

ON THE BRINK OF THE BIG SPRING

By Thomas P. Montfort

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In the Ozark mountains there is a spring that could tell some startling tales and explain away the mystery surrounding the disappearance of more than one human being.

Jack Warner thought that he had made an important discovery, and the next minute he found that he had made two of them.

In the first place, he had discovered a "moonshine" distillery, which was important, but not interesting to him. In the next place, he was a prisoner in the hands of the "moonshiners" themselves, which was both important and interesting.

For two long hours in the stormiest of nights Jack had toiled wearily up a narrow ravine in the wildest of the



THE CABIN IS SURROUNDED AND THEY'RE SEARCHING THE WOODS.

Ozark range. He was wet, cold, exhausted and, worse than all else, lost. So when at last a little speck of light suddenly shot out of the darkness he hailed it as a harbinger of shelter and rest and hurried forward with renewed hope.

He had taken less than a dozen steps, however, when he found himself face to face with a tall, determined looking man and a gun.

The two men scrutinized each other narrowly; while half a dozen ruffians gathered round. The man with the gun finally broke the silence by saying: "It's a bad business, your coming here, young fellow; but since you have come we'll have to attend to you, I guess."

With that he made a motion to the other men, and they speedily bound Jack hand and foot.

"What does this mean?" Warner demanded.

"Oh, nothing much," the man with the gun replied. "About all it means is that you will have to take a bath in the Big Spring, and anything that goes in there never comes out."

Warner comprehended the man's meaning now and, agitated with horror, cried:

"Great God! Do you mean to drown me?"

"We mean to put you where you won't never tell no tales," was the cool reply.

Warner tried to collect his reasoning faculties and speak calmly.

"Before going any further let's sit down and talk this matter over. There is a misunderstanding," he began.

The other slowly shook his head. "I guess," he replied, "there ain't no misunderstanding on our part, at least. You made the mistake when you came here to spy on us."

"Right there you are wrong," Warner said. "I did not come here to spy on you."

"Ah, come! You can't fool us. If you ain't one of them revenuers sneaking round to locate our still, what are you doing here at this time of night and in all this storm?"

"Well, in the first place I am the new schoolteacher in this district. I've been here a week, and you have probably heard of me. In the second place, this being Saturday, I spent the day fishing, remained too late, and with this rainstorm I lost my way. In the third place in my wanderings around this morning I accidentally stumbled on this spot. Now there's the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me."

After a pause the man with the gun replied:

"That may be so, but still I don't see that it changes matters any. You'd be most sure to report on us for the sake of the reward."

"I'll pledge you my word of honor that I will never whisper to any living mortal a word of all this."

"Maybe you won't; but you see, we can't tell about that. Sometimes a man's word and honor don't amount to much, and we can't afford to take no great chances. There's no use of all this talk. We know our duty to ourselves, and we propose to do it. Boys, take him on and let's settle it."

Two men advanced and took Warner by the arms to lead him away to the Big Spring. Pale with terror, he cried:

"Great God! Would you murder me?"

"It's better for you to go that way than for us to go at the end of a rope."

Loosen his feet, boys, so he can step along."

They cut the cord about Warner's legs and started forward into the woods. But a woman, her face white and anxious, her hair flying wildly in the wind, barred their way.

"For God's sake, Liz," the man with the gun cried, "what's up?"

"They're here!" she gasped. Then, clasping her hands and looking into his face appealingly, she added: "Go, quick, Jake! Fly before they get you."

"What are you talking about?" Jake demanded. "Who is it? Not the—"

"Yes, yes; the revenuers! The cabin's surrounded, and they're searching the woods. I slipped away, but most likely they seen me. Don't wait, Jake, but go quick!"

His face darkened, and a dangerous light came to his eyes.

"D—em!" he said bitterly. "Let 'em come! I'll get some of 'em before they get me." Then, turning to his men, he added: "Stand back out of the light, boys, so that you can't be seen. Wait a minute! This man has been spying on us, and we'll fix him for it first."

With that he struck off into the woods, commanding two of his men to follow with Warner and the others, with Liz, to hide.

After covering about thirty yards along the side of the mountain he stopped on the brink of a dark hole. It was the Big Spring that greedily swallows up everything that falls a prey to it and gives nothing back.

A cold chill of horror went over Warner as he heard the water boiling and bubbling down there in the dark.

"Throw him in, boys," Jake said coolly.

The men began to push Warner forward. In his struggles the rope slipped from his arms. Finding his hands free, he wrenched himself from the grasp of one of the men and, striking him a quick blow, sent him reeling back toward the spring. There was a scream, a heavy splash in the water and then silence. Quickly following up his advantage, he struggled to free himself from the other man and had almost succeeded when Jake gave him a push that sent him flying over the brink of the spring and clear to the opposite side, where he struck against the bank.

As he began to sink down into the hole he clutched frantically in search of a support. When half his body was in the water, his fingers grasped a jutting stone that checked his fall. There he hung, his whole weight on his fingers and the waters tugging at him as if angrily determined to tear him away.

By a flash of lightning Jake saw him clinging to the wall and, with an oath, started around to that side of the spring. In another flash Warner saw Jake with his gun raised to strike him. At the same instant there was a pistol report, and in the darkness Warner felt a heavy body plunge past him and heard a great splash in the water. Then, just as his fingers had begun to relax their hold, a pair of strong hands grasped his wrists and saved him from sinking. For the first time in his life he fainted.

When he returned to consciousness, he was lying before a fire in the shelter of the still with a dozen detectives. Three of the "moonshiners" were in irons.

The detectives, guided by the scream of the man who had first met his fate in the spring, had arrived just in time to give Jake to the spring, which no doubt hid much of his guilty past. Afterward they had captured the rest of the gang, killing one in the fight. The woman Liz had escaped.

Guided by Himself.

The father of Thomas Jefferson died in 1757, and the son's situation was touchingly described by him years afterward in a letter written to his eldest grandson when he was sent from home to school for the first time. It is given in "The True Thomas Jefferson," by William E. Curtis. The letter was as follows:

"When I recollect that at fourteen years of age the whole care and direction of myself was thrown on myself entirely, without a relative or friend qualified to advise or guide me, and recollect the various sorts of bad company with which I associated from time to time, I am astonished that I did not turn off with some of them and become as worthless to society as they were."

"I had the good fortune to become acquainted very early with some characters of very high standing and to feel the incessant wish that I could become as they were."

His father left instructions for his education and especially enjoined upon the widow not to permit him to neglect "the exercise requisite for his body's development." This strong man knew the value of strength and used to say that a person of weak body could not have an independent mind.

Statistics About the Lakes.

The following figures obtained from reliable sources show the mean level of the lake surfaces above the mean tide at New York and their maximum depths respectively: Lake Ontario, 248.61 feet, 738 feet deep; Lake Erie, 572.86 feet and 210 feet deep; Lake Michigan, 551.28 feet, 870 feet deep; Lake Huron, 531.28 feet, 750 feet deep; Lake Superior, 601.78 feet, 1,008 feet deep. The deepest water runs very fairly in mid-lake throughout the chain.

The area of water surface in square miles according to Crossman's delineation is as follows: Lake Superior, 31,200; Lake Huron, 23,900; Lake Michigan, 22,450; Lake Erie, 9,960; Lake Ontario, 7,240, or a total area of 94,650 square miles.

Attentive.

The Crow—Are you listening to me?
The Rabbit—Yes; I am all ears.—Chicago News.

The Boy Giant and His Pet Tiger

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One day in the woods all alone
Ah Grim heard a pitiful moan.
A tiger he found
Stretched out on the ground,
A thorn in his paw to the bone.
Ah Grim, with "it won't hurt a mite!"
With a bow and "Excuse me" polite,
Extracted the thorn
Which had made the beast mourn
And caused it to purr with delight.



The tiger, by gratitude tamed,
The pet of Ah Grim was proclaimed.
So gentle was he
That he ate cake and tea
And became in that region quite famed.
Many tricks to the tiger Grim taught
And bravely was each of them wrought;
He could climb and could bowl,
He could jump o'er a pole
And drop to the earth as if shot.

Educated Seals.

Seals are not only capable of being trained while in captivity, but it may be truly said that they may be educated. They are extremely sensitive to sounds and can even be taught to enunciate short syllables. I had one who could say "pa" and "ma" intelligibly, and no doubt with larger instruction it might have acquired other words. This one would also play a tune through on a hand organ by holding on to the crank with his right flipper. He could also make as graceful a bow as any lady need wish to receive. He would throw water over you with his flippers and expect you to enjoy it as much as he did. He would also follow me about like a dog and was not even discouraged by a flight of stairs, up and down which he would go to keep me in sight. When I was obliged to leave him at night or any other time, he would beckon to me with his head and neck "to come back" just as plainly as words could have expressed the feeling, and when he could no longer see me he would cry like a child.—Philadelphia Ledger.

The Barometer Boy.

The rain will come down in a tempest to-day;
The wind is so dreadfully cool,
And (if you ask me) I should certainly say
That it's wiser to stay
At home in the dry than go roaming away
To the horrible school."
Said Freddie Maguire
As he sat by the fire
On a beautiful stool.
"I'm sorry for that," said mamma, "for you see,
There's a trip up the river today,
I meant you to go with your father and me."
At a quarter to three
The steamer, I hear, will be leaving the quay.
But then, as you say,
Such a trip would be vain
When there's sure to be rain
And the clouds are so gray."
"Oh, mother!" said Freddie. "I fancy, you know,
The wind is a bit on the wane,
And faintly the sun is beginning to show,
While the meadows below
Are surely more bright than a moment ago."
And on looking again
I think it would do.
Yes; I'm sure it won't rain.
Yes; I'm sure it won't rain."

PAST HIS FIRST YOUTH.

A Fowl That Was Hardly So Blame For Proving Tough.

The swan is said to be excellent eating when young, but as it is one of the longest lived of all creatures it is well to learn if possible how old your bird is before you cook it.

A gentleman in Lincolnshire, England, sent a dead swan to the Athenaeum club, addressed to the secretary. A special dinner was to occur that week, and the committee without question turned the bird over to the cook.

At the dinner the swan, resting on a great silver dish, was a delight to the eye, but when it came to carving and eating the bird no knife seemed sharp enough to cut it, and of course eating it was out of the question.

A few days later the donor met the secretary and said: "I hope you got my swan all right?"

"That was a nice joke you played on us," returned the secretary.

"I hope you got my swan all right?" "I hope you got my swan all right?" "I hope you got my swan all right?"

"Why, we had the thing boiled for thirteen hours, and even then we might as well have tried to cut through the rock of Gibraltar."

"You don't mean to say you had the swan cooked?"

"Why, of course."

"Man alive! I sent it to be stuffed and preserved as a curiosity in the club. That swan has been in my family for 280 years. It was one of the identical birds fed by the children of Charles I. You've seen the picture of it. My ancestor held the post of 'master of the swans and keeper of the king's cygnets.' Well, I have no doubt it was a bit tough."

The "W" in Writers' Names.

Beginning with William Shakespeare, we remember instantly Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, Washington Irving, William Makepeace Thackeray, Henry W. Longfellow, John G. Whittier, William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Walt Whitman. Others whose names occur almost simultaneously are William Cowper, Isaac Watts, Henry Ward Beecher, Daniel Webster, Wendell Phillips, George William Curtis, Richard Grant White, Julia Ward Howe, George W. Cable, William D. Howells, Charles Dudley Warner and Richard Watson Gilder. To these are easily added Sir Walter Blackstone, John Wesley, Edmund Waller, Nathaniel P. Willis, Walter Savage Landor, Will Carleton, James Whitcomb Riley, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Hamilton Wright Mabie, William H. Prescott, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Mary E. Wilkins and many more.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Country Inns in England.

A noted traveler says he has sampled a large number of hotels in his time—even in Greece—but for barefaced dishonesty in the making of bills the bluff British landlord takes first place. "After charging twice what his food and rooms are worth he tacks on a further charge for service, another for lights, another for bath, another for fire. In short, my experience of country inns in England—and I can speak with some authority—is that I pay as much a day at a shabby little country inn of England, where the food is poor and ill cooked, the attendance inferior and the beds poor, as I would at a good hotel in such towns as Springfield, Mass., or the very best in Switzerland or Germany. Indeed, it must have struck the average American that the incomparable Baedeker hardly ever finds it possible to recommend an English hotel."

The Original Silhouette.

The name silhouette was derived from Etienne de Silhouette, a French minister of finance in 1759, who introduced several parsimonious fashions during his administration called a la Silhouette, a name which continued to be applied to the black profile portraits. Silhouettes were executed in various ways.

One of the simplest is that of tracing the outlines of a shadow's profile thrown on a sheet of paper and then reducing them to the required size either by the eye or by means of a pantograph. The camera obscura and camera lucida are also occasionally used for the purpose.

His Appeal.

Little Georgie was taken by his aunt to see the newcomer, aged one day. He was duly and profoundly impressed with the specimen and asked where the little brother came from. "God sent it," answered the aunt reverently.

The answer made a deep impression on little Georgie, for that afternoon he was seen out in the backyard gazing up into the deep blue sky and spreading his diminutive apron expectantly as he said, "Dear God, please throw me one down too."—Troy Times.

Hardening Steel.

Small steel articles that are too soft may be hardened with sealing wax. The method is to have ready a large stick of sealing wax and then after heating the article to a cherry red thrust it into the wax for a minute, withdrawing it and sticking it in again, repeating the operation until the steel is cold and will not enter the wax.

Baked in a Quarry.

Shney Patches—What sort of cake is this that the lady gave you?
Weary Willie—She said that it was marble cake.
Shney Patches—Marble nothing! It's granite.—New York Herald.

Exempt.

"There's one good thing about Mrs. De Sneeze—she never slanders her friends."
"No; she hasn't any."—San Francisco Bulletin.

His Hope.

"I hope," said the serious man, "that you haven't been betting on the races."
"I hope so, too," said the young man with the red necktie and the restless eye. "I hope I will wake up tomorrow and find out that the whole thing was a wild dream, but there's no use hoping."—Washington Star.

Of Absorbing Interest.

He—Do you find it an interesting story?
She—Oh, very. I'm so anxious to get to the end that really I can't help skipping nearly every other page.—Chicago Record-Herald.

Advice.

Advice is a good thing, but it will always be something of a nuisance until the givers of it accept responsibility for the bad as readily as they take credit for the good.—Saturday Evening Post.

CHINESE HATS.

Queer Head Coverings That Are Worn in the Celestial Empire.

In China the retainers and guards wear special hats to indicate their office. The ensigns wear a wire structure resembling a sugar loaf and a rat-trap. It is a foot high and of no earthly protection against sun or rain.

The chair coolies use a hat something like their employers', but flatter, cheaper and without button or feather. The boatmen have a storm hat made of rattan and bamboo, which is never less than a yard in diameter.

A servant who is scribe and valet combined is marked by something that looks like a two storied or three storied cook's cap of four sides. The prevailing color of the structure is vermilion. A mourner wears a turban made by fastening a long cloth of grayish yellow hue around the head and allowing the ends to fall down behind to the small of the back. Another style covers the head, temple, ears and back of the neck and is a caricature upon the steel morions of those tall hats upon the heads of the captives that are drawn upon the papyrus and tombs of the pharaohs. Still another funny shape is one which looks as if it were the remnant of a felt hat from which the brim had been irregularly torn.

Douglas as a Printer.

Stephen A. Douglas, although not recognized as such by the craft, was a one time printer. The story of how he and "Long John" Wentworth came together on a printing proposition is still afloat, but in such close quarters that it is not often heard. Mr. Wentworth was printing The Democrat in Chicago in 1838 and struggling to remove an indebtedness of about \$3,000. Douglas called on him one day and said that he had some handbills that must be printed at once.

"All right," answered Mr. Wentworth, "but the facilities of this office are limited. Do you want ten or a hundred of these bills?"

"The 'Little Giant' said he believed 200 or perhaps more would be needed. 'Very well,' was the response. 'You will have to turn printer yourself if you expect to get them today.'

The bill was set up and placed on the hand press. Then Douglas was given special instructions how to handle the ink roller. A big apron was put on him, and he performed the menial work of roller boy, inking the types, while Mr. Wentworth worked the press.

Criticized the Wrong House.

"I've made bad breaks before, but I certainly eclipsed all previous efforts out in 'leveland the other day," said a well known business man. "A business friend met me at the station and said we would drive around a bit before going to his new home. He slowed up a bit as we drove around a curious looking mansion in which several styles of architecture had been mixed with terrible results. I was forced to exclaim: 'What fool was unkind enough to put up that monstrosity?'

"My host then took me to his club for dinner. He said in explanation: 'We will dine here, because I have a headache, and the fresh paint odor of my new house might make it worse.' The next day another friend showed me my first friend's new house. It was the monstrosity of the day before."—New York Tribune.

A Willy Afghanistan.

A man was once condemned in Afghanistan to have his ears sliced off as a minor punishment. He had a powerful friend, however, who was much attached to him. This friend begged the late ameer in duly submissive tones to allow him to perform the operation, a favor which was granted. However, the amateur begged the ameer to show him what portion of each ear he wished to be removed. The ameer accordingly touched them lightly. Whereupon the ingenious—and courageous—person proceeded to quote a passage in the Koran which said that anything touched by the representative of the Almighty became sacred. The despot smiled grimly and forgave them both.

The Kicker.

They're telling a heavenly story which they say is no more than does justice to the "kicking" propensities of the Togos veteran.
The old soldier dies, so the story goes, and after death he marches up to the gates of heaven. He hits the door a thump, and St. Peter peers out through the wicket.
"Who are you?" asks the saint.
"I'm an old soldier."
"Where from?"
"Soldiers' home at Togos."
"Well, you may come in," says the saint, "but I don't know as the place'll suit you."—Kennebec Journal.

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