replied.

"Fix the gliding mechanism! The gas is done!"

"Yes, Theodore!"

(To Be Continued.)