

Gordon Craig SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

By RANDALL PARRISH
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There was nothing there to interest me, and I crossed a narrow space of grass to where a broken picket fence was visible amid a fringe of weeds. No description can fitly picture the gloomy desolation surrounding that ramshackle place. Evidently this fence, now a mere ruin, had once served to protect a garden plot. But I saw merely a tangled mass of wild vegetation, so thick and high as to obstruct the view. Narrow footpaths branched in either direction, and I chose to follow the one to the right, thinking thus to skirt the fence and learn what was beyond before approaching the negro cabins on the opposite side. To my surprise I found myself suddenly standing on the bank of a narrow bayou, the water clear, yet apparently motionless, the opposite shore heavily timbered. Owing to a sharp curve I could see scarcely a hundred yards in either direction, yet close in beside the shore a light boat was skimming over the gray water. Even as I gazed, the fellow playing the paddle saw me and waved his hand. In another moment the bow grounded on the bank and its occupant came stumbling up the slight declivity.

He was a medium sized, wiry looking fellow, with olive skin and small mustache, dressed in brown corduroy, a colored handkerchief wound about his head in lieu of a hat. As he came to the level where I stood he stopped suddenly, staring into my face.

"Savrel! I thought eet was Coombs. Who are you, m'sieur?"

"I came in last night," I replied evasively, "and was just looking about a bit."

The black eyes searched my face, and I noted his right hand touch the hilt of a knife in his belt.

"What water is this?" I asked, ignoring his action. "Bayou?"

"Oui, m'sieur."

"Are we near the sea?"

"Twenty-seex mille. You not know where you are? 'Tis odd you not know, m'sieur."

I laughed, enjoying his bewilderment, yet not realizing how to turn it to better account.

"Oh, no. I came by train in the night and am a little hazy as to location. You live about here?"

"Som' time. Then off again—sallor. Where Coombs? You know, m'sieur?"

"No, I don't," I acknowledged.

"Asleep in his cabin likely."

The creole, for such he undoubtedly was, made a swift resolve.

"'Tis like, m'sieur. I find out. Maybe you come too."

The last was more of an order than a question. I gave it no apparent heed, but turned in the direction of the cabins. I had no reason to avoid Coombs. Indeed, I desired to see him, and I had no intention of permitting this lad to suppose that I feared his veiled threats. Without so much as glancing back at him I advanced along the footpath, my hands in my pockets. Yet my mind leaped from point to point in eager speculation. Little as I liked Coombs this creole was even more dangerous. The one was a rough, the other a venomous snake. So far as the original purpose of my adventure was concerned it had already largely faded from recollection. The swift recurrence of more startling events dominated.

"Ze right; turn to ze right, m'sieur," said a voice behind me, and then I saw Coombs standing before the door of the second cabin.

"What does this mean, Broussard?" he growled savagely. "Where did you pick up that fellow?"

"At the landing," the creole hastened to explain. "How could I tell? He said he knew you, m'sieur."

"Oh, he did, hey? Well, all I know about him is that he blew in here last night with a woman. Claimed to be young Henley and took possession of the place. I reckon it's about time I saw some papers to prove what yer are, young feller, 'fore yer go snooping round at daylight. What's yer game anyhow?"

The man's bluster gave me my clew. The thought suddenly occurred to me that for some reason he was more afraid of me than I of him.

"You can see my authority, Coombs, any time you are ready to exhibit your own," I returned coolly, leaning back against the side of the cabin and staring him straight in the eyes. "If you are the overseer here, then it is my money that is paying your wages, and from the look of things you'll not hold the job long at that."

Coombs did not cringe, but my tone brought him uneasiness.

"The niggers won't work," he returned gruffly. "Thar ain't a nigger on the place."

"Apparently white men enough hanging around. What's the matter with the negroes?"

"Ghosts," and the fellow laughed. "Maybe yer've seen 'em?"

I straightened up, stung by the sneer in his voice.

"No, but I've seen something more to the point—a murdered man."

"What?"

"Just what I said. There was a man killed last night in that back room upstairs. Shot in the head through the

window. I heard the shot and investigated. His body lies there now." I saw Broussard's snaky eyes flash across toward Coombs' face, but the latter remained motionless.

"It's a d—ll!" he ejaculated roughly. "There is nobody there!"

"Easily settled. Come with me, and I'll show you."

Rather to my surprise neither objected to the test, and we tramped in single file toward the house. Some precaution kept me at the rear, and I followed silently to the room of the murder.

There was the furniture as I remembered it, the dirty walls, the opened window. But the overturned chair stood against the wall, the cards were stacked on the table, and there was no body lying on the floor. Coombs let out a harsh laugh.

"Well, where's yer dead man? I reckon ye don't see none, hey?"

"No," I insisted, "but I did see one—twice. The body lay there where the stain shows on the floor. It has been carried away within half an hour."

"A likely story. Who could do the job? Nobody round this shebang but Sallie an' me. I sure ain't been in yer, an' I reckon it won't Sallie. So cut it out, young feller. After breakfast you an' I'll have a talk an' find out a few things. Come on, Broussard, an' let's talk over that matter o' ours."

The two went down the stairs together, and I closed the door of the rear room and stepped out into the hall. Sallie was in the kitchen, for I heard her voice questioning the men as they passed through. Out of the window I caught a glimpse of them both disappearing through the weeds toward the bayou.

That dead body had not moved itself. Human hands had accomplished the deed during the brief period of my absence outside. Whose hands could have done it? Not those of Coombs, surely, for he could not have passed me and attained the house while I was in the garden unseen, nor Sallie, for she possessed no strength to more than drag the dead man to some near-by covert. With the possibility of this in mind I searched the vacant rooms of that floor, closets and all, thoroughly, but to no result. There was therefore but one conclusion possible—unknown parties were involved. We were not alone in the house in spite of its apparent desertion.

I paused in doubt before Mrs. Bernard's door, convinced this was the truth. Should I tell her frankly the story of the night, my vague discoveries, my suspicion? I surely had no right to deceive the woman or keep her with me. I had determined myself to face it out—to risk life, if need be, to learn the truth. But I had no right to involve her further.

I rapped at the door twice before there was any movement within. Then her voice asked who was there, and at my answer she came out fully dressed, fronting me with questioning eyes.

"The night has rested you," I said smilingly, my heart beating in swift appreciation of her beauty. "Are you ready for breakfast?"

"For anything to escape the loneliness of that room," she replied seriously. "If I really looked rested it is not from sleep, for I have passed the night in terror. My slumber was fitful and filled with dreams. But I am sure of some things—my door was tried twice, and I heard some one prowling about the hall."

"That might have been I," I interrupted, "as I was out there during the night, but I certainly never tried your door."

"You had a light?"

"Yes."

"I saw that shining over the transom. It was much later when my door was tried—no long before daylight, I think. Whoever it was passed out the front hall window on to the porch roof. My light was burning, although turned low, and no doubt he saw me sitting up, wide awake, on the edge of the bed, for he had disappeared by the time I gained sufficient courage to approach the window and look out."

"Climbed down the trellis probably," I said, deeply interested. "It appears strong enough to support a man. I wish you had got sight of the fellow."

She lifted her hands to her head.

"But I was so frightened. My head throbs now with pain. I was frightened last night in the darkness. I confess I completely lost my nerve and would have run away if I could. Perhaps I even said things which made you believe I regretted my action in coming with you. But I am more myself now, and I mean to remain and discover what it all means. Can you guess why? Do you not suspect who I am?"

"Who are you? Only as you have told me."

"And I told you only a half truth. I am the wife of Philip Henley." Her cheeks flushed, a touch of passion in her voice as she faced me. "That is the truth. Do you suppose that I would ever have come here with you otherwise? No matter how desperate my condition was, that would have been impossible. I should have despised myself."

My surprise at this avowal kept me silent, yet I could not conceal the admiration from revelation in my eyes. She must have read aright, for she drew back a step, grasping the knob of the door.

"I—I wanted to tell you yesterday—all the way coming down here. But I wanted to discover just what you were like."

"You mean whether I could be trusted?"

She looked at me frankly.

"Now I am simply going to trust you fully. I must. There is no other way. I thought it all over and over again last night and determined to

confess everything as soon as we met this morning."

CHAPTER VII.
The Decision.

NOW that I could openly associate myself with Philip Henley's wife in a struggle to retain for her what was justly her own, all feeling of doubt vanished, and I became grimly confident of the final result.

"I am glad to know that," I said, "for now I can work openly, knowing exactly what I ought to do. I have felt like a rat skulking in a hole. I believed what those men told me. They convinced me with proofs I could not ignore, but they must have lied. Would it be possible for Philip Henley to be in a penitentiary convicted of crime?"

"It would not be," she returned firmly. "There was no time after I left him for an arrest and conviction. That alone is sufficient to convince me of fraud and conspiracy. His remittances were amply sufficient."

"Then what do you think has occurred?"

"Murder!" her face went white. "Who was killed?"

"Either one of two things," she said soberly. "He is dead or helplessly in the power of those men who sent you here. There is no other conclusion possible. He had possession of his papers, even his private memoranda. They knew more of conditions here than I had ever been told. In my judgment, he is desirable they would dare attempt to carry out such a conspiracy. The very boldness of their plan convinces me. They knew he was dead and believed, if I still lived, that I knew nothing of his inheritance. The telegram announcing the judge's death I never saw. It must have arrived while Philip was too intoxicated to grasp its meaning."

"You know nothing, then, of the two men Neale and Vall?"

"No. There is a Justus C. Vall, a lawyer, in the city. I found the name in the directory and called at his office. He was away making political speeches, had been gone two weeks."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Lesson IX.—Fourth Quarter, For Nov. 28, 1915.

Text of the Lesson, Amos v, 1-15. Memory Verses, 14, 15—Golden Text, Jer. xxi, 28—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

The message of Jonah was to gentiles, suggestive of foreign missions; that of Amos was to Israel, and therefore a home mission lesson reminding us of the need of the church today to be awakened to see her privileges and opportunities and responsibilities. The sins of Israel and her needs were not different from those of believers now. They bore the name of Jehovah, but were false to Him and worshiped idols. "They know not to do right, saith the Lord" (iii, 10). There was self and sin in all their worship. Therefore the Lord said, "Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, * * * for this liketh you" (iv, 4, 5). Leaven is always a type of evil. Because of the sin in their professed worship of God He said, "I hate, I despise your feast days." I will not accept nor regard your offerings (v, 21-23). Although they outwardly kept new moons and Sabbath days their hearts were long for them to be over that they might sell corn and wheat and grow rich by fraud, giving small measure and taking in as much money as possible (viii, 4, 5).

Consider the growing rich by fraud that abounds today even among those who hold high positions in the church, the oppression of the poor, the formality in worship, the false teaching that all are children of God, that Jesus Christ was only one of the sons of God, better than the others, but not God; that there is no hell, no lake of fire; that if people are not saved in this life they can be in the next and that a God of love will never allow any one to perish eternally; the Bible cannot be taken literally, it does not mean what it says—consider all these horrible things and then think how God in His mercy sent forth a Daniel Crawford from the heart of Africa and a William Sunday from the baseball field to show His people their sins and to uphold the honor of His word.

How does the Lord plead by Amos? He reminded them how He had brought them out of Egypt, led them forty years in the wilderness, given them the lands of others, raised up prophets and Nazarites from among their sons and revealed to them His purposes by His prophets (ii, 10, 11; iii, 7; ix, 7), therefore He would have them seek Him and live, assuring them of an abundant pardon if only they would turn to Him with the whole heart (v, 4, 6, 14; Isa. lv, 6, 7). He also pointed them onward, as He always did and still does, to the future glory, for in spite of all the sin of Israel it is the purpose of God to restore Israel and bless all nations through them. He will raise up the tabernacle of David (ix, 11), and James said at the great council at Jerusalem that would be after He had gathered the church, as he put it, taken out of the Gentiles a people for His name. Then he said that all the Gentiles would after that be gathered (Acts xv, 13-15). Note how in the very last words of Amos' prophecy the Lord said that He would bring again the captivity of Israel, that they would build their waste cities and inhabit them; that He would plant them upon their land and that they would no more be pulled up out of it (ix, 13-15). Abraham was encouraged and sustained by the assurance of the city—Moses by the recompense of the reward, David by the kingdom, Paul by the glory to be revealed and our Lord Himself by the joy set before Him. I know of no way by which the church of today can be turned from its worldliness and indifference so successfully as by setting clearly before her the great love of God in Christ Jesus, the greatness of the salvation He has provided and the glory of the kingdom to which we are called.

Men are trying to remedy the evils that exist, to reform or uplift the race, by their own efforts, but "They know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel" (Mic. vi, 12). They do not know that the babe of Bethlehem was born to rule in Israel and that there can be no kingdom of peace on earth till He shall come again (Mic. v, 2-4). People are so filled with their own thoughts and ways, just as Israel was, that they will not be agreed with God and therefore cannot walk with Him (Amos iii, 8). Because many preachers in pulpits and teachers in seminaries are turning away from God to the wisdom of men there is a famine of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos viii, 11). As in the last lesson, those who have knowledge of God are disobedient and asleep and must be awakened. As it is written in Eph. v, 14, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. v, 17, 18). "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii, 11, 12). The whole world lieth in the wicked one; it is an evil age from which the Lord desires to deliver us (I John v, 19; Gal. i, 4). All things indicate as never before that the end of this evil age is near and that it is a time to be specially separated unto God from all evil and unbelief.

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Empty Compliments.

Fifty years or more ago Sir Harry Smith, after whose wife Lady Smith was named, was governor of Cape Colony, and led a number of campaigns against the Kaffirs. Returning from a particularly lively one, he held a review of his troops, who were in a most dilapidated condition—barefooted, ragged and half starving.

When the time came for him to say a few words he lavished praise upon them, dwelling upon their bravery, endurance and even upon their soldier-like appearance.

This last compliment was too much for the patience of the old color-segment. He stepped forward—tattered and unkempt—saluted most respectfully and then said:

"Begging your pardon, Sir 'Arry, we don't want no gammon; we want boots!"

This outspoken criticism was fortunately taken in good part and shortly afterward the men got their boots—London Scraps.

Bedlam.

The word "bedlam" is a corruption of the word "Bethlehem" and originated as a synonym for chaos at the time when the house of Bethlehem, occupied by a sisterhood of London, became an insane asylum. The treatment of the insane in the early part of the sixteenth century was not well understood, and, according to the theories then prevalent, it was necessary to frighten the patient out of his lunacy. All sorts of awful expedients were resorted to, among them "surprise floors," which slipped from under the feet; "surprise baths" and doggings at the periods of most severe illness; hence the name "bedlam," the result of incorrect spelling possibly, came easily to stand for awful things.

Weight of Air.

There is no uniform weight for air. For instance, say the weight of a cubic foot of air at sea level is 1,700 grains, with the pressure removed, by its elevation to an altitude of 10,000 feet, its weight would be about the half of 1,700 grains. In other words, the cubic foot at ten or twelve thousand feet above the sea would expand to two cubic feet, each of about 850 grains weight.

OLDER BUT STRONGER

To be healthy at seventy, prepare at forty, is sound advice, because in the strength of middle life we too often forget that neglected colds, or careless treatment of slight aches and pains, simply undermine strength and bring chronic weakness for later years.

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Noticeable.

"Speaking of honesty"—

"Yes."

"—there is one thing I have often noticed."

"What is that?"

"The man who talks most about it is generally willing to dispose of what he has left for a consideration."

Girl Workers in Japan.

The number of factory girls newly recruited every year in Japan is 200,000, of whom only 80,000 go home. The remaining 120,000 never return. They go from one factory to another or go into other occupations, never thinking of going home.—World of Labor.

Sad.

"Did you ever notice?"

"What?"

"Freckles are sure to be hereditary, but the dazzling beauty of the woman who first introduced them into the family failed to accompany the freckles."

The Wretchedness of Constipation

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