

# THE COLONEL'S PAIR OF REDHEADS

*By Archie P. McKishnie*

**I**N Martin's defence let it be said that he started in the race to Marion Nevill's favour sadly and woefully handicapped. Perhaps no wooer since man was made and woman placed beside him to awaken yearning and discontent had ever found himself in quite such a dilemma as did he this momentous season when, in response to Colonel Nevill's invitation, he was spending the closing autumn days in Shag Villa, the country home of the girl he adored.

Now, had it been an open field and no favour—but, you see, it was not; very much not! Two competitive wooers toed the scratch with Martin in the race to Marion's favour, either of whom, he felt assured, could have given him five yards and beat him to the rope with time to spare.

And the devilish part of it all was, he confessed to himself, he knew it. Yes, Martin knew it all right, and the knowledge did not serve to help him in the least. He liked Captain John Simms as a man, very much indeed, and he possessed a wholesome admiration for Billy Gregory, too. Man to man, and with man that is; as rival to rival, he hated both, and would have enjoyed tying them together and hurling them over the highest cliff into the lake.

There was something prehistoric about Martin's nature, and it was nothing for him to jump back a couple or more of centuries and become a cave-dweller. Particularly was this liable to happen when, as now, he played golf with his rivals and heard their derisive chuckles and Marion's sigh of sympathy when he missed a drive. At such times that slender, steel-nosed golf-stick took on enormous proportions with knotty protuberances along its sides, and he longed to make one fell swipe at the captain and Billy, grasp Marion by the hair and drag her to his lair among the cliffs.

Only there were impediments to the design. In the first place, Martin was not fashioned by nature to carry it out. He stood only five-foot-three, which fact, perhaps, explained why he was being frequently mistaken by visitors for the caddy; in the second place, this spirit of outlawry was but an obsession that lasted not longer than the flicker of an eyelash.

However, of one thing he was positive. Neither the captain nor Billy cared for Marion just in the way he cared for her. They were not capable of it. They were both big, raw-boned, aggressive individuals delving away at life for the kernel the shell afforded. In other words, they were brute men, veneered by civilization into fair-