

# WHY HE WAS NAMED ANANIAS

By A. R. INGALLS

There have been many stories which taxed the credulity of the readers. The Editor ventures to suggest that this story is without an equal in this respect. The author is a Canadian Journalist, and he deserves a medal for having drawn the longest bow in Canadian fiction.



"SPEAKING of balistics," said George as we finished discussing the Japanese Shitose powder at the club the other day, "did I ever tell you fellows about my friend Ponsonby?"

I saw the far-away look in his eyes, and hastily kicked Fetterley under the table. Fet. looked up and shook his

head hopelessly, but made a noble effort. "Luther Burbank says here that it's impossible to cross the apple with the rose to get a new flavour," he exclaimed, rattling his paper to attract attention. "The—er—the stamnia is—ah—yes, different species—er—pollen—" His voice trailed off into unintelligible mumblings and he gave up. It was really no use, George was staring at him in pained surprise and reproach.

"If you don't want to hear about Ponsonby, why, I won't tell you, you know," said he, looking grieved. So with sundry sighs he ordered a fresh supply of refreshments and settled ourselves to hear the story. We all of us like George and hate like sin to hurt his feelings, but—

"Well, as I was saying," he said, looking pleased at our apparent interest, "Ponsonby he came to me one day after dinner with pure joy just radiating off the top of his bald head and gathering in big drops on his eye-glasses. 'George,' he says, so excited he could hardly talk straight, 'George, it's going to be a 60 horse-power Panhard painted red with blue trimmings!' (I never could find out why he'd call me that. My name's Thomas.) 'Yes?' I says, 'Yes,' he goes on, 'and—and I'm going to have an observatory on top.' 'Top of what?' says I. 'Why, my new house,' he says. 'I had a sort of vague impression that you were talking about an auto,' says I sarcastic, 'but maybe I was mistook.' 'So I was,' says he, 'so I was. I'm going to have one—or two, and a yacht, and—' 'Ponsonby,' says I severely, 'what have you invented now?' 'Why, I thought I told you,' says he. 'It's the greatest thing of this or any age—Ponsonby's Patent Projectile! Say, George,' and he gets me by the arm, 'would you have the sparking plug in gold, or inlaid silver?' 'Now, that was old P. all over. Talk about counting chickens before they're hatched! Say, honest, that man would buy a poultry farm for the hypothetical offspring of his chickens' grandchildren!

"I steered him gently back to his invention, and he told me all about it. I won't try to give you his technicalities, which were fierce, but it consisted of a nest of thin shells made up to the size and shape of a nickel-jacketed Lee-Metford bullet, each one charged with an explosive and a time-fuse, and so arranged that when fired from a rifle the first charge would explode just before the trajectory began to take effect. This would cause the outside shell to act as a rifle barrel, driving the remainder forward as a new projectile. At the end of the next point blank range the next shell would follow suit; and so on till the whole thing was spent, each shell in turn becoming a firearm—something like a relay race. The central core was solid, of course.

"Ponsonby was naturally mighty enthusiastic about it. He claimed it would travel farther than any projectile known, that it was a thousand per cent. more deadly than the deadliest, that—but what's the use? Merely by stating that Ponsonby 'claimed,' I have given you the superlative absolute of claims to the *n*-th power.

"Nothing would do but I must go with him at once and help test the thing. But I knew Ponsonby from of old, and his inventions to boot. Being naturally a truthful man, it went a little hard, but I pleaded sickness, death in the family—a date with a Russian grand duke! Nothing doing. In despair I suggested a drink. He wavered—I almost had him—but no, he was true to his guns—I would say, ammunition. I was dragged off home protesting feebly, where he produced a rifle and the Projectile. This was like an ordinary .303 cartridge with an extra long bullet made in layers—something like one of those big cannon they use on the coast. I fingered the thing and listened while P. spouted a steady stream of superheated atmosphere. At last he led the way out into the back yard and pointed to a big tree two miles away at least.

"Set the sights for two hundred yards, George, and I'll shoot at that," he says, "and I'll bet you any-

thing you like to name at any odds that the Projectile will be in the trunk when we go and look. Provided I've shot straight, of course," he adds before I could take him up. 'Is that a fair test?' 'A fair test! 'Provided he'd shot straight!' Were we going to dig a two-mile trench to make sure the thing had not gone into the ground somewhere between here and that tree? And how else could we make sure he'd shot straight? But since inventors—and Ponsonby was a rule that proved all exceptions—are notoriously obtuse in the a b c of logic, I merely hinted delicately that there might be a Projectile in that trunk already, at which he went up in the air.

"Oh, you think I'm a sanctified old fool, eh? You think this is no good, do you?" he snapped. 'Well, mark this one yourself, unravel your body, and then maybe you'll be satisfied,' and he went on growling to himself. (I give you the antonyms of some of what he said.) So to pacify the old duck I got out my nail file and marked a little cross deep in the nose of the bullet. Meanwhile he began fussing around rigging up a frame to screw his gun into so it would shoot straighter. He took the cartridge from me and shoved it into place, aimed very carefully, and finally let her go with his eyes shut.

"There was a little puff of smoke out on the plain, and a second later a shrill screaming sound. Ponsonby's hat was twitched off his head, and the kitchen window went to almighty smash, accompanied by ructions inside.

"Good Lord!" says P., picking himself up gingerly, and white as a sheet, 'that must have been the first shell! Something is wrong, for I figured just how much Ponsonbite to put into each one, so's the momentum of the initial discharge would stimulate the combined—er—the combined solidity of the firearm and the clavicle of the operator, and thus exactly counterbalance the retrogressive impetus ensuing from the renewed flight of the projectile—' and then his breath gave out. I bet that was in the prospectus. 'It was a near thing for me, though,' he went on, gazing ruefully at the wreck of his hat, 'and that sounded like the china closet in the kitchen there.' Then a new thought struck him. 'Come on, quick!' he yells, 'before the wife gets next!' And knowing Mrs. P. indifferently well I lost no time in following his advice and example, and we beat it for the distant tree. 'I'll tell her it was some bad boys stoning a kitten,' he says after meditating a bit. 'That ought to fetch her.' But he still looked scared. I was shocked by such evidence of mendacity in my old friend.

"Your bullet seems to be working all right, though." Then I groaned. I wanted to cheer him up a bit and change the current of his thoughts. I did.

"Now, you old duffer," he says, digging me playfully in the ribs, 'got any scoffs left? What do you think of the Projectile now, eh?' then started to dilate on the things he'd do with his unhatched billions. To tell the truth it seemed to me that I, too, could hear that same money kinder moving a little mite in the egg-shell. However, I was mighty thankful when we finally did get to the tree and Ponsonby had something else to occupy his thoughts. After hunting around a bit he let out a yell and pointed to a little hole in the trunk about level with his shoulder. 'There's where she struck!' he hollers, as tickled as a small boy in his first pants. I had a look, and it was a sure-enough shot hole.

"Now," says he, getting out a big jack-knife with a hand that shook, 'we will proceed to excavate for the purpose of extracting the Greatest Marvel of the Age,' and he promptly cut himself. 'Hold on a minute,' says I, prospecting round the other side, 'it looks to me as though she'd gone clean through!' There was another little hole all right, with the splinters sticking out, and it corresponded to the first.

"Has she, though?" says P., forgetting his finger in an instant. And when he saw that little hole—well, you ought to have seen his face! After a while he quieted down some and tried to squint through it.

"Why, that's funny," he says in a minute, his face dropping about a yard; then tried from the other side. 'I can't see a darned thing.' I put my eye to the hole and moved this way and that, trying to see daylight, but could not. Kind of puzzled, I picked up a piece of stiff wire lying on the ground and tried to shove it through. There

was some resistance about half way through, then out came—the second shell.

"Well, holy smoke!" says I, and went and sat down on a stump to think. Evidently the thing had recoiled square back into the hole it had made itself—unless it had gone off inside the tree. But anyhow it looked as though my old friend had at last made good. I sat there meditating for a while and he pattered round the tree, talking to himself and taking measurements.

"Aw, come on, Pon," I says at last. 'Yon ain't going to stay there all day, are you?'

"All right, all right—wait till I have another look. Straight as a die," he goes on with his eye to the hole. 'Couldn't have been better bored with—' Something went ffffft by my head, and Ponsonby gave a sort of gasp and crumpled up in a heap.

"I was petrified for a moment, then hurried forward and picked him up. He was quite dead, shot through the head. Well, I won't harrow you with details. But the bullet had a little cross-mark on the nose, almost obliterated, but unmistakable.

"For a long time I sat there, stupefied. What in God's name had happened? What reasonable explanation could there be of the uncanny phenomenon? There was no doubt in my mind as to the identity of the wicked little object I held in my fingers, but where had it come from? It was the same bullet the dead man himself had fired a short time before, but how had it killed him? Some statement to the effect that Hiawatha was able to 'shoot an arrow from him and run forward with such swiftness that the arrow fell behind him' came to my dazed intellect. Was that what had happened? Impossible, preposterous! Then suddenly the appalling truth burst upon me.

"Gentlemen, fill your glasses and let us drink to the memory of the greatest genius this world has ever known. Ponsonby's Patent Projectile had travelled right around the earth, and on its return journey, coming of course from behind, it had overlapped just enough to kill its inventor!" said George Washington, solemnly.

We call him "An" now, for short.

## Improving the Country Roads

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country roads, it is claimed, and as the number of automobilists, who use these roads, is increasing every year, those interested in road improvement believe that owners of motor cars should do something handsome in assisting the work. There is this to be said on this point, voluntary and concerted action on the part of automobilists in rendering substantial assistance in maintaining country roads, might help to counteract the strong prejudice that exists in many rural districts against the automobile. Were motor car owners, and they are among our most wealthy citizens, to cooperate in road improvement, it is safe to say that considerable of this prejudice would be removed, and they would not be so much hampered by irritating legislation and the demands of the people in some sections to keep them off country roads altogether.

Coming to the more general aspects of the question, the addresses and discussions of the convention show that substantial progress is being made in improving the roads of the country. The Ontario Good Roads Act, passed in the early days of the Ross Government, and fathered by the Premier of the day, by which \$1,000,000 was set apart for road improvement, is still doing effective work in this direction. Though modified to some extent by the present Government, considerable money is being expended yearly in road improvement. The Government cooperates with the counties, which adopt and carry out the plans for road improvement laid down under the Act, the former paying \$1 for every \$2 expended by the county. Up to date, \$500,000 has been expended by the Government in this work and plans for improved country roads have been accepted at an estimated cost of \$3,000,000. The aim is to secure permanent roads built after the most approved plan, and as the counties do not care to burden themselves with large debenture debts, progress is somewhat slow. Some counties lay a direct tax on the assessment each year to cover the cost of expenditure under the Act and, therefore, the stretches of road improved yearly are not large. But a permanent system of leading road-

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