

A MISTAKEN IDENTITY

By WILLIAM HENRY

HE was a tenderfoot. That was enough. From the moment his tall, lank, boyish figure appeared at Taylor's Camp we disliked him. Not a man had a decent word to say to him. John Taylor had been an easy chief—possibly too easy, but he knew the country, was familiar with the ways of the West, an Old Timer; and in those days that meant almost everything. It is still a pretty good recommendation west of Lake Superior.

That this young upstart, just out of swaddling clothes, should have been appointed our chief in succession to John Taylor was too much for human endurance. Doubtless he had some kind of college diploma, but a piece of paper could never make up for lack of experience on the plains or in the woods. I have seen Indians who had never been inside of a school district, knowing no more about an engineer's instruments than a blind cat, who could locate a road better than a professor of engineering with thirty letters tacked on to his name.

Well, as I was saying, the new chief had not a friend in the party. I do not think it was altogether because we thought so much of the man whose place he had taken. To be strictly honest, Taylor had made mistakes which had caused us a lot of trouble. It was the new chief's youth, more than anything else—and his name—Augustus Claude Simmers. Imagine Dan Brennan, Bill Gorman, Jerry Sullivan, to say nothing of myself, full grown men with years of experience in Western life taking orders from a man by the name of Augustus Claude Simmers.

Brennan was loudest against the new chief. He was a big, broad-shouldered fellow who had been on location ever since the commencement of the survey. He was a bit of a bully and when he said he was going to drop Simmers in Red Deer creek I think he meant it. After the boy had been with us a couple of weeks there wasn't a man in the party that would have raised a hand to stop him. Up at five and slave till sundown, with only enough time to snatch three hurried meals, is no way to treat men working for a rich railway corporation. To make matters worse it rained, rained, rained, continuously rained.

Certainly Simmers was green. He might have put it all over us in the East, but we had it on him in the West.

One night when we had all turned in with the exception of Brennan, who was putting a patch on his pants by the light of the lantern, the boy-chief suddenly jumped up in bed and nervously exclaimed: "What's that noise?"

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo" came from the distance. It was raining as usual, but otherwise this weird sound alone broke the stillness of the night.

"What noise?" grunted one of the men roughly, turning over in his bunk.

"There, there! Don't you hear it?"

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo" came out of the distance, though this time a little nearer the camp.

"Heavens!" shouted Brennan, jumping from his seat with an air that would have done credit to a tragedian in a ten-twenty-and-thirty dramatic outfit, "it's wolves!"

Only the day before we had word from Johnson's Camp that one of their men who had strayed from the party had been killed by wolves. The wolf was the only animal we feared. The poor fellow at Johnson's Camp was only one of the many victims of the fiendish, murderous ferocity of the wolf that summer.

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo." This time the noise was less than a stone's throw away. We turned to Brennan.

"Wolves, sure enough!" said he, excitedly. "What can we do? We haven't any guns. You shouldn't have left them behind at Witchwood," turning to Simmers.

"Well, who left them?" asked the chief in an angry tone, and for the first time showing signs of temper. During the two weeks he had been with us he had taken everything we had said to him, which was little enough, with the forbearance of a saint.

"But, what are we to do?" began Brennan. "You are responsible for our safety. Here you fellows," said he, turning in a tone of unutterable disgust from Simmers, "get up and protect the



"Augustus Claude Simmers."

DRAWN BY C. W. JEFFERYS

Camp." We saw that Brennan had something on to worry the chief, so we readily climbed out of bed to help along the game.

"Here," said he, tragically grabbing an axe and swinging it over his shoulder, "I'll sell my life dearly."

Simmers sat on the edge of the bed. "Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo" again came the noise. Any one but a blamed idiot from the East could have told that the sound came from a tree, and would have known that although wolves are devilish in their cunning they cannot climb trees.

"Come, get busy there, fellows," shouted Brennan. We all grabbed for the first thing that came handy, and began to take a real interest in the proceedings.

Simmers was excited, not to say frightened. You could see by the dim light of the lantern that his face had turned an ashy hue.

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo." The hoot of the owl came this time from above the tent. Simmers reached under his pillow and pulled out a wicked-looking gun, and turning to us in a deliberate manner, with a low determined voice, said:

"Men, I realise that as chief of the party I am responsible for you, as Brennan told you. There are only six shots in this revolver, and I don't know how many wolves there are. Each man must do his best. Now, Brennan, take the axe you have and stand outside the tent in front of the door. You are the biggest and bravest man here, and must be the first to take the attack. We will support you."

"Give me the gun?" demanded Brennan.



"The next shot won't miss," said Simmers.

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"I'll keep it," replied Simmers.

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo," came from over the tent.

"Get out at once," commanded Simmers.

"I won't!" sullenly answered Brennan.

Bang! A hole in the tent two inches above Brennan's head was the answer. "The next shot won't miss," said Simmers in a low voice.

I think I mentioned that Brennan was making repairs to his wardrobe that evening. You may surmise that he was not dressed for wet weather. He went hurriedly out into the rain, which commenced to fall in torrents as if the heavens appreciated the situation and were prepared to take a hand in Brennan's discomfiture.

"Now, you fellows," said Simmers, turning to us, "get into bed."

"It's only an owl," shouted Brennan, poking his head through the tent door.

"It's wolves," replied Simmers from his comfortable seat on the bed, "and if you move from that door I'll fire."

There is nothing that will take the spirits out of a man quicker than to stand in the pouring rain clad in a night shirt. After a few moments Brennan's voice called in a meek, respectful tone:

"Mr. Simmers, the—the wolves have all gone."

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo," came the answer.

"Stick to your post like a man," shouted Simmers.

We didn't know whether to be mad at Simmers or not. At one time or another we had all been the butts of Brennan's scurvy tricks—practical jokes, he called them—and it did not take us long to make up our mind to enjoy this one on him.

Only once in ten minutes did Brennan move and then, bang! went the gun. At the end of that time the hoot of the owl was again heard, but some distance away.

"Brennan, you may come in," said Simmers, comfortably settling himself down to rest. "Put on some dry things and get to bed."

The next day Brennan quit the camp, and after that somehow we got along better with the new chief. After all Gus Simmers was not a bad sort of fellow, and it was really remarkable how quickly he picked up the ways of the West.

About Charles Dana Gibson

WHEN Charles Dana Gibson was at Harvard, they thought a great deal of him as an athlete and good fellow, but turned up their noses at his drawings. Whatever else Gibson privately thought of his work, he probably knew it could be done better, and kept at it; but he got little encouragement when he put it before those who buy such things; and so, when the editor of *Life* took one of his pictures which he had called "The Moon and I" and handed him a cheque for it, Gibson, it is told, was made very certain that fortune was within his grasp. The cheque was for four dollars. Gibson straightway did a sum in arithmetic: if one such drawing was worth four dollars, five drawings were worth twenty dollars. To decide just what this meant in daily income he sat down and did five drawings in rapid succession. Early the next morning he took them to *Life's* office. The editor glanced at them and handed back all five, accompanied, it is said, by a reflection upon the workmanship they displayed which sent Gibson's castle in the air to the ground.

At the same time, however, the scales fell from the artist's eyes, and he was able to do his sum in arithmetic somewhat after this fashion: If one whole day of honest work, plus an original idea from observation of life, was worth a certain fraction of twenty dollars, then two days of similar work, plus an equally good idea, is worth more than double that same fraction of twenty dollars. This last proposition seemed to him the better one, and he proceeded to try it out, and it was on that basis he continued his work. It has proved a rather sound basis, too, judging by results; for not long ago it was reported that certain editors paid Gibson fifty thousand dollars a year for his exclusive services, and now he is abroad doing things with colours which will accomplish for him no one knows how much.