Mystery of the Bayou Woods

By WALKER KENNEDY.

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ers and then carried out his scheme with another of them, if, indeed, he is the man who put up the poisoning job."

Wright asked that Warde should publish the facts in the Gazette and place him right before the public, the jailer corroborating all he had said.

During the afternoon Warde ran against John Holcombe, the city editor of the Journal, and asked him how he got the points about the suicide in jail.

Jim laughed and said: "I scooped you badly on that, didn't I, old man? That item was a bird."

"But I have some curiosity, Jim, to know how you got it. Who gave it to you?"

"I can't tell you that. The party who put me on made me promise not to give him away. He also made me promise not to go to the jail for it. Said he thought the authorities were trying to keep it dark, as it occurred shortly after supper, and nothing was known of it—at least not for publication—at the station house at midnight."

"He made a great guy of you, whoever he is."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, there is scarcely a word of truth in his story from beginning to end. The man did not try to commit suicide, and your report that he is not expected to recover is all bosh. I found him sitting up in the jailer's office smoking a cigar this morning."

"Well, I'll be damned! If I find out that I have been imposed upon in that way I'll wring the neck of that little skunk!"

"Who is that?"

"Why—no; that won't do, Warde. I won't give him away until I've given him a chance to explain himself."

Holcombe departed in a brisk dudgeon and Warde sought the office, where he found Fenton awaiting him.

"I got what I wanted this morning," he said.

"Tell me," said Warde.

"Mrs. Wright said that her nearest neighbor, a kind-hearted widow by the name of Mrs. Anderson, had been over at noon to take care of her child while she visited her husband. Just as Mrs. Anderson was about to take the child away Mrs. Wright examined the pistol and called Mrs. Anderson's attention to the fact that it had not been shot off for a long time. I then went to see Mrs. Anderson. She remembered the pistol very well, and knew where it had been placed. The ivory-handled revolver was not the weapon she had seen there. But Mrs. Anderson had some other facts. She had seen a man coming out of the side door of the Wright house and she accosted him and told him there was no one in at present. He replied that he had found that out and would drop in again when Mrs. Wright was at home. Mrs. Anderson had thought nothing further of it until she was told about the pistols."

"Did she describe the man?"

"Yes; she said he was a rather stoutly built man with probably a couple of weeks' beard on his face, and that he wore a red flannel shirt."

"Fenton, you have done splendidly, and if you will agree to help me further, we will unravel one of the deepest-laid crimes ever planned in this section of the country."

"I'll help you any way that I can."

"Then we will win the game yet."

CHAPTER VIII.

The next evening at nine o'clock, Warde was working in the office when a negro boy brought him a note. He opened it casually and read the following:

"Mr. Warde—Come as soon as you can to Peter's Rest, No. 1,006 Commerce street. A river man there can give you a great story for the Gazette. His name is William Jackson.

"A Friend."

Irving received a great many notes like this, and it occasioned him no surprise. Peter's Rest had a reputation of a not very reassuring character; still he was often called to such places, and he gave it no particular thought. He finished the work upon which he was engaged, and at 11 o'clock started for the choice locality to which he had been called.

As he was passing the station house, Fenton, the detective, joined him and asked whither he was going.

"To Peter's Rest," said Warde.

"That's a nice place to go to," said Fenton, laughing.

"I was called there to get a piece of news," replied Warde.

"I will go with you," said Fenton; "it may be something in my line."

"All right; but remember that this is mine, and if there's anything in it the Gazette gets it exclusively."

"Of course."

The locality which the two men were about to visit was a considerable distance from the station house, and it abutted on the river. Commerce street originally ran parallel with the river but the current of the Mississippi, which is ever making some excuse for a change, had eaten away a large part of the bank so that the upper end of the street ran almost into the water. The rear end of several houses on the west side were actually suspended over the stream, and it was only a question of time when they would topple into the swirling waters; but it is rather a venerable observation that because a thing did not happen yesterday people are inclined to think that it will not happen to-morrow. And so, many persons on upper Commerce street continued to reside above the river, knowing full well that there would be an end to it some time, but fondly expecting that somehow they would move out a day or two before the crash came and the river claimed [illegible] refuse not its own.

[illegible] city Warde and [illegible] no such luxu- [illegible] nd depended en- [illegible] minations as a [illegible] furnish. On [illegible] moon was [illegible] with a sea [illegible] right as [illegible] d street [illegible] several [illegible] ige di- [illegible] The [illegible] ta-

commodations were ample for this kind of population. There were dens of various shades of iniquity; ramshackle sheds where the tramp could readily find free accommodations for the night; greasy corner groceries where stale vegetables and riot-breeding liquors were sold, together with the certainty that one would take up the trail of death where the other left off; boarding houses where river and plantation hands were packed Chinese fashion. In short, one could see here every sort of building, except the church and the school house.

As the two men continued their walk the houses became less numerous, and they passed vacant lots, beyond which they could see the silvery gleam of the river.

At last they came to Peter's Rest.

It was a two-storied house, which in its day had been considered one of the handsomest residences in the city; for, in the early days of Nilus, this congeries of filth, crime and degredation had been the most eligible part of the town. Yet nobody ever dreamed at the time of this story that Hell's Half Acre, which lay hanked in shadows to the north, would one day be reclaimed again and traversed by railroads and resound with the hum of business; for now the desperado and the rough were omnipresent in that locality.

The exigencies of the time had converted this old mansion into the very worst resort of its kind in the city. It was become the rendezvous of all sorts of disreputable men and women. It was here that under the influence of liquor, which was unequaled in vileness, all sorts of evil pacts were struck, crimes were planned and new lessons of depravity were learned. Just this side of the Rest was a vacant lot, stretching down to the river. Here Fenton said



BEHIND THE BAR WAS A STOLID RUFFIAN WHO LOOKED AS IF HE HAD TAKEN ALL THE DEGREES OF CRIME.

he would stop while Warde went in. Before they separated Fenton handed him a police whistle, and it was agreed between them that if Warde should blow it, the detective would know that he was in danger and would hasten to his assistance. Fenton was not at all satisfied with this adventure of Warde's, but he did not communicate any of his uneasiness. He merely cautioned him to be on his guard, as the crowd he was going among was not very particular about taking either property or life.

The atmosphere in the saloon was so heavy and malodorous that the lights burned dimly and reluctantly. Behind the bar was a stolid ruffian who looked as if he might have taken all the degrees of crime. A low brow, heavy black mustache, small animal eyes and a profusion of cheap jewelry admirably fitted Billy McGee to be the hero of a bloody melodrama or a prominent character in a London chap-book. A couple of dissipated young men were throwing dice before Billy, who watched the result with the interest of a dispassionate referee. A number of persons embodying various degrees of disreputability were congregated about the tables, some handling greasy decks of cards, some "shooting craps," some drinking whisky and other congenial liquors and some talking apart in whispers on subjects not to be revealed even in that favorable atmosphere. There were also on hand a few faded parodies of womankind, whose efforts to be gay and mirthful were of a piece with their ghastly surroundings.

It was not often that a well-dressed, good-looking young man was seen in Peter's Rest, and his advent ought to have occasioned some surprise, but it did not. The Rest pursued its dark and devious occupations as repose-fully as though Warde had been a regular feature of the establishment. Billy McGee did not even look up from the important business that was transacting before him.

Warde at once strode up to the bar and asked if there was present a man by the name of William Jackson.

"Four deuces," said Mr. McGee. "It will be hard to beat that. William? Oh, yes. Bill was here about half an hour ago. Are you the gent he was expectin'?"

"Yes."

"He said if you come to tell you to wait for him. He'll be back d'rec'ly. You'll have to throw again, Dock. Take a seat in the parlor," continued Mr. McGee to Warde, waving his hand toward the door of an adjoining room.

As Warde stood before the bar he was somewhat startled to find that his coming had not been without some interest to at least one or two of those present.

In one corner of the room two men sat at a table drinking. They were sturdy-looking fellows, who were slightly better dressed than their associates, but their faces were almost startling in the prominence of evil displayed therein. One of them was a very muscular man, whose strength had a certain cat-like element in it, which had been very cleverly celebrated by his associates in the nickname of Old Tom, which they had given him. His companion was an almost perfect specimen of physical manhood.

The mirror revealed the fact that these men were watching Warde with an intensity—it seemed to him a malignity of interest—for which he could not account; but he betrayed no surprise, nor did he give any evidence that he had observed them. Taking from his pocket a cigar he lighted it coolly, and then nonchalantly entered the parlor.

This was a simple room with a table and several chairs in it. A swinging lamp was suspended from above. The walls were covered with choice pictorial selections from the illustrated criminal weeklies. A few sensational papers suitable to the clientele at Peter's Rest were on the table, and Warde idly scanned these with about the same interest that a seraph might take in reading the London Times.

He had been there barely five minutes when the door opened and Old Tom entered the room. At first he seemed a bit embarrassed before Warde's cool and searching gaze and then he said: "You come here to see Bill Jackson, did you?"

"Yes; has he come back?"

"No, but maybe my pardner can tell you something about him."

"I'm not particular about that. If he does not come soon I shall go. Have you any idea what he wants with me? I'm a newspaper man."

"Wait till I call my pardner. I think he knows something about it."

"Never mind your partner. I do not care to know what he has to say."

Warde's suspicions were now aroused, and he did not propose to have a tete-a-tete with these brawny ruffians. There could be no doubt about it, a trap of some sort had been laid for him.

"See here, young feller," said Old Tom, "you ain't afraid to talk with a couple of gentlemen, are you?"

"I am not," said Warde, "but I have nothing to talk to you about. My time is up, anyhow."

He arose as he said this, but Old Tom stood before the door leading into the saloon, and there was something in his face that Irving had not seen before. The word "murder" was written upon it as plain as could be. Warde saw that not a moment was to be squandered. He took the whistle from his pocket and was raising it to his lips when Old Tom sprang toward him and with one sweep of his powerful hand sent the whistle spinning across the table to the floor. So vigorous was the blow that Warde was knocked against a door to the right and it gave way, sending him through it. Somewhat dazed, he picked himself up and with mechanical presence of mind he closed the door quickly. He had touched a key in the outside, and he turned it rapidly; and thus a locked door was between him and his assailant.

At first he could not tell where he was, it was so dark. But as soon as he became accustomed to the darkness he found that he was on a back porch shut in with lattice work. Round about him was the sense of something gliding.

In the saloon there was a great commotion, and he knew that he was not yet safe. He would be pursued. There was a door doubtless leading from the barroom to the porch, and the ruffians would come that way or break down the rickety door which he had just bolted. He felt that they were coming closer all the time. He could not spare even a moment. Hurriedly he felt with unsteady hand along the lattice work. If he could only find an opening he could cross the back yard and join Fenton in the vacant lot just to the south of the Rest. At last he found a door in the rear and a sense of triumph possessed him.

He flung it open and was about to plunge out, but for a moment he paused, appalled by the dense darkness beneath him; then he heard his pursuers coming, and a moment later a light flashed through the porch. Just then the moonlight fluttered feebly out of the clouds and he caught its sheen below. A cold horror came upon him.

Beneath him lay the river.

Now his pusuers were upon him indeed. Just below he saw the head of some black object projecting from the water, and as he gazed eagerly out he saw that there was a series of these dark objects leading away toward where a tugboat lay moored. The object seemed solid, and without moment's hesitation he leaped upon it.

"He has gone!" he heard a hoarse voice cry.

"Then he's in the river," came the answer.

And there was a rush toward the rear.

The object upon which Warde had lighted was a half sunken pile, and a series of them were driven at intervals of a yard apart. Some had been sunk deeper than others, and they stood out from the water like the black pillars of a ruined temple.

If he could walk along the tops of these irregular columns he might reach the tugboat. This would place him where he could perhaps secure help or where he could defend himself.

The river had eaten a great semicircle in the bank under the Rest, and the current eddied and circled around therein with silent but tremendous power. None but an expert swimmer could save himself from being drawn into this impromptu whirlpool. The piles had served the purpose of protecting the bank from the further encroachments of the river, and the line began under the Rest and extended away from the shore.

At first Warde leaped from one to another of these pillars without much trouble, but to climb up to one a little higher than the others and then let himself down to one far beneath it was a dangerous task, and the further he got out into the river the more difficult it became for him to make any headway.

Hardly had he traversed a dozen of these treacherous stepping stones when he was discovered, and, glancing back, he saw to his horror that he was being followed by Old Tom. He looked at the swirling river below him, and the world was reeling about him. A cold perspiration stood upon his face. He became nervous, blind almost, and felt an almost irresistible impulse to throw himself into the river and end the suspense.

Old Tom, however, was at home in this kind of an enterprise. It was pastime to him, and he crept from pile to pile with the cat-like agility which had won him his name.

It was a fearful race. The moon had now made some headway, and its light fell upon the black river and gave it the semblance of oxydized silver. Another backward glance, and a gleam of light revealed something bright in Old Tom's hand. It was a long, sharp knife.

Warde shivered.

On went the two figures leaping from pile to pile, one with trembling and uncertain steps, the other with the easy confidence of one to whom the way was familiar.

Old Tom was gaining steadily upon him, and Warde, with some reeling and despair in his heart, saw that he could not escape.

Suddenly he remembered his pistol. He did not want to use it as long as he had been in the saloon, for he knew very well that if he had killed anybody the mob would have torn him to pieces with joyous unanimity; and in his effort to escape he had for the time forgotten it. It was now his only hope unless Fenton should come to his assistance.

He turned about upon the pile on which he was standing so as to confront his adversary. The latter was approaching him confidently and resolutely. His one grim object was the death of the reporter.

The shadowy houses on the shore were rising and falling as if they were about to plunge into the stream. The silver lines of light played over the face of the water. He could see the great steamboats, with their red and green lights and their trailing banners of black smoke, rounding the bends or putting into the wharf. All else was silence. Even the crowd of reckless criminals, craning their necks from the back door, were dumb with excitement as they watched the duel between the men upon these black stumps.

The stars were silent, and they were cold, too. Warde felt that they did not care.

In his eagerness to get out his pistol, his hand trembled so that the weapon, catching in his clothing, slipped and fell into the river.

Where could Fenton be, he wondered in a vague way? Had he entered the Rest and been disposed of? Warde called to him several times, but received no response; but he had no time now to look toward the shore. Old Tom was nearly upon him, and he determined that if he had to die, it should only be after a game fight. He braced himself as firmly as he could upon his pile, prepared to use his fists upon his approaching antagonist, and drag him down to death with him.

Old Tom had just lighted on the pile next to him and was getting ready to leap.

A pistol shot broke upon the air, the gleaming knife dropped into the stream and Old Tom gave a terrible cry of mingled pain and disgust, and then crouched down and held to his pile to prevent himself from falling into the river, but his strength was not great enough, and he slipped into the swirling water and was dragged away from sight.

In the meantime a skiff which had been moored on the bank just under the rear of the Rest was pushed out from shore, and in a few seconds Fenton had Warde safely within it. Getting outside the line of piles, Fenton began to pull away. It was a shrewd move on his part, for the crowd within the saloon had surged back through the front door, and Bill McGee could be heard calling for his skiff. Then followed mingled cries of rage and disappointment, and when the boat was detected moving away beyond the row of piles, a number of scattering shots were fired.

Fenton stopped long enough to fire back at the crowd and as it turned out, casually shot away a small section of Mr. McGee's nose. Then he bent to the oars with all his might and pulled for the wharf, which was about a mile away. It did not take him long to get beyond the range of the strange shots that were sent sizzing after him.

Warde was completely exhausted by the tense strain upon his physical and nervous system, and he lay in the bottom of the boat in a sort of stupor. Gradually, as they approached the wharf, and as he realized that he had, indeed, escaped with his life, his faculties began to fully assert themselves.

When they reached the wharf, and he began to feel more like himself, he gave Fenton an account of his adventures. The latter was profuse in his regrets that he had not gone to Warde's help sooner; but he explained that as he had not heard the whistle, he concluded that the noise in the saloon was only some extra jollification on the part of the Bacchanals inside. He had heard the cry for help, and ran down to the river's edge through the vacant lot. The skiff was tied up, but with his knife he had cut the rope, and successfully made the rescue.

It was 12 o'clock when Irving Warde re-entered the Gazette office. He had been gone but an hour, and yet in that time he seemed to have lived an age.

At one o'clock the police raided Peter's Rest, but the easy Mr. McGee with his mutilated nose and all his guests had mysteriously disappeared and the only persons caught were a boy, who was acting as barkeeper, and several individuals who had straggled into the Rest when the fracas was over, and the real disturbers of the peace had fled.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

Some die with heart failure and some live with head failure.

It isn't always the best actress that gets the most followers.

Nothing jars a man like being compelled to love by contract.

Somehow a man generally loses his nerve just when he needs it most.

In order to start the political machine one must drop dollars in the slot.

Every time a man calls his wife an angel she thinks he's been drinking.

A good many things are bad enough, but the worst never really happens.

No artist should attempt to select a living model unless he understands figures.

After marrying the man who courted her a girl is apt to find that he's another man.

Truth is constantly getting in the way of some people. That is probably why it is crushed to earth so often.—Chicago Daily News.

CHURCH AND CLERGY.

The Baptists of Kentucky did not succeed in raising the $75,000 they wanted by January 1. They are still hoping that Mr. Rockefeller will extend his offer of $25,000.

An interesting old pulpit, from which Whitfield and Wesley have preached, is to be restored to its former place in a Bath, England, chapel. It was removed 12 years ago.

Rev. Charles Bayard Mitchell, pastor of the First Methodist church of Cleveland, is being urged by his friends as a candidate for one of the Methodist bishoprics which will be declared vacant at the general conference this spring.



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10.10	6.12	Lv.. Love Point..Ar.	9.50	5.45
10.50	6.50	....Queenstown....	9.15	5.05
11.15	7.15	.....Centreville.....	8.50	4.40
11.04	7.04	.....Wye Mills.....	9.02	4.47
11.22	7.20	....Queen Anne....	8.47	4.25
11.42	7.40	.....Denton.....	8.30	3.55
11.59	7.59	.....Hickman.....	8.13	3.30
12.15	8.16	....Greenwood....	7.57	3.10
.....	8.37	.....Ellendale.....	7.33	.....
.....	8.52	.....Milton.....	7.10	.....
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