


The Free Traders



By
Victor Rousseau
WNU SERVICE

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Lee obeyed the instinct not to tell Rathway that Leboeuf was alive. "Besides," Rathway went on, "as for C. P.—Well, that might mean anything. Charles Patrick, or Clarence Peel. There used to be a Clarence Peel in this district who disappeared. I swear that's the truth, Anderson. Any old timer will tell you that I'm not lying to you. N-no, Anderson, you can't prove that's the body of old Pelly, just from those initials."

Lee wondered at Rathway's agitation. The man seemed quite beside himself. He twined his fingers in his black beard, and shambled away with his peculiar hunched slouch. Lee led him to the cross above the little grave. "I think that's proof," he said quietly.

But Rathway, clenching and unclenching his fists, said nothing. Lee went back, calling Joyce, and they proceeded in the direction of the cave. Lee pointed out the pans and cradle, and the proofs of dynamiting.

"Aye, but the gold—where's the gold?" Rathway demanded.

"I have seen none," answered Lee, "and, if you remember, I made no guarantee as to it."

"How do I know you haven't taken it away?" Rathway shouted. "Aye, you may have stolen my gold as you stole my wife. You may be planning to take my wife and my gold away together."

Lee looked at him in amazement, for Rathway was nearly crazed by some passion, probably, Lee thought, the anticipation of obtaining the treasure of old Pelly.

"I've taken no gold and I've seen none," he answered. "I must again remind you of our agreement, Rathway."

Rathway pulled himself together with an effort. "Aye, that's all right," he answered. "This looks like Pelly's mine. Let's look inside. Have you been inside, Anderson?"

"I've only explored the entrance," Lee answered. "I brought no candle with me last time I was here."

Relighting the candle, he preceded Rathway within. The sound of the distant roaring came immediately to their ears. By the candle light Lee saw fresh footprints on the sands. They were made by a man wearing moccasins, no doubt Leboeuf. He did not call Rathway's attention to them, and Rathway, absorbed with his eagerness to find the treasure, noticed nothing. Lee wondered, however, what the Indian had been doing in the cavern.

The cave grew narrower; then, just when Lee thought that they had reached the end, it suddenly vaulted out and up into a large chamber.

The roaring of the waterfall immediately became accentuated as the sounds echoed from wall to wall. By the light of the candle they could now see what looked like a sheer drop into darkness immediately in front of them.

They drew back from the edge hastily. But the next moment they perceived that what they had taken for a precipice was a river, inky black, a swift and perfectly soundless stream rushing through the cavern from side to side of the mountain.

It emerged through a low tunnel in the rock and disappeared through another, barely two feet in height, upon the other side. And the roaring that they heard was not caused by this stream within the cave, but by some distant cataract, either beyond the mountain or deep within the bowels of the earth.

There were evidences, in the shape of rusty pots and kettles, and disintegrating tins strewn about the place, that this had been Pelly's headquarters, while on the opposite side of the cavern there was a deep sand tunnel extending into a smaller cavern under the wall, showing that Pelly had worked this part for gold. And the whole interior was piled high with wood ashes and remains of charred logs.

This seemed, in fact, to be the heart of Pelly's gold mine.

Suddenly Rathway, who had been wandering apparently aimlessly about the interior, uttered a shout and leaped toward the obscurity of the opposite wall. In another moment he had returned, dragging with him a large sack, from whose mouth tiny yellow particles exuded.

As if unconscious of the presence of Lee and Joyce, he knelt down, and, muttering feverishly, began untying the cord about the sack's mouth. The gaping sides disclosed a pile of gold.

Gold in fine dust, gold in nuggets. Rathway plunged his arms within the sack up to the elbows, chuckling and mumbling. There was a fortune in that bag, the accumulation of old Pelly's years of nocturnal labors. It was impossible to estimate it, but it would make its possessor a very rich man for life.

"Well, I'm glad you've got it," said

Lee. But he was thinking bitterly of Joyce's loss.

He turned away. Suddenly some instinct caused him to duck and spin around. The flash of flame spurted almost into his face. He heard Joyce's cry ring through the cavern.

Rathway had pulled a second pistol from his clothes and fired at Lee at five or six feet distance.

The bullet chipped a silver of granite from the wall behind his head. At the same instant Lee saw Joyce aim her automatic and fire deliberately at Rathway.

But of course no discharge followed the pulling of the trigger. Lee had known the automatic was empty, though it had not seemed necessary to warn Joyce.

As he sprang forward, Rathway brought the butt of the weapon smashing down upon Lee's forehead.

Lee dropped foolishly upon his knees; he saw Rathway's face, convulsed with fury, over him; Rathway's arm, yellow with gold dust, raised to strike again. Lee leaned backward, overbalanced, fell into the stream.

He saw Joyce run forward and grasp at him as he was swept past, saw Rathway grappling with her—then he was in the whirling current, and Joyce and Rathway and the cavern vanished as swiftly as a picture on the screen.

Lee was only dimly conscious of what was happening to him, for his senses reeled under Rathway's blow, and it was only an intense effort of the will that enabled him to keep his face above the water. He had a vague consciousness that he was being whirled through the depths of the mountain in complete darkness. The

rock roof swept his hair, and the rock walls on his two sides formed a sort of hydraulic tube against which the stream tossed and buffeted him, hurling him from side to side in its fury.

And ever the stream grew swifter, and ever that ominous roaring sounded louder in his ears.

The river was carrying him toward some subterranean waterfall. Half conscious, Lee visualized death among the grinding rocks—death in that viscous blackness that no ray of sunlight had ever illuminated.

He knew in a dim way that this was the end, and resistance being impossible, resigned himself to the rush of the waters, gasping in a few mouthfuls of air whenever it was possible.

The tunnel was growing still narrower, and now the roaring sounded in his ears like thunder. The rock roof dipped to the water. Lee drew in one last breath. He went under. He flung up his arms, and his fingers scraped the roof—then touched only emptiness. The current hurled him to the surface again. He opened his eyes.

Starlight overhead, appearing between high, precipitous walls, that seemed to scrape the sky. A narrow gorge, through which the current whirled him still more furiously. In the distance a line of white, the boiling of the torrent about the rocks of the falls.

Involuntarily a great cry of anguish broke from Lee's throat. Again and again it broke forth, the spontaneous protest of the body against inevitable destruction.

Upon the brink of the gorge, which had a tiny ledge of rock or undercliff beside the water, a beacon fire leaped into view, far away. Silhouetted against it was the black figure of a man. Lee fancied that he shouted in answer. His head was growing clearer now.

The gorge had become as narrow as a hall bedroom, and the rush of the black torrent toward the falls terrific. It whirled Lee around and around like a ball. The line of white was coming nearer with awful rapidity. Lee saw the figure on the edge of it, tossing its arms as it raced along the brink, but if it was shouting now, its voice was indistinguishable in the roar of the torrent.

Great fallen rocks lined the banks. Lee grasped at them as he was swept by, but they always eluded him, always the current carried him away. Now he seemed poised upon the brink of the tumbling cataract. He grasped at a rock projecting out of mid-stream, missed it.

Something descended over his head, checking him. He seemed to float still

in the current, which boiled about and past him. He reached out to the rock, found it, clung there. He reached up one arm and found that he was enveloped in the folds of a long fishing net. He saw Leboeuf upon the brink, not ten feet distant. The man was shouting, but Lee could not distinguish a word. He was pointing toward the shore, to the rock. Lee held himself fast.

The great shoulders and arms strained themselves upon the net against the torrent. Completely enmeshed, Lee felt himself being slowly drawn, like a gigantic fish, toward the bank. There was one instant when the force of the current seemed to be pulling old Leboeuf into the stream. The huge body bent like a bow, there was an instant of suspense, then slowly the great shoulders swung back, and Lee grasped the rocky ledge through the folds of the net. He felt himself raised to the rock rim, felt Leboeuf's arms about him, and collapsed into unconsciousness.



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CHAPTER XVII
Rathway Takes Thought of His Spoils

Rathway laughed like a hyena as he saw Lee disappear in the swift waters of the torrent. He spun about and struck the pistol from Joyce's hands, pulled the girl to him, and crushed her brutally against his breast.

And Joyce, overcome by this climax of the night's work, suddenly relaxed in his arms and fainted.

Rathway laid her down on the sand and looked at her in perplexity.

He discovered that he was somewhat in the same situation as the fox with the sack of corn and the goose.

If he carried the girl through the tunnel and left her while he went back for the gold she might escape him.

On the other hand, if he left her in the cave while he carried the gold away, she might fling herself into the stream in her despair. And someone might take the gold.

The only thing for Rathway to do was to remove the gold and the girl simultaneously. He carried the bag of gold to the cave's mouth, but in spite of his great strength, the weight was terrific. He reconciled himself to his labors, however, by the reflection that the bag contained a fortune.

Then, returning to Joyce, he carried her to the bag and set her down beside it.

It was fortunate for him that Joyce remained unconscious, or he would have been impossibly handicapped in his maneuvers. Cursing and struggling, first with the bag and then with the girl, Rathway at last got them to the rock at the foot of the tunnel which Lee had so indiscreetly pointed out to him.

Then arose the most difficult problem of all. Either the girl or the gold would have to be left on the upper side of the tunnel while he went back for the other. And during his absence—Rathway shuddered at the thought of any prowler coming along and making off with the treasure.

He was not convinced in his mind that his aides had not followed him.

Rathway chose to leave the gold in safety. It was the greater of his two passions. Gathering Joyce in his arms, he essayed the ascent of the cliff.

How he got to the tunnel's entrance he hardly knew afterward. It was a feat which only the spur of triumph enabled him to accomplish. He had to hold on with both hands while gripping the girl with the insides of his arms.

At length, however, he did succeed in reaching the tunnel's mouth, dragging himself through, and pulling Joyce through after him. The ascent of the rock ladder was trifling in comparison.

He looked at Joyce. She was still in a condition of profound unconsciousness. Breathing an unvoiced prayer to whatever gods controlled his soul, that she would not awake, Rathway laid her down between the monolith and the rocking stone, and went back for the gold.

This job of hoisting the heavy bag up the side of the cliff, required less dexterity, but every ounce of strength that he possessed, Inch by inch, straining and scrambling up the rocky wall, Rathway pushed it before him until, bruised by the impact of the treasure, he got it safely within the tunnel, and thence to the rocking stone above.

He stopped to breathe. He wiped the sweat from his face. It was not very far from dawn. He must have spent hours on that hideous task.

Then, carrying the bag and the girl alternately, he pushed on toward the house. He wakened his aides with a bellow. They came staggering out, drunk and half asleep.

"Start up the engine, Kramer," he shouted. "We'll have to be on our way by daylight. Gimme a drink!"

He gulped down half a bottle of his own liquor. The reaction after his incredible labors, the possession of the gold, the supreme triumph of that night exalted him. But he was anxious to get away as soon as possible.

At Slaton lake, which was only a few hours' journey by motor boat, he would be in his own retreat. He could wait till then to enjoy success. He gloated as he looked down at the unconscious girl.

Something had gone wrong with the engine, and Rathway russed and fumed while Kramer, the mechanic, was repairing it. The packs were got together, the engine overhauled. Rathway placed the bag of gold dust in the middle of the boat, and carried Joyce to it. He laid her down,

and they pushed off.

Joyce had fallen into a profound sleep of exhaustion. She began to stir, stretched out her arms.

"Lee, dear," she murmured.

She opened her eyes and looked into Rathway's vulpine face. She screamed. She struggled. She remembered.

She fought like a mad woman, and Rathway was forced to call for a rope. He tied her ankles together and fastened her arms to her sides. He passed the rope around one of the cleats. In spite of her bonds she struggled so that it was all Rathway could do to keep her from flitting the boat over. She screamed continually and tried to throw herself over the side.

At last she stopped, however, and lay still from exhaustion. She never renewed her struggles. She lay in the bottom of the boat with her eyes closed, drawing in convulsive breaths. Despite his triumph and his anticipations, Rathway was afraid of her. He wondered what was going on inside her mind.

III, Peter's Sermon (vv. 34-43).

1. The Introduction (vv. 34-35). He showed that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation those who fear God and work righteousness are accepted of Him.

2. His Discourse (vv. 36-43). In the discourse he touches briefly upon the mission of Jesus, showing that by means of His baptism and anointing with the Holy Spirit, He was qualified for His work as mediator. He then exhibited the work of Christ:

(1) In His life (vv. 36-39). He went about doing good, even casting out demons as a proof that God was with Him (v. 38).

(2) In His death (v. 39). The just suffered for the unjust that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh (1 Pet. 3:18).

(3) In His resurrection (vv. 40-41). God raised Him up the third day showing openly that Christ was His Son (Rom. 1:4), and that His sacrificial work was satisfactory (Rom. 4:25).

IV. The Holy Spirit Poured Out (vv. 44-48).

As the gospel was entering upon its widest embrace, the Spirit came in new power.

V. Peter Vindicates His Ministry to the Gentiles (11:1-18).

Being called to account for visiting and eating with Gentiles, Peter rehearsed the whole story in such a way that his narrative took the form of logical argument, and showed how that God had set His seal upon the work by the miraculous gift of the Spirit.

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The examination for the award of vacant scholarships in the University of South Carolina and for admission of new students will be held at the County Court House Friday, July 10, 1925, at 9 o'clock a. m. Applicants must not be less than 16 years of age.

Scholarships are vacant in the following 23 counties:

Allendale	Charleston,	Dorchester,	Jasper,	Oconee	Union,
Barnwell,	Cherokee,	Fairfield,	Laurens,	Richland,	Williamsburg,
Beaufort,	Clarendon,	Hampton,	Lexington,	Saluda,	York.
Berkeley,	Dillon,	Horry,	Marion,	Sumter,	

Applicants for scholarships should write to President Melton for scholarship application blanks. These should be filed with the President by July 7th. Scholarships are worth \$100.00, plus free tuition and fees. The next session will open September 16th, 1925.

For further information write to:
PRESIDENT W. D. MELTON,
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LESSON TEXT—Acts 10:1-11:18.
GOLDEN TEXT—Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.—Acts 10:34.

PRIMARY TOPIC—A Strange Sight Which Peter Saw.
JUNIOR TOPIC—Why Peter Went to Caesarea.
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Peter's Broadening Vision.
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—The Gospel Intended for All Men.

Through the conversion of Cornelius, the "middle wall of partition" was broken down (Eph. 2:4).

1. Cornelius (10:1-2).
1. His Official Position (v. 1). He was a Roman officer over a company of 100 soldiers.
2. His Character (v. 2).
(1) A devout, pious man.
(2) He was a praying man.
(3) He was charitable.
(4) He was respected by his family. The Lord chose Cornelius for the transition of the gospel to the Gentiles because of his character and position.

11. The Supernatural Preparation for the Transition of the Gospel to the Gentiles (10:3-33).
In order to bring this about:
1. Two Visions Were Given.
(1) The vision of Cornelius (v. 3-8). While engaged in prayer, an angel of God announced that his prayer and aims had come before God as a memorial, and instructed him to send to Joppa for Peter who would tell him what to do.
(2) The vision of Peter (v. 9-16). He saw a certain vessel containing clean and unclean animals let down from heaven. This vessel let down from heaven and taken back indicated that both Jews and Gentiles were accepted on high.
2. A Messenger Sent From Cornelius (vv. 17-22).
Peter was greatly perplexed over what he had seen, but not for long, for messengers from Cornelius made inquiry at the gate for him. The Spirit informed Peter of the matter, and bade him go, nothing doubting. Thus we see that both had been prepared for each other by God.
3. The Meeting of Cornelius and Peter (vv. 23-33).
(1) Peter took six witnesses along (v. 23). He had the good judgment to know that on a matter of so great importance, he must have witnesses.
(2) Cornelius waiting for Peter (v. 24). He called together his kinsmen and friends.
(3) Cornelius about to worship Peter (v. 25-26). Peter repudiated his act and protested that he was but a man alongside of Cornelius.
(4) The reciprocal explanation (vv. 27-33). Peter explained to him how God had taken from him his Jewish prejudice, and asked that Cornelius state the purpose of his having sent for him. Cornelius explains how God had appeared unto him and instructed him to send for Peter.

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