## The WANTED MAN by Harris Dickson

THE STORY THUS FAR N apposite sides of Lake Marmion, in Mississippi, are two large estates, Bennington, owned by Maj. Ken-neth Stark, and Marmion, owned by Gen. Bob Clayton. Their owners have long Bob Clayton. Their owners have long been at feud; first there was a political quarrel, then a bitter lawsuit over a boundary, and then a duel, following which Gen. Clayton fled to Salamanca,

Latin America, with his young son, Stuart.
As the story opens, Stuart has returned to
the old home and is being hunted by dethe old home and a seem, Maj. Stark's aged servitor, tells of the detectives, Barbara, Maj. Stark's beautiful daughter, and her creale guest, Mrs. Florian Kazilly, become strangely excited. It develops the girls have been keeping a tryst in the woods with a mysterious horseman, who is in love with Barbara. Barbara has given him Mrs. Razilly's name delaide as her own. Adelaide tells how the Salamancan consul has visited her husband on 9 mysterious mission. Uncle Nat vis-its Marmion house to warn Stuart of the detectives, but becomes offended when a dollar is thrown at him, and declares the young man is not Stuart. The girls go to the lone oak to meet the myterious horseman and find Uncle Not napping beside a log. He reveals to them his suspiciens, Stuart arrives, announces his identity to Barbara, and asks her to become his wife. Piqued at his apparent impos-ture, Barbara rebuffs him.

## FOURTH INSTALLMENT.

The Lie.

ISTEN, Adelaide. I am not free to tell you everything. My name is Stuart Clayton. That is my planta-tion across the lake! Father took me away from here when I was a child. I live at El Jucare, Republic of Salamanca, Central America-and must hurry back within the next day or two. But I'll return to Mississippi if you'll marry me?"
"What an inducement!"

"Will you marry me?"

Marry you? It never entered my bead."

"Of course, it hasn't, dear. But I must put it into your head, for there's nothing else in mine. You'd believe that if you only knew how dangerous it is for me to tell you that I'm Stuart Clayton, and going back to Salamanca."

"Dangerous? Why so?" Barbara thought instantly of constables with the nippers, and ached for him to tell her the whole truth. "Because," he answered, simply, "certain

people are trying to learn what I have just told you. You have the right to know who I am and what I am. Now, will you marry

"What kind of a girl do you take me for?" Barbara had failed to stop him with petty evasions, and now retreated behind another subterfuge. "Do you think I'm to be picked up, accidentally, by the first man I happen to meet in the woods?" "I know what kind of a girl you are. And

it was no accident, but destiny, which brought me here to look at this lone oak that father used to speak of as our original boundary." "It was not the boundary!" Barbara

sprang up with belligerent heat, glad to staan argument which offered a little time to collect herself.

This oak never was our boundary," she hotly denied. "The court decided that our line runs to the burnt cypress, half a mile farther down the lake." "Your line?" And even before he asked

the question Barbara felt herself floundering in deep water. no!" she corrected, "I didn't mean that. I mean the Bennington boundary.

This land belongs to Miss Barbara Stark. She told me all about the lawsuit. There! I hope you are satisfied." "I've never been dissatisfied," he answered,

with a quiet smile. "Boundaries mean nothing to me-now. Are you visiting Miss Stark? 'I didn't say I was."

"Well," a slight shrug, "suppose we also waive that point."

Then the woman within her foresaw what was coming, and Barbara knew the utter futility of trying to prevent. Inexorably he started again at the place where she had broken in upon him.

"It was not an accident which led me to this oak. Three times since you have met me here of your own accord. Was that

" No." she laughed, "that was just silly." 'Silly?" he repeated, and flushed.

If Barbara Stark had been a man she might not have dared to bait this other man who looked so resolute. But from the sudden reddening of his cheek she thought that ridicule would prove a more effective weapon of defense.

"Of course it was silly," she taunted him

again, "and not a bit of sport." Barbara felt that she now had the game in her own hands, and was smilingly invul-

nerable as he took one quick step forward and demanded: "Did you come here to play with me?"

"O dear, no. I had nothing else to do, and imagined it might be fun." Nonchalantly she began drawing on her gauntlet and started to leave; but he stood squarely in her path. Good-by," she said, with the slightest quiver of indecision, for she was testing him to see what she meant.

"You are not going." There was no uncertainty in his tone. "You shall not go without hearing what I came here to say. If you are visiting Miss Stark, it will be impossible for me to follow you there."

Although many inches shorter than he, Barbara straightened up until she seemed every bit as tall, and announced, "I am

Then they both heard a voice, the guarded, half raised voice of Mrs. Razilla calling out, Adelaide, dear, we'd better be moving soon. I think the men are coming in.

Barbara nodded at Clayton, as if indorsed by the call of her friend, to whom she answered, "I'm ready-right now." But Clayton stepped directly in front and

barred the way as he spoke. "No, stay here, just a moment. If I were free I'd wait for years. But I cannot wait."

Nobody asked you to wait." "That's why I shall tell you now. I want you to marry me, when I come back from Salamanca—if I'm lucky in getting away."

- Then you may not-The half question, the anxious glance betrayed her. Before she realized it, before she could step beyond his reach, he was holding her close, very close, closer than Barbara Stark had ever been to any man. As if she were tossed into a stormy sea, the girl felt herself fighting, fighting and losing-with a

sense of triumph at being lost. "Let me go! Let me go!" Both her hands



weere beating against his breast, struggling to push him away. But he was strong, and she exulted in his strength. "This is shame ful!" Barbara whispered.

'No, it's glorious, glorious! You will go with me now. I can find a way." The intoxication of new mown hay was in his nostrils, and the madness of possession thrilled

his soul. His intensity overpowered Barbara, the will to resist was gone. His lips were drawing nearer, dizzily nearer to her own. Her senses swam at their touch. She had played with fire and it was scorching her; the hot

blood throbbed in her throat and ran tingling through every vein. "O, please, please," she begged. Barbara was begging now.

"No I'll hold you forever. You are mine. Then terror came, and again the frantic beating of her hands against his breast. She would say anything, do anything, lie, cheat, steal, just to get loose. Her brain staggered, and out of frenzy she spoke at random. "O you don't know what you're doing

I'm married!" "You? Married?" His arms dropped as he stepped back.

It seemed an age that they confronted each other, an age of bewildered silence, during which he stared at her, trying to understand and trying to repent. Comprehend he could not, neither could be repent. "I never dreamed that you were-mar

That was all he said. Barbara said nothing at all. It was not the character of Barbara to temporize with a lie. The major hated lies and so did sheexcept old Nat's, which were ingenious and

delightful. She winced before Clayton, abashed, and hanging her head for shame. She had lied because she was afraid, she who had never known a falsehood or a fear. Barbara felt his eyes fastened upon her as if they searched into the depths of her cowardice and deception. It galled her to imagine his contempt, she, the upstanding Miss Stark, whose pride it was to be self-reliant and frank as any man. What could he be think ing of her? O, yes-that she was humiliated, like any fool of a married woman who made a slip. That's what he thought; of course he did. She dared not raise her eyes; such a man would despise her if he knew she feared him, and could only take care of herself by hiding behind a craven lie.

But suppose she told the truth? What might he not do? No matter. She deserved it. "I will look up! I will tell him!" She nerved herself again and again before the strength came. Miss Stark's face had gone utterly white when, with clenched hands and steady lips, her resolute chin arose. Brave enough she met his eye, but her tongue stumbled as she tried to say:

"I-I-I cannot leave here without-There she stuck fast. "Without what?" he inquired very gently.

Without telling you-Along the road beyond the greenery there came a scurry of hoofs as two horses burst through the canebrake, and, terror stricken, Mrs. Razilly flung the bridle of the gray to Barbara.

-" she caught herself-"O. "O. Bar-Adelaide! Adelaide! Quick! Florian is here."

In presence of the panicky wife Barbara could not confess. A man might understand -for men always pardon the follies committed on their account-but another woman would laugh especially one whom Barbara had fibed for being bullied by a husband. "Hurry! Hurry! I'm so frightened!" The creole trembled while her horse went dancing on all fours, and Barbara's gray began to prance. She had no time to set herself straight, no time for anything except to mount and ride. Mrs. Razilly was already

sprang upon the log, leaped into her saddle "I must tell you something," she waved back and called to Clayton. Then she was gone.

crashing through the cane when Barbara

Barbara's gray horse reared and dashed of behind Mrs. Razilly on the black, while Clay ton stood immovable with eyes fixed upon a closing gap in the greenway through which the two had disappeared. Not until their hoofbeats had almost died away did he rouse himself to follow her, step by step, and me chanically as if he had not yet collected all his faculties. He pushed through the dense growth and saw their horses speeding across the fields on a course which held the cane brake between themselves and Lake Mar mion, for Mrs. Razilly was anxious to avoid detection. Again and again the woman on the black glanced over her shoulder, then raced the faster. But the other never turned her head, not even as she plunged into the

farther woods and vanished. No disaster could be more complete. Many times, in his rough life among the Salamanca mountains, Clayton had seemed just on the point of grasping his heart's desire, only to find himself fettered to a rock whilst his dream slipped through his fingers. Three times he had staked his last penny and his last ounce of energy upon some hazardous game and lost, irretrievably lost - then buckled his belt the tighter and smiled upon a world which still invited him to conquest. But here was a loss which forbade all efforts to retrieve.

For one moment the old combative glean flashed into Clayton's eyes as he considered his swifter sorrel. He darted to the oak and was reaching for his bridle when he checked himself. No, he could never pursue the wife of another man.

His dream was ended and the book was closed. Yet she had called back to him that there might be something more. What could she mean? Nothing that really mattered. Nothing mattered now except the dishonor of seeking her. At that he smiled. Honor or shame, hers had been no unwilling kiss, nor the cold, dead touch that gave him no response. Their souls had mingled at the meeting of their lips, and in that moment of madness she had been completely his.

The woman had been won and lost, leaving him more utterly alone than Clayton had ever felt in the isolated arroyas of Central America. Even there he could find comrades who filled his needs, for there he craved no other. But here, almost upon the acre where he was born, the universe seemed stripped of human companionship and peopled only by his dreams. Around him lay the silence, and he resented a sound which marred it, a paddie rasping against a boat. Somebody was

coming It fretted Clayton to be disturbed, but there were powerful reasons why he must not be taken unawares. So he parted the cane behind him and watched a man who stepped ashore and stooped to draw his boat a little higher up the bank. The stranger might be a secret service operative, and desirable to avoid. But this now seemed impossible, for the sorrel stood openly beneath the oak, and must be soon discovered. Besides this, Clayton had ridden from home unarmed, and was helpless unless he got close enough to grapple with the other if he drew. Keeping hid, Clayton scrutinized the newcomer, and caught his visible start as he straightened up to gaze sharply at the sorrel, then to look round as if searching for somebody.

Plainly he was not a planter of the neighborhood. His dress seemed that of a city sport-correct fishing togs and white cork helmet. Now Clayton recognized him for the third fisherman who had come with Major Stark and Dr. Humphreys. At this Clayton also gave a start, and experienced the same unrest that the other man displayed. Perhaps this might be "Florian," of whom the black horse lady had shown such terror. And if he were in fact the husband of Adelaide, Clayton could not fight with him;

neither could he suffer himself to be killed when so much depended upon his escape, With the casual air of a gentleman who strolls for pleasure, Mr. Florian Razilly approached the sorrel. It was not a Benning ton horse, which absolved Mrs. Razilly. But Florian saw only one horse, while he had distinctly heard the tramping of several. Were they going or coming? And where was the sorrel's rider? Then it disquieted Mr. Razilly to imagine that while he inspected the sorrel, the sorrel's rider might also be inspecting him-and Clayton observed Razilly's quick little jerk of his head when

this notion struck him, Then Razilly turned, and had he been more of a woodsman he need not have looked twice for a break in the shrubbery through which horses and men, and women, too, had recently passed. Not ten feet away the wary Clayton eyed him, so as to keep within arm's reach whenever Razilly broke into the open. The creole plunged through the thicket, shielding his face from the scratching of briars, and when he emerged beside plantation road it astounded him to find a

man at his very elbow. "Of" he exclaimed, and his tone acquitted him of being a detective, for secret service agents take things coolly as they come. He tried to steady himself but could not conceal his excitement when face to face with Stuart Clayton. The government was searching four states for this man, and he, Florian Razilly, had located im-young, tall, Spanish looking, mustache and goatee, and the dress? It fitted the description and could be no other. To effect a capture Rezilly must now dissimulate and throw the fugitive off guard. So he forced a smile and said: "I beg your par don, sir, but I expected some friends to

"I am not acquainted with your friends." the other man replied, almost touching Razilly's shoulder and moving nearer as the creole edged away.

"Did I not hear horses?" Razilly made his bland inquiry.

"Possibly. I heard them myself." "Two ladies?" Razilly tried again. "Who were they?"

"I do not know." Clayton spoke the truth, and with such finality as discouraged

"Forgive me: I was mistakee," Razilly spologized profusely. "I beg a thousand pardons for my intrusion." Then he bowed himself away and blundered backwards

through the cane A few seconds after Mr. Florian Razilly had tumbled into his boat and shoved off, Clayton hurried to the lake front and saw him paddling hard in the direction of the other fishermen, a stratagem which Fiorian

adopted for fear of alarming the fugitive. His ruse succeeded admirably, for when the sacred glade was all his own again Clayton forgot his nervous visitor and leaned against the great oak to brood over what had happened. Five minutes ago he was living. planning, human, virile. It seemed strange how completely a man may die, yet remain slive. Tomorrow-through thousands of vacant tomorrows-he would never ride to this glade, never hitch his sorrel to that limb, never sit again beside her on their log. The glade, the limb, the log would still be here. yet the woman would come no more. Queerly enough, his most intangible and persistent memory was of new mown hay, which must forever link itself with that delirious instant when he had crushed her to him. The woman's bodily presence had departed while the imponderable aura of her soul yet lingered and abided.

Not fifty feet away another man came sneaking toward the glade. Like an in-quisitive alligator Uncle Nat's dugout poked its black snout from the willows and headed for the landing. But Uncle Nat wasn't studying about new mown hay, nor pestering his head over imponderable auras. He was hot and tired, and grumbling at the white folks who kept butting in to wake him up. If he hadn't been so grouchy Nat would never have got tangled in the brushwood and made such a splash.

Instantly alert, Clayton drew his sorrel out of sight and watched from behind the Lone Oak until he saw a pair of white eyes rolling this way and that, for wily old Nat did not propose to go blindfolded into another ambuscade. Nothing threatened him from the lake. So Nat figured that everybody was The sun had dropped a bit; it was even shadler and cooler in the glade, and Nat felt powerful sleepy.

"Now, den," he muttered as he regained the log, "reckin I kin have some peace."

Then he stuck up both ears like a frightened rabbit, squatted and stared, for a hollow voice spoke unto him, saying:

"No peace for old Nat." "Who-who-who dat?"

The Negro whirled and started to run, when Clayton stepped from behind the oak

and came forward, laughing. "Don't run, Uncle Nat," he called. "I

want to talk with you." "Talk wid me? Meanin' me?" Casting one scared glance behind him, he wondered if he could reach his dugout. He did not crave a second interview with this man trash, common as pig tracks. But when he glanced back at the other's face Nat saw something which he had never noticed while on the porch at Marmion. He hesitated uncertain and bewildered, eying the man who moved towards him, and held out a hand with the hearty greeting: "Shake, Uncle Nat, shake! How's my good old friend?"

"Fine, Mister Stuart, fine," Nat's voice trembled as he wiped both palms on the seat of his breeches. He shook hands, first one then the other, then both, grinning and say-

"Lordee Mister Stuart, Lordee! I sho is tickled to see you.

"Yes, Uncle Nat," Clayton continued, with the same laugh of little Mister Stuart; so it did not surprise Nat to hear him say, "Gee! this feels like old times. Lemme ride in your augout? Lemme ride?"

"Sholy, Mister Stuart; come 'long, come long. No." Nat darted to the water's edge and glanced at the fishermen. "No. you better not start from major's side. roun' on yo' own side de lake, den I'll cross over an' pick you up."

"Not this trip, old friend." The grown-up boy shook his head with a sad kind of smile that Uncle Nat had never seen before. Long and curiously the Negro guzed upon him, up and down, from the wide brimmed hat to the leggings, finally coming back to consider the tiny black mustache. These personal additions were new, but the smile and the eyes, they were the same.

"Mister Stuart," he spoke in a haze of bewilderment. "Mister Stuart, you sho is got me bumfoozled. One time I claim dis ain't you; den agin I say dis is you."

"Well," Clayton demanded with a chuckle that left no lingering doubt. "What do you claim now?"

Hit's Just like dis, Mister Stuart; over yonder at de big house I didn't take no real good look; an' I say to myse'f, jesso, 'Nat. dat nacherly can't be little Mister Stuart. But now," after a most critical dissection "now dis is you, cause you favors yo' pa more'n you favors yo' own sef.' "Like my father, am 1?"

"Egzactly, Mister Stuart, egzactly. You's jes de breathin' image o' yo' pa. Pears like I kin shet my eyes right now an' hear de ole gen'l talkin'." Having made absolutely sure of his man,

Nat scouted to the edge of the lake and reconnoitered the approaching boats, which came on slowly, but were still far enough away to give him time. Then he hurried back and said:

"Lissen, Mister Stuart, lissen. I laid off to tell you dis news when you fust come out en de gallery; but I plumb forgot, 'cause you was so busy, an' lef, in sech a rush. Now lissen good. Jes atter dinner two white men come pas' our house in a automobile an' 'quired 'bout you mighty p'ticular." Who were they?'

"Dunno, suh, strangers to me, an' ack like folks from up norf." What did they want?"

" Dey was cravin' to see you, suh; powerful sot on seein' you. Claimed dey was friends o' your'n. I p'inted 'em de big road to Marmion, but dat didn't suit. Peered like nothin' wouldn't pacify dem white folks cept fer me to come on ahead an' fin' out ef you was to

As Clayton listened he knew precisely what sort of men they were, not from any description given by the Negro, but from his general manner in alluding to them, especialv the dubiousness with which he regarded their boast of friendship.

"Dey claimed to be pals o' your'n-I think dev said 'pals'-an' wanted to drap in."

"To pull off a surprise party?"

" Egzactly, suh, egzactly. An' ketch you unbeknownst, bein's dey was sech old friends,"

"Yes, yes." From the quiet way in which Mr. Stuart received it, Nat feared that his tale had fallen flat, and inquired, "Den you

was expectin' 'em?' "Yes." Clayton admitted, "I rather looked

for a visit from these gentry." "Suttinly, suttinly. Ef dey's comin' to visit you, dey mus' be all right." Which was worth precisely twenty dollars to Nat. "Den I jes as well go back an' tote 'em de news; tell 'em you's lookin' fer 'em."

"Just as well," Clayton muttered absently. It was many a long year since Uncle Nathaniel Stark had got the chance to looses up his tongue with little Mister Stuart Clayton. Now it wagged like the bell clapper on a frolicsome calf, going over every detail of his interview with Foxyjaw and Fatfacebut kept muffled concerning the five dollars already collected, and twenty more that was due him. Yet be told of his engagement to meet ,them under the magnolia with a tip as the whereabouts of their wanted man. Clayton listened attentively, but not with that same rapt absorption which the child had always given to Uncle Nat's accounts of Brer Possum's adventures. Fometimes Clay-ton didn't seem to hear, and the Negro noticed that he was kinder wool-gathering, even

before Mr. Stuart interrupted him. "No, Uncle Nat. Wait, wait. I can't be annoyed by those officers until I get some-thing else off my mind. Then you may tell

them that I am here.' Suttinly, suh, egzactly." With the vision of twenty dollars dangling before him, Nat's eyes grew luminous. "Dere's jes one mo' thing, Mister Stuart. I s'picioned dem mes at fust, an' lowed dey mought be comin' to 'rest some nigger off yo' place, 'cause I seen

pair of nippers in de car." "Nippers? Yes, naturally."

Even this suggestion did not seem to rik Mr. Stuart. It appeared like he quit think ing about nippers right away, for a wholly different expression flickered into his eyes a he motioned Nat to a seat beside him on the log and asked:

"Uncle Nat, did you happen to see two ladies out riding this afternoon?" "No, suh, never saw none, excusin' dem

two what lef' our house." "One on a gray horse and one on a black?" he questioned briefly. "Yas, suh. Dat black's de major's Glen-

coe, out o' Sassy Bess, by Lawd Bennington. He's a pow'ful high stepper. An' de gray-"Never mind the horses. Did you know the ladies?" "Bleeged to know 'em, suh, when I waits

on dem ladies ev'y day. One of 'em is Miss Barbara Stark, de major's daughter. Don't you 'member when she was a teeny little chile, an' you come over dere one time.

"But the other lady, the other?"

" She's Miss Adelaide-"Miss Adelaide?" Clayton bounded up from the log and blood went rushing through his veins again. He felt the strength return to his arms. Old Nat also felt the power of his arm when Clayton grappled both his

shoulders and repeated, " Did you say 'Miss Adelaide '?" During his long absence from the States Clayton had forgot that household Negroes usually address a matron by her christian name. Old Nat had forgot nothing; neither could he remember anything while Mister Stuart kept shaking him so rapid. Nat's teeth knocked together like castanets as he

looked up and answered: Miss Adelaide-leastwise dat's what she

calls her own se'f." "Then she's a young lady?" " Not so pow'ful ole; her an' Miss Barbara's nigh 'bout de same age."

But she-she's not married? " "O, yas, suh. 'Cose she got a husban'. suh, an' by rights I oughter call her Mrs. Razzle. But dat name comes so onhandy." "Mrs Pazzla?"

"Yas, suh, dat's her husban' in de white hat what lef' dis landin' jes befo' I come. Dey's stayin' at our house." Razzle? Razzle?" Clayton repeated. Yas, suh. Sho is a funny name?

"Very funny." But there was no hilarity in Clayton's attitude as he sank again upon the log and appeared to be studying so hard that old Nat dared not speak another word. Presently,

and without glancing up, he inquired: "Uncle Nat, you will see those ladies when you go home? "Shory, suh; dey'll be settin' right dere on

our gallery." After a long silence and much pondering Mr. Stuart seemed to get his head sot, then turned and asked:

"Will you do something for me?" "Do somethin' fer you? Lordee, Mister Stuart, it's already did." "I thought I could rely on you-just to

carry a note." "Dere, now!" Old Nat laughed and slapped his thigh. "Ain't dat yo' pa' all over ag'in, in his sparkin' days? When de gen'i was young he used to be all de time savin'. 'Nat. I wants you to tote a note.' I was de chief note toter fer yo' pa an' Major Stark whilst dey was co'tin' de ladies. Dey coted plenty ladies. Huh! I knowed enuff to hang 'em

His good old days were coming back, and Nat gabbled on delightedly while Clayton searched his pockets for paper and found nothing except an envelope. The sound of nearer voices floated across the water, so Clayton stepped to the bank where he saw two boats apparently headed for this landing. "Uncle Nat," he pointed, " are they coming

in here?" "No. suh; Mister Razzle's fixin' to go

home. "Razzle? Razzle?" Clayton kept trying to remember. "Uncle Nat, what is that name?" "Jes Razzle, nigh as I kin git it-Mister Flory Razzle, what runs a bank in N'Yaw-

"Oh!" Clayton exclaimed. "Razilly? Florian Razilly?"

"Yas, suh. Dat's how do major speaks it." This gave Clayton something else to consider. The banking firm of Gaumont & Razilly were financial agents for the Dictator of Salamanca. Razilly's awkward presence might not be a mere coincidence, which made it all the more imperative for Clayton to cocape this night. This complicated the matter, but did not change his decision to see

Adelaide "Uncle Nat," he urged, "get your dugout

ready to travel." "Ready, suh; all steamed up." Hastily splitting open the envelope, Clayton began to write on the inside, and no seasoned veteran of intrigue would have not down such words in black and white.

(Continued Next Sunday, Copyright: 1922.