

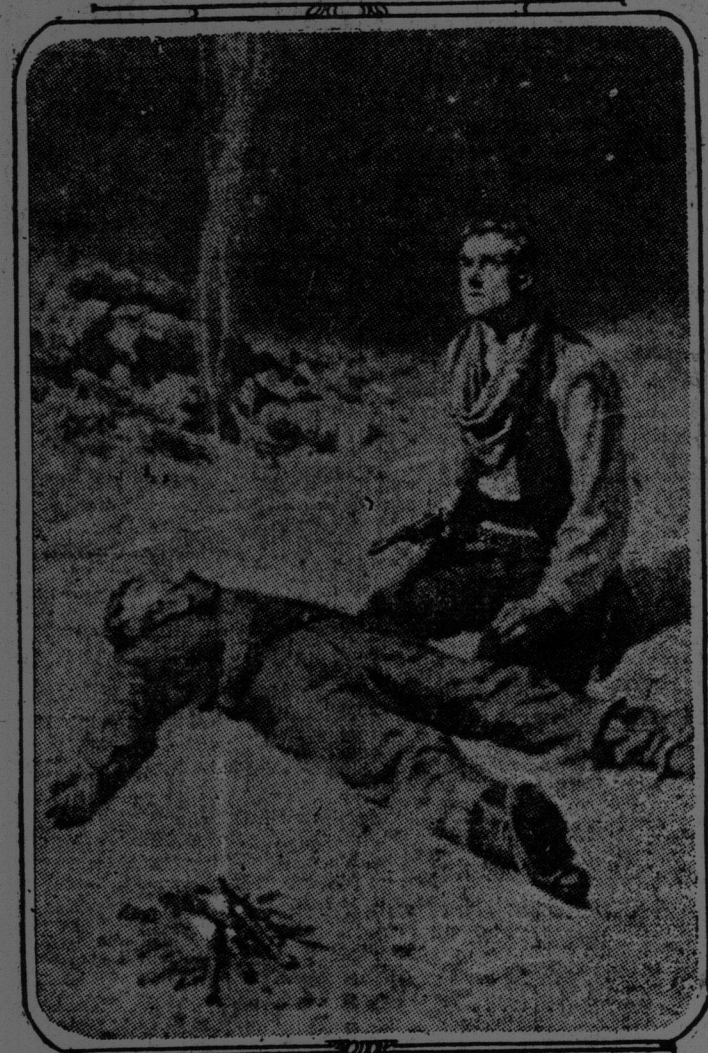
## Yes, The Old Days Were Good, But These Days Are Better :: :: By "Bud" Fisher



## The Reckoning

BY JANE ANDERSON

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The rob were torn out of the very depths of his being—he was crying over other dead things than the body beside him. He poured down his face, but he did not know how to wipe them away. He had had no need of tears.

There are more pleasant daily occupations than to sit behind bars and stare into the filthy patio of the county jail at Cochina, Arizona. Bill Cameron had done this for five months. When a man has lived in the saddle for the better part of thirty years and has come to understand the desert, this form of exquisite torture robs the nether regions of all terror. That Bill had committed no crime added piquancy to his position. Somebody had been guilty of hair-branding a hundred strays that rightfully belonged to the herd of a powerful cattle man, and somebody had to suffer. Bill, a stranger in that section, and unable to prove a water-tight alibi, had been sent up for six months.

Somewhere outside, with Bill's burros and prospecting outfit, were two six-shooters. It was his ambition to empty one of these into Ramon, the sheriff. His hatred centered about Ramon for two reasons. Added to this, he hated him instinctively—which is stronger than any reasoning. In the first place, Bill blamed him as a Cholo; secondly, Bill believed that he knew more about the matter of the hair-branding than he chose to tell. He had no grounds for this except that Ramon had shown him every meager courtesy possible during his custody. In reality, Ramon was high-caste Castilian, which differs from Cholo like wine from pulque; and he was genuinely concerned over the prisoner in Number Ten.

Bill was the only prisoner sufficiently dangerous to be locked up in a cell. This was singular, in that he was the only gringo at present under the heel of Cochino justice. The patio was overflowing with Cholos.

Bill had never spoken to the mob in the patio, although in the first month he had longed for the appearance of a white man's face among them. But when there were but two remaining days of his sentence, trivial incidents became numerous experiences. All morning he watched everything with the eager anticipation of a child. He waited at noon for the turn of the gate key; it was through that gate that he would enter again the mysterious outside world. When the visitors were gone the Cholos crowded back into the patio, gabbling. One a lean-faced Yuma, separated himself from the others and threw himself down on the floor opposite Number Ten. He drew from his shirt a roll of cigarettes and a cluster of Mexican matches.

Bill looked at the straw and paper that littered the patio, at the four flimsy walls inclosing it. "Want to bake us in here—like an ovenful of pigs?" he asked.

The Yuma ripped off a match from the cluster. He lighted the cigarette, in-baling and exhaling luxuriously. The others looked on with hungry eyes. They balled and exhaled luxuriously, babbled around him entrancingly, bab-

grime and smoke. "It is over," he said to Bill, who stood beside the sheriff and surveyed the ruins.

"It is a good thing," Ramon said at last. "They will build a new one now. I have tried to get them to before."

Bill turned back toward the court-house. "Where you going to put us to-night? Number Ten looks like a handful of ashes."

"The others will bunk, somehow, in the courthouse. Your time is out."

"One more day," Bill said, filling his lungs with the smoke-laden air while there was time. He followed Ramon into the sheriff's office.

"Smoke?" Ramon put cigars and a handful of cigarettes on the table.

Bill accepted a cigarette. He wanted the pipe, but he would not have taken the cigarette if it had been humanly possible to refuse it.

He tried to strike a match.

"Caramba!" murmured Ramon. He insisted on bandaging Bill's hands. He did it clumsily, first spreading salve on the blistered palms.

Ramon gave him his papers of release, his unopened wallet, and the two six-shooters. "The remainder of your property is locked in the corral—also your burros. The last day of your time we will mark off for good behavior."

Bill accepted his freedom in silence. When he went out to the corral he found his burros fat at the expense of the county.

Ramon joined him there. "Will you be leaving?" he asked.

"Soon as I can lead these scorpions," Ramon looked out over the dusty town that lay in the hollow below the jail. "I would like to get away from this," he said. "Which way do you go?"

"Out on the desert somewhere—anywhere."

"Prospecting?"

"Scoutin' around a bit."

"No wife no heart, said there was no pulse in the wrists."

Bill looked him over. "No," he said shortly.

Ramon sighed as he watched the sun drop down behind the distant levee. "I wish I could go with you—and get away for a time."

"Come along," Bill said lifelessly, goaded to it by his obligation.

Ramon laughed. His dark eyes lighted with the irresponsibility of a boy's. "When do we leave—when do we return?"

"Come back when you get ready, leave manana."

The next day, toward sundown, Ramon found him at the corral.

"Your hands?" asked Ramon.

"Better. Let's pull out tonight."

"Bueno—at what hour?"

"Right away."

Bill mounted and they rode out of the yard together, leading the pack animals. Ramon stopped before an adobe house on a side street and went in. Bill saw the flutter of a white dress. He waited outside, sick at heart. Ramon joined him and they went forward. When they dipped down from the mesa into the cool night shadows of the desert Ramon took off his hat and lifted his hand wearily to his forehead. "Dios," he murmured, "I would that I need never return."

They pitched camp at midnight, and Ramon shouldered the heavy work, sparing Bill's hands. In the months that followed they became friends as only men who love the desert can.

One night Bill brought in a mountain sheep.

"Grub's holdin' out fine," Bill lighted his pipe and sat watching the dancing shadows in the fire.

"That is hard—but it is the dinner who has to pay for his crime. And he must keep on paying."

"We got to pay, somehow, for everything we get. I've thought a good deal about what I'll have to pay for the thing I've got to do. He quietly placed a new log on the coals and waited for it to blue. "I've got to kill him—when I find him. It ain't a pretty story," he said wearily. "I like to forget it—that's why I ain't looking for him. I'll run across him some day—that's the way things happen. An' I'm waitin'—just like I have been waiting since that night I come home and found her gone. It's happened lots of times, I reckon. I married her—an' I had to go away once. When I come back all the windows was shut down, an' everything was dusty. There was a letter—but she didn't tell me the man's name. It's him I'm waitin' for." He fumbled in his wallet and brought out the photograph of a woman.

"The Lord makes some women too good looking," he said, brooding over the pictured face.

"When was it, Bill?" Ramon asked. His voice was shaking, and it was the first time he had used the Christian name.

At Palomas—five years ago," He gave him the picture.

"Madam Dios," Ramon whispered, and put his head down on his arms.

The picture dropped into the fire, and Ramon reached for it.

Don't touch it," Bill said. He kicked it deeper into the coals. "She don't want to see this." He stood up, waiting. His face white, and the pupils of his eyes were dilated and blackened.

Ramon got up. "I am ready," he said wearily. "It has been hell—straight through."

Bill looked at him, feeling a torrent of rage mounting steadily toward his head.

"You're no coward. I can't shoot you down—like I want to. It's a fair fight now." He was thinking of the white skirt that had fluttered behind the screens of the patio.

He went back to her—then you won't have to pay any more."

Ramon waited, his hands hanging listlessly at his sides. Bill drew the two six-shooters from his belt and Ramon accepted one of them.

"And the sign?" Ramon asked. He broke a twig from the mesquite and, kneeling, traced W in the coals. Bill rebelled at the injustice of having to balance such an account with a man who was not afraid to turn his back on him.

"When the twig burns out," Ramon said, rising. He walked around the camp fire, and Bill moving back an equal distance faced him across it.

Across the fire he saw that Ramon's tips were moving, as if he were praying. The mesquite blackened and Bill raised his six-shooter. As the twig broke he saw the light on the other gun barrel. He fired, and the echo rang in the dunes; Ramon moved as if he were about to step forward.

He ran to him and caught him in his arms. There was blood on the shirt Ramon wore, said there was no pulse in the wrists.

Bill laid him back gently in the sand. He set a long time looking at his lips. He knelt down and began to cry. The tears were torn out of the very depths of his soul, as if he were crying over a dead thing than the body beside him. The tears poured down his face, but he was not aware of it. He had had no need of tears.

Afterward, under a new dawn bright with promise, he dug a grave in the shadow of the dunes. When all was done he looked out across the changeless desert to the Mexican hills—where lay freedom. When he turned back he was smiling. He took his six-shooters from the camp, which was now a long trip before him. He emptied the evidences; only one cartridge had been fired. He took the cartridge from the pale light that hovered over the eastern dunes. Then he slowly mounted his burro and turned his head toward the jail of Cochina.

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## TERRIBLE PERIL OF SLEEP THREATENS TRANS-ATLANTIC FLYER!

Motors' Deadly Drumming and Hypnotic Glare of Boundless Water Will Make Birdman Porte's Flight Continual Fight To Ward Off Sleep



The stren sleep presages most peril to daring birdman skimming over Atlantic ocean. Lieut. is new picture of Lieutenant Porte, who will have to battle with his worst enemy, sleep, on flight to Europe.

(By Kenneth Wilcox Payne.)

One tremendous terror menaces Lieutenant Porte as he prepares for his world-startling trans-Atlantic flight. Not storms, not fog, not air-pockets, not failure of the engine, not frailty of the planes.

Sleep! It is the sleep that presages most peril to the daring birdman in his great attempt!

Will Lieutenant Porte doze off heavily at the wheel, under the oppressive weight of utter fatigue, perhaps when the peaks of the Azores, his first stop, already loom above the line of sea, and will his plane, lurching suddenly as his languid grip relaxes on the wheel, career downwards and carry both pilot and his assistant to death?

That is no idle difficulty. It is a portentous problem which all his brother birdmen, watching Porte's mighty undertaking, are very seriously considering. For they have each and all felt at some time or other that deadly grip of drowsiness.

Sung the Ancient Mariner, in Coleridge's famous poem:

"O sleep! It is a gentle thief,  
Beloved from pole to pole,  
To Mary Queen the praise be given;  
She can count on the sea being unruffled  
That laid into my soul."

But our modern mariner, Lieutenant Porte, is not so easily lulled.

Believed Necessary to Pay

The witness told of meeting Mr. McLeod later and asking if he had received the money. Mr. McLeod said he had and that it came at a good time.

Q—Was it necessary to pay this money to get the contract?

A—I confidently believed so.

Q—After what happened to us on the first contract. We got it but it was taken away from us and we did not want that to happen again. We did not pay anything for that contract.

In reply to further questions the witness said that the contract did not turn out as they had expected and instead of receiving about \$112,000 as they had expected from the estimates they got only \$80,000.

The estimates came to them through the Hibbard Company but they were prepared by the engineers of the Q. & St. J. Construction Co. On one occasion the estimate prepared by the resident engineer was changed from about \$10,000 to \$112,000 by the addition of 10,000 yards of solid rock and 14,712 yards of other material.

Mr. Carter asked that the witness be allowed to stand aside until after lunch so that he might consult his client about this was agreed to.

C. Fred Chestnut

C. Fred Chestnut of Fredericton was then called. He said that he holds stock in the St. John and Quebec Railway Company to the par value of \$5,000. He

Porte, sailor of the Atlantic skies, has no such pleasant praise for "beloved" sleep. It is to be his worst enemy, more like an evil spirit, luring him to destruction, than like a gift from heaven's sleep, evoked by the glare of sun on water, or the rush of wind, by the monotonous, rhythmic music of the motors, may rise treacherously over him, grip him in her magic spell, drag him—bringing him to death!

It will be a mighty fight that Lieutenant Porte must wage against that fatal sleep.

In other respects he is fairly secure. The marvelous engines of his trans-Atlantic aircraft, about as sturdy as a test to perfection and have shown that, under all the strain of the first 20-hour lap in the long flight they will race faithfully never a stop.

The America has shown that she can carry more than a sufficient amount of petrol for the first stage of the journey. She is wonderfully stable, and Porte is a expert enough birdman to triumph without doubt over any air-pockets, "soft spots" or cross-currents that he may encounter.

There is very little danger of storm. He will pick his day for starting and will complete his first flight within twenty-four hours. At this time of the year captains of ocean liners will tell you they can count on the sea being unruffled as a millpond, not for the few hours Porte will be in the air, but for days on end.

The America has already proved its ability to weather the minor storms which its pilot may encounter.

In fact, from the mechanical point of view, success of the great flight is practically assured, and it might be safely predicted today that the year 1914 will see the trans-Atlantic air voyage, which in spectacular daring and world-interest exceeds any deed ever undertaken by man, accomplished—were it not for the one peril of sleeplessness!

For twenty hours the trans-Atlantic flyer must stay wide awake. Through all that time he must keep every muscle active, every nerve alert, his mind constantly concentrated on his compasses and mechanism, making continual effort to detect and adapt his plane to every lift of the air currents. That tense mental activity alone would be sufficient to produce overpowering fatigue.

But through all those hours there will be humming accompaniment to the eul of mental fatigue, the deadly, monotonous drumming of the engine, beating eternally against his ears like a seductive lullaby!

That this is the real and worse peril, frequently felt, all birdmen will testify. The most striking instance of it is told by a great English aviator, Claude Grahame-White.

Grahame-White recently rose, with a passenger who proved to be insane. The man began to struggle and kick, and in a few moments would surely have grasped with the pilot and capsize the machine. But the opiate influence of the rush of wind and the hum of the motor had its inevitable effect. The madman gradually became subdued, fell asleep as heavily as though chloroformed, and was still in that state when the pilot descended and lifted the erstwhile madman from the machine.

If Lieutenant John C. Porte accomplishes his flight, it will be not a triumph of machinery, not the triumph of skill nor daring, but the triumph of determination and unflinching will—the will not to sleep, in spite of sound drugging and in spite of fatigue!