

"THE FIGHTING TRAIL"

NOW SHOWING AT THE HAPPY HOUR

Continued

Casey, soon after his appointment as the head of the vigilance committee, had taken up his duties with an ardor that was not merely inspired by his desire for work. He had been stimulated by the natural love of a fight, and the problem of ridding Lost Mine of Drant and Rawls and putting a stop to the outrages caused by Von Block offered many opportunities for him to satisfy the love. He had rounded the three men, as well as a goodly number of confederates who had joined them, in a little hut in the mountains, only to lose them again when they escaped by the use of swinging to the limb of a tree through a trap door in the roof, and making their getaway in the dark. Finally, however, Casey's persistent activities and his apparent determination to round up the gang, so frightened the fugitives that they had disappeared and evidently had decided that the healthiest thing to do was to attend to their own affairs and allow Gwyn to carry on his plans unmolested. For a time one of Von Block's new confederates, known as "One-Lung" and notorious as a former New York gunman, continued to annoy the young engineer, but he, also, finally vanished and nothing more was heard from him.

It was over two months now since anything had been heard from Von Block or any of his men. Gwyn, Nan and Casey were standing one day, before the main shaft of the mine, watching the operations of the men. All about them things were busy. Ore cars were travelling into and out of the mine, cars of trains laden with cinnabar, were moving along the narrow gauge railroad which had been built from the mine to the town, and which, incidentally, had been one of the big improvements which Gwyn had installed in Lost Mine.

"It seems," said Gwyn, as he and Casey stood outside the shaft, "that we finally scared Von Block away. He hasn't been heard from for nearly nine weeks, now, and it looks as though he'll stay among the missing. I've written to the financial powers in New York and they are mighty well pleased with the outlook. I believe that they will send someone out soon to see how we are getting along."

"Well," replied Casey, "if they do, the report ought to be a hum-dinger. We sure are progressing—and, don't forget, this is the only cinnabar mine that anyone knows of. And this would have been drained long ago if anybody except Don Carlos had known where to find it. Hi, there!" he called suddenly to a man operating an ore-car which had just come from the entrance of the mine. "Stop your loafing and drive up here. We have no time for vacations between loads. Move up!"

The person to whom this curt order was addressed looked up from his car with a scowl. His unshaven face, covered with a ragged beard of several months' growth, was black with dust. And, though no one knew it, it was so intentionally. As the laborer proceeded to push his car toward the engine house, in obedience to his command, he read hastily a note that was stretched on the ore before him. It was in such a position behind the pile of ore, that it could not be seen by the three who stood talking some distance away. He read:

"One-Lung: 'Keep yourself under cover. I need you where you are. Have learned that Gwyn and his wife found in the mine the deeds from the mine and the old land grant which gives them legal possession of the mine. This has been hidden in the mine by Don Carlos as a precaution should his house be robbed. It must be somewhere in Gwyn's cabin now. Get it. But don't let yourself be seen, as I may need you where you are later. Get the deeds and the grant now. You know what failure means!'

"VON BLOCK."

"One-Lung" tore the paper into his pocket. He pushed the ore car past Casey and the others, just in time to hear, Gwyn say to Nan:

"I am terribly busy and want to finish up some things with Casey before it is too late. This is pay night. Do you suppose you could drive one of the machines to town and get the money from the bank? I'll send a man along with you, in case you don't get back until after dark."

"Of course, I can go," Nan answered. "I'll start now and get back as soon as I can."

Gwyn hailed one of the men who was nearby and ordered him to pull up one of the automobiles. "One-Lung," who had skulked along slowly so he could hear what was being said, hurried along with his car to the end of the track, and then disappeared behind some ore cars.

Casey and Gwyn walked slowly toward the former's office and left Nan as she was preparing for her departure to town.

The four men who were seated about the table leaned closer to each other and spoke in low tones. About them, standing in the rear room of Brown's Cafe, in the center of the town of Lost Mine, were a score or more of the roughest, hardest type of men that had ever been seen in the town. They talked among themselves, glancing frequently at the group about the table, waiting to hear the decision of the conference. And Von Block, Out-Deep Rawls and Shoestring Drant were firing questions and statements in subdued voices, at another individual, a huge, fleshy person, weak of face, although

weak of body. This fourth man was known to Lost Mine as Sheriff Causley, whose main object in holding the position was to try to assure himself of re-election at every next election.

In a sudden spasm of duty, which struck him but infrequently, Causley had threatened Von Block and his band, but when the agent of the Central Powers gave him to understand that interference would result sadly for him both physically and politically, he had seen things in a different light.

"Everything is just ripe for our next move—and it'll be our biggest move too," said Von Block. "We have to act quickly and sensibly. The main thing is to get the deeds. I'm pretty sure 'One-Lung' can take care off that; he might even have them already. Then an attack on the mine. We'll capture that, and with the deeds and Sheriff Causley's legal influence, we can hold it—and I can go back to New York and take things easily. You boys," he spoke to the others about the table, "will get your little pieces and they'll be enough to keep you from worrying for some time to come. Now go to it!"

"Wait here a while, boys," Rawls addressed the crowd of men in the room. "We'll be back to get you soon. Be shining up your guns, meanwhile. Then he, accompanied by Drant, Causley and a few of the others left the room and piled into the sheriff's automobile which was standing by the door.

Just as the auto filled with men shot away from the curb to go down the road, another car swung around the corner ahead. In it were two occupants, a man and a woman—Nan and the mine employee who had come with her. She caught a fleeting glance of the passing car and recognized the outlaws in it.

It was very evident that the unexpected presence of Dawls and the other of Von Block's men in Lost Mine alarmed Nan. She speeded up her motor, swung in by the bank, and came out again almost immediately with the money for the pay-roll. In another moment she was back in the car and driving at a dangerously rapid rate of speed toward the narrow gauge railroad which led back to the mine.

Some distance from the terminus of the railroad was a bridge, a wooden structure which ran several hundred feet above a river, whose waters rushed and whirled from the mountains. Before this was reached, when a train was coming from the town and going toward the mine, it was necessary to cross another bridge over a chasm. This latter structure was not straight, but made a turn, as a bow. Where the string of this bow would have been was a wire cable which also bridged the

The Stowaway

By LOUIS TRACY.

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[CONTINUED.]

new increased number. Sabor-nae, they began to take part instantly in the work of rescue, but she wondered dully why Hozier did not come to her, nor did she understand that he had gone back to that raging inferno beneath until she saw his blood stained face appear over the lip of the precipice.

Then she screamed wildly. "Thank God—oh, thank God!" and staggered to her feet in the frantic desire to help in unfastening the ropes that bound him to the insensible Watts. Tears gushed forth at her own helplessness.

The pain in her eyes blinded her. She shrank away again. Not until Philip himself spoke did she dare to look at him, to find that he was bending over her and endeavoring to allay her agitation by repeated assurances of their common well-being.

"Come, Miss Yorke," said Hozier, "our Portuguese friends say 'THANK GOD!' we must not remain here any longer than is necessary."

chasm, with the town and lower than that nearest the mine. By means of this, and a basket attached to a rope and pulley, ore had been sent across the chasm by means of the cable ferry before the bridge had been erected. Since then, however it had not been in use, and the basket was rotten from exposure to the weather.

As Nan, in her engine, approached the chasm bridge, she noticed an automobile that was standing on a road near the trestle. It was Causley's car. She guessed in a moment that Rawls and his men had headed her off and went about to attack her. She did not know why; perhaps, she thought, for the money she had with her, perhaps to capture her and use her as a sort of modern hostage against Gwyn. A glance at the car and she threw the throttle wide. The engine dashed by the car upon the bridge, just as Rawls, Drant, Causley and the others who had left Brown's in the sheriff's car, emerged from the bushes firing a fusillade of shots which they intended would stop Nan's flight. The man in the engine with her opened the coal box to speed the flames as they rode over the river and almost lost all the fire when many of the burning cinders fell to the bridge. As the engine swept along toward the mine, Nan looked back and could see the bridge over the river beginning to flame. The cinders had set fire to the dry logs that served as ties.

When Nan's engine drew up before the main shaft of the mine, she saw Gwyn and Casey talking excitedly before the superintendent's office. It was evident that something had gone wrong. The engine had scarcely stopped when Nan jumped from it and ran up to the two men.

"Von Block," she cried, breathlessly. "He and his gang are on the tracks. They tried to get me. There's something mighty troublesome in the wind and we'd better do something quick."

"Von Block!" Gwyn echoed, his excitement at even a higher pitch. "You bet he's making trouble. Nan, your deeds to the mine are gone. They've been stolen. I was just in the house, and the safe has been ransacked. Casey, we've got to head them off. We've got to get to town before they do with the deeds and land grant and keep them from filling them. Nan and I'll get on the engine again and ride back. You stay here, Casey, and guard the mine with your men. It's two to one they'll attack here and try to get possession."

Gwyn lost no time. Casey understood and shouted that he would do his part while Gwyn and Nan went to town. Gwyn ran to the engine, followed by Nan, threw open the throttle and sped along the rails in the direction of the town of Lost Mine. There was nothing to hinder them until they reached the bridge over the river. This they saw to their horror, as they rounded a curve and came within full view of it, was blazing in flames.

"There's nothing to do, Nan," Gwyn shouted above the din of the roaring wheels on the track. "We've got to take a chance. I'm going to drive over, full speed. Hold, now!"

(Continued next week)

"Yes," said a strange voice, "the sea is moderating. At any moment a boat may appear. Follow me, all of you. The road is a rough one, but it is not far."

The speaker was an elderly man, long haired and bearded, of whose personality the girl caught no other details than the patriarchal beard, a pair of remarkably bright eyes, a long, pointed nose and a red scar that ran diagonally across a domed forehead. He turned away without further explanation and began to climb a natural pathway that wound itself up the side of an almost perpendicular wall of rock.

Hozier caught Iris by the arm and would have assisted her, but she shook herself free. She felt and conducted herself like a fractious child.

"I can manage quite well," she said, with an odd petulance.

Suddenly she clung to him. "Don't let them send me back to the ship," she implored.

"No, no. You are safe now."

"Of course I am safe, but I dread this ship. Why did I ever come on board? Captain Coke said he would slink her, I told you."

"Steady! Keep a little nearer the rocks on your left. The passage is narrow here."

Hozier raised his voice somewhat and purposely hurried her. They were skirting the seaward face of the rocky islet on which they had found salvation. The sun was blazing at them sideways from a wide expanse of blue sky. Thinking he was still dizzy from the effects of the blow, which the girl had ascribed to the bursting of a shell, Philip glanced at his watch. It was twenty-five minutes past 8. Yet he distinctly remembered eight bells being struck while Coke was telling him from the bridge to give the anchor thirty-five fathoms of cable. Was it possible that they had gone through so much during those few minutes?

Just then the track turned sharply away from the sea. A dry water course cut deeply into the cliff, where occasional rains had found an upright layer of soft scoria imbedded in the mass of basalt. Their guide was standing on the sky line of the cleft, some forty feet above them.

"Tell the others to make haste," he said. "This is the end of your journey."

"Who is he?" Iris asked, being rather breathless now after a steep climb. "I don't know," said Hozier. "How absurd!" she gasped. "I—I think I'm dreaming. Why—have we come here?"

It was not as a furnace in this narrow ravine. Each upward step demanded an effort. She would have slipped and hurt herself many times were it not for Hozier's firm grasp, nor did she realize the sheer exhaustion that forced him to seek support from the neighboring wall with his disengaged hand. The man in front, however, was alive to their dangerous



"PARDON ME, MONSIEUR."

plight. He said something in his own language, for his English had the precise staccato accent of the well educated foreigner, and another man appeared. The sight of the newcomer startled Iris more than any other event that had happened since the Andromeda reached the end of her last voyage. He wore the uniform of those dreadful beings whom she had seen on the island.

She shrieked. Hozier fancied she had sprained an ankle, but before she could utter any sort of explanation the apparition in uniform was by her side and murmuring words that were evidently meant to be reassuring. Seeing that he was not understood, he broke into halting French.

He was a handsome youngster, evidently an officer, and his eyes dwelt on the girl's face with no lack of admiration as he led her into a cave which seemed to have been excavated from the inner side of a small crater.

"You can rest here in absolute safety, madame," he said. "Permit me to arrange a seat. Then I shall bring you some wine."

Iris flung off the hand which held her arm so persuasively. "Please do not attend to me. There are wounded men who need attention far more than I," she said, speaking in English, since it never entered her mind that the Portuguese officer had been addressing her in French.

He was puzzled more by her action than her words, but Hozier, who had followed close behind, explained in sentences built on the Ollendordian plan that mademoiselle was disturbed, mademoiselle required rest, mademoiselle hardly understood that which had arrived, et voila tout.

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