

## MAD LAVEEN

(Continued from Page 7)

Ravine, I could not help thinking of the poor devil of a foreigner, and the possibility of him being in a plight that might need a helping hand.

At breakfast, next morning, I mentioned it to some of the boys. I asked them if they were game to come along to investigate, and I had no trouble over volunteers. Late in the afternoon, we took cautiously down the trail. As we neared the clearing by the shack, I got the boys to remain in hiding, with their guns ready in case of trouble. I went quietly forward alone.

The door of the shack was closed. There was a shutter on the window. I battered on the door, but got no answer. Thinking it most probable that Laveen had flown the country, I beckoned the boys forward. We put our shoulders to the woodwork and the door gave way.

A rush of air of the vilest odor swept on us. We stepped back for a bit until it was safe for us to venture in without gas masks. It was dark. One of the boys tore down the shutter from the window, letting the sunlight stream in. Laveen's bunk was empty. An object was lying on the floor. It was Mad Laveen, sprawled, face downward. We turned him over. He had evidently been dead for weeks. A neat bullet hole showed on his left temple. By his side lay his empty rifle.

Laveen had demanded credit for at least one good deed. He had left the world that he merely cumbered.

Looking about for the cause of the musty, pestiferous odor that pervaded the place, a strange sight presented itself. Around the walls of the shack were nailed the heads of putrid fish, the heads of dead animals, rabbit feet and bird wings, all in the most horrible state of decay. Below each were written religious quotations intermingled with the most vile blasphemies one could imagine, and all in good English.

In a hurry to get away, I ordered the men to pack Laveen's body outside, when my attention was drawn to a sheet of notepaper on the bench near the window. I picked this up and read it.

"The curse of God be on you if you bury me in the wormy earth," it read. "Build a fire, saturate me with coal oil and set me on top. Don't leave hide or hair of Laveen."

"Poof!" I remarked to the boys. "He's quite finicky about the disposal of his remains. He didn't do much good when he was alive; darned if we're going to do any Hindu stuff over him."

"Come on! We'll dig a hole for him at the end of the clearing. That should be good enough."

And that's exactly what we did;—a four-feet-deep hole, and "Good bye, old sport!" was his funeral service;—a nice little mound with a few white stones on top, and we were through.

As the only way to get rid of the pest-house he had left behind, I decided to burn it.

We set it alight, and stood back to watch it go up, for, after all, he's a queer codger, man or boy, who doesn't like to watch a fire.

Well, in the gathering dark, that shack went up like pitch and dynamite. It roared and seethed and hissed, with the flames hitting the roof of the sky till we had to back up to save ourselves from roasting with it. The walls stood up round what seemed to be a white-hot furnace.

It was an awesome sort of sight, away out there in the clearing, backed by the dense forest, we standing by the river's edge and every one of us staring half-hypnotised,

with not a word to bandy between us. But suddenly Andy Slaven, my foreman, cried out hoarsely.

"Great God! See,—there's Mad Laveen!"

Every one of us stiffened as if an electric shock had shot through us. Instinctively, we looked in the direction Andy had indicated. And there, sure enough!—apparently as live as any of us, was Laveen—big, broad, bearded and grim,—striding down from the place we had buried him.

Not one of us could speak. A queer chill, that froze us where we stood, crept down our spines. I could feel the hair rise at the nape of my neck, and my tongue curl, dry, at the back of my mouth. If Laveen had had a mind to, he could have killed every man-jack of us where we stood and we wouldn't have been able to raise a hand to save ourselves.

On came the big Russian, striding calmly toward the blazing shack and paying no heed to us at all. He came round the side of the house and made for the doorway. At the entrance he turned. His eyes opened wide and seemed to flash with exultation. Then he grinned at us in a good-natured way, showing his great, white teeth. He raised his hand in a motion of farewell, tumbled backward and disappeared in the blaze.

The moment he did so, the fire shot to the sky as if the very fiends of hell were at play inside. And, as we stood gaping, the walls fell inward with a crash and a shower of sparks, and gradually the flames subsided until nothing was left but smouldering ashes and black char.

We were a silent crowd that travelled back to camp that night, and it was not until next morning that the boys opened up.

"Hallucination! Hypnotism!" most of the men said. "Of course!" Yet every man there saw the same thing.

"All right!" said I. "Let's go down and dig him up, then we'll be sure. No use leaving this thing unsettled in our minds for all time."

And down we went with picks and shovels.

Laveen's grave was slick and neat as we had left it the evening before, even to the little heap of white stones that Andy had set on top.

We buried Laveen four feet deep—as I told you. Well—we digged and shovelled for ten feet deep, and in a ten feet square, but devil a hide or hair did we find of Mad Laveen.

Ghosts! Well—I don't know. Maybe there are;—perhaps there aren't. Every man is entitled to his own opinion. But when dealing with the subject of ghosts—real ghosts—a man cannot explain. The ghost never takes the trouble to, he just comes and goes, and that is all.

Our Motto: "SERVICE AND QUALITY"

Established Over a Quarter of a Century  
THE PREMIER CAFE IN VANCOUVER

(Opposite General Post Office)

Our Menu Offers the Best of Everything at Most  
Reasonable Prices

**LEONARD'S CAFE**

716 Hastings Street West

C. G. DIXON

C. MADILL