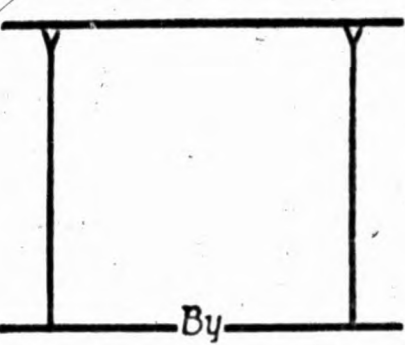


The Free Traders



By Victor Rousseau
WNU SERVICE

Copyright by W. G. Chapman.

Looking about him, Lee saw that some two or three hundred yards from the place where he had emerged out of the face of the cliff, the gorge made a sharp bend, almost at right angle, and here the ground was strewn with a mass of fallen boulders, ranging from huge rocks to small debris. Above it was a gap in the lower section of the cliff, from which it had been detached.

Lee made his way in this direction. At once he came to the conclusion that dynamite had been the cause of this collapse of part of the surface of the granite wall, which, smooth as a steel lining, could have been disrupted

Pains Very Severe

"I suffered from womanly troubles which grew worse and worse as the months went by," says Mrs. L. H. Cantrell, of R. F. D. 9, Galveston, Georgia.

"I frequently had very severe pains. These were so bad that I was forced to go to bed and stay there. It seemed to me my back would come in two."

CARDUI For Female Troubles

"I taught school for a while, but my health was so bad I would have to stay out sometimes. This went on till I got so bad I didn't know what to do."

"One day I read about the merits of Cardui, and as I had some friends who had been helped by it, I thought I would try it. I began to get better after I had taken half a bottle. I decided to keep on and give it a thorough trial and I did. I took in all about 12 bottles and now I am perfectly well. I do not suffer any pain and can do all my housework."

At All Druggists

DR. J. H. YARBOROUGH
Veterinary Surgeon
Office: Peoples Pharmacy,
Day Phone 66 - Night 82
Denmark, S. C.

McLAURIN D. BROOKER
—DENTIST—
Office Over
J. G. Moody's Store
Barnwell, S. C.

Wm. McNAB
Representing
FIRE, HEALTH AND ACCIDENT
INSURANCE COMPANIES.
Personal attention given all business
Office in Harrison Block, Main St.
BARNWELL, S. C.

BOILER FLUES MILL CASTINGS AND SUPPLIES BELTING, PACKING AND LACING WOOD, IRON AND STEEL

SHAFTS PULLEYS HANGERS

Bring ENGINE REPAIRS in auto for quick work
LOMBARD IRON WORKS, AUGUSTA, GA.

Tutt's Pills
Enable Dyspeptics to eat whatever they wish. Cause food to assimilate. Nourish the body, give appetite.
DEVELOP FLESH

by no natural force such as gravity. And then he came upon something that confirmed the obvious deduction. It was a rotting wooden cradle.

Beside it lay a rusty pick. Not far away were two huge iron pans, their bottoms eaten out with rust, so that they resembled fretwork in steel. Under them were still—the ashes and charred residue of the wood that had been used to thaw out the frozen earth.

All about among the fallen rocks were mounds, the residue from the pans after the extraction of the gold, now covered with tangles of dead vegetation.

There was no longer any doubt that this was Pelly's gold mine.

Before making further investigations here, Lee decided to explore the remainder of the chasm. It ran on beyond the bend for a quarter of a mile, and then came to an abrupt termination. Without any gradual lessening of the depth it simply ceased, the two walls coming together, in the same way as they did near the rocking stone at the other end. The chasm was, in fact, simply an elongated crater.

Returning, Lee made his way to the cave formed by the explosion. If Pelly was in the district, there would be hardly any doubt but that he would be hiding in that inaccessible spot, where he would be safe against discovery. It was not unlikely that he was in the cave itself at that moment.

Lee first examined the snow about the mouth of the cave for footprints, but he found no tracks except his own. Drawing his automatic, he advanced into the opening. The sand in the interior bore the marks of continued tramping, but there were no imprints with clear edges, and it was certain that no one had been there for a long time.

Unfortunately, Lee had brought no candle, but he advanced some distance within the cave, lighting his way with matches. However, it was a foregone conclusion that Pelly was not in there, for the sandy interior bore no fresh footprints as far as he went.

A faint, distant roaring, as of a waterfall, came to Lee's ears, and the air was fresh, as if the cave were connected with some opening in the mountain side. Lee resolved to explore it another day. But it was clear enough that Pelly was not in the chasm after all. Another thing that led Lee to that conclusion was the fact that no mining operations had been carried on there for a considerable time—long enough for the pans to have rusted through.

If Pelly had taken refuge within the gorge, it was incredible that he would not have resumed operations.

And these seemed to have been interrupted unexpectedly, to judge from the exposure of the pans to wind and weather.

Perplexed and disappointed, Lee turned his thoughts toward the capture of the man who had attacked him in the tunnel. He could, no doubt throw light on Pelly's whereabouts. Perhaps he was the assistant of whom Joyce had spoken.

Lee expected that he would be lurking in the tunnel, ready to renew his attack, but this time there should be no such fiasco as before.

Lee made his way back on the opposite side of the gorge. Here there was a thick growth of dwarfed scrub laurel, which had taken root in the soil brought down by the little stream, and bordered it, extending back from it toward the cliff in a sort of miniature jungle. Something protruding out of this growth arrested Lee's attention.

It was a wooden cross carved with the name HELENE PELLY, standing up above a low cairn of boulders.

Lee stood and looked, and vaguely mournful thoughts coursed through

his mind. The bones were bleached white, the flesh had long since disappeared. One bony hand still tightly clutched the handle of a large, old-fashioned revolver. The muzzle was choked with rust; there were rusted cartridges inside.

Disengaging it with difficulty from the fingers, Lee saw, on the less rusted portion of the handle which they had protected, the initials, C. J.

But he hardly needed that to know that his mission was at an end, and the last barrier between himself and Joyce overthrown.

The problem so inscrutable an hour before had been solved. All cause for antagonism between them had come to an end.

And Lee was conscious of a quiet satisfaction. It was the happiest solution, and though Joyce would grieve, she would come to see that it was the best. She would be glad, after the first shock, that her father would not have to face the ordeal which he had dreaded for so many years.

But as Lee looked down at the remains of the dead man, he became aware of a single fact. Nearly every bone on one side of the skeleton was broken—the skull, ribs, arm and leg bones, and pelvis.

Then Pelly had not died of a stroke or from a sudden attack of heart failure. He had fallen from the summit of the cliff above—perhaps he had been flung down, for the revolver which he had been clutching showed that he had either encountered or anticipated an enemy.

And, filled with a mixture of emotions—happiness for their future, grief for the news that he must break to Joyce, Lee made his way toward the tunnel.

But all at once he made the singular and unexpected discovery that he did not know where the entrance was.



One Bony Hand Still Tightly Clutched the Handle of a Large, Old-fashioned Revolver.

his mind. It was a sad and lonely burying place for Joyce's mother. Its existence there was in itself a testimony to the old man's mental condition—that he should have carried his wife's body through the tunnel to that place of his dreams. And yet it was certain that no prowling thing would ever violate that grave.

Lee went on, and a few steps further, stumbled against something else.

It was the skeleton of a man, the bones protruding through the rents and tatters of the scarecrow clothes. The laurel tangles sprouted between the

chasm, in which Lee struggled like a madman, dust-white, dishevelled, haggard, half-delirious from want of sleep and exhaustion.

He stopped, tried to collect himself. But to cease meant to yield to despair. Only by incessant labor could he keep up the pretense that he was about to find the tunnel. He felt at the end of his resources. One conclusion was being borne in upon him; he had worked his way far beyond the saplings on either side; he must have passed the tunnel during the night.

One little orifice unexplored in the obscurity, and all his work had gone for nothing.

He would have to go back to the beginning and start over again.

But no human-being could go through the test again.

There occurred to him an alternative, but so fantastic that he only played with it as a madman plays with a straw. The tunnel might be no longer there. It might have disappeared through a rock slide.

That seemed incredible—Lee put the thought from him; its very occurrence made him realize that his mind was beginning to wander.

And, lapping up some water from the stream, and sprinkling himself with it, he began again—at the farther sapling.

The sun rose high. It was beginning to descend. It ceased to illuminate the gorge. Lee was nearing the second sapling. He would work on till that was passed, and then—what?

And now each step of each ascent was an incredible labor. His hands were lumps of bruised flesh. He was hardly conscious that he was doing. Still, he must reach the second sapling.

He passed it. A sort of film descended over his consciousness. In the declining day he saw himself staggering round the gorge, seeking for some other egress. Impossible! For forty feet there were footholds innumerable in the lower part of the cliff; above them the hard granite surface bulged inward. There was no handhold for an ape. And he staggered from one end of the gorge to the other, round and round and round—an ape in a cage.

He dropped upon the ground utterly worn out, utterly hopeless. A little respite, and then he would arise, to struggle again, a short sleep.

Respite? He had slept, and that lynx sense of his had just awakened him in time—just in time to anticipate that shadow stealing down the gorge toward him. A misshapen, gross thing that leaped forward, snarling, and then leaped back as Lee struck at it.

Lee was alert on the instant. In that thing alone lay his chance of escape. And, as it vanished into the shadows, Lee went blundering after it in the darkness, finding it, losing it. He saw it in every moon-shadow among the rocks. He heard it jeering at him. Then stones began to fly. One grazed his cheek, one struck him in the chest. Now the thing was in front of him, and when he rushed, it was not there, and a shower of stones from an unexpected quarter cut his lip and chin.

This tortured, maddened, Lee was baited till the second dawn filtered into the gorge. There was no respite. All the while Lee struggled against the bonds of sleep. He would rest; his eyes closing for an instant—it was upon him again, a stone would hurle past him; another rush would follow, and again the thing was gone in the dark.

Down—daylight—sunlight. Crouched behind a ridge of rock above him, Lee saw the misshapen figure with the massive shoulders and the long, furred arms.

And, yielding to the elemental rage that was in him, Lee whipped out his automatic and fired two bullets. They clipped fragments of stone from beside the face, which continued to watch him unmoved. That face, illumined by the sunlight in the gorge, appeared so human, so intelligent, so much at variance with the misshapen body, that Lee was shocked at the sight of it.

It was only a man—but such a man! A gorilla, all but the human face.

Lee had already pulled the trigger a third time, but there was no third shot. Then he remembered that he had had only two cartridges remaining. He was unarmed.

He sprang, and a stone struck him in the chest and hurled him backward. Like two baboons they bombarded each other with stones; but at last, as a fortunate shot sent the other staggering, Lee managed to close with him.

The face, bruised and battered from the encounter in the tunnel, looked impassively into his. Lee struck, and quickly discovered that he had not strength enough left to administer a knockout blow; while at close quarters he was decidedly at a disadvantage.

On the other hand his opponent was equally unable to overcome him, for he could not stand up against Lee's fists at short range long enough to allow him time to get the gripping power of those shoulders into action.

At last, bleeding and bruised, they broke off the fight simultaneously, and lay side by side, panting, upon the bottom of the gorge.

Lee took stock of the other. The man looked like an Indian, but there was a touch of the Caucasian in him. Lee addressed him for the first time.

"What is it that you want? Why have you attacked me?"

The answer—Lee had hardly expected that there would be an answer—was in a tone singularly soft, incredibly at variance with the appearance of that gross body.

"You find the way in. But you

CHAPTER XII
Freed by a Lock of Hair

It seemed to him that it would be a simple matter enough to ascend the cliff again, and he had not taken the precaution to take note of landmarks. Now, however, he discovered that the lower third of the granite wall was scored with hundreds of holes and fissures where the friable limestone had crumbled away, or had been washed out by the streams.

The entrance to the cliff tunnel was somewhere on that side of the chasm, some little distance from the bend—but where?

Lee stepped back to the brink of the stream and looked up, trying to locate the rocking stone or agoliths for a guide, but the upper incline of the cliff hid them from view.

It was high noon. Lee set himself to the task before him. He looked about him, trying to orientate himself. It would be necessary to ascend to a point about one-fourth the distance up the cliff in order to discover the ingress, which was no wider than any of numerous cavities in the wall.

Plenty of places along the chasm afforded access, and Lee grasped a projecting rock which seemed familiar, and began to ascend, digging his hands and feet into the holes, until he found it impossible to proceed farther. Swinging to the right, he discovered a large cavity and thrust his arm in up to the shoulder.

A bitter disappointment awaited him, however, for at the end his hand encountered only a smooth surface of rock.

He tried again as he descended, thrusting his arms into all the likely crevices in the vain attempt to find the orifice.

He descended, selected another place and scrambled up the wall again, only to achieve the same negative result.

And when he reached the bottom of the cliff again, and looked up at the innumerable crevices, he realized that not only did he not know at which point to begin the ascent, but he did not know how high to climb before he reached the level of the tunnel entrance.

He looked up at the huge cliff, with its inward incline, and scored with its myriads of mocking mouths, and now a sort of fury took hold of him. Again and again he scrambled up and clung like a fly to the cliff's face; scrambled down, baffled, and then began once more.

It was now the middle of the afternoon, and he was no nearer a solution. He had accomplished nothing. He was becoming bewildered. It was necessary to proceed in a systematic way.

He now proceeded to mark off what he considered the possible boundaries within which the tunnel lay, by stamping down two birch saplings. And again and yet again he essayed his task, always to recoil, beaten.

He was only half way from sapling to sapling, and it was beginning to grow dark. His hands were bleeding, his nails split to the quick. But it was the eerie nature of his efforts in the loneliness of the darkening gorge that was the most nerve-racking part of all. He was like some mythical hero of the classic world, tortured by inanimate things—like Sisyphus, condemned to roll his stone up the hills of Tartarus, forever, only to have it bound down again before it reached the summit.

He had been toiling by moonlight for an infinity of time. He had covered all the space between the saplings. He extended his radius; and now, in his desperation, he attacked the cliff as if it were a human enemy, beating on it with his fists in senseless fury.

Dawn, clear and gray, and bitter cold crept into the gorge and found him still at his labors. The sun rose. Long rays of light streamed down into

never find the way out. You fight me and I fight you. You sit down here, so and I sit down here beside you so. When you fight I fight, and when you stop I stop, and so we wait until you sleep. And then 'le grand mor' come."

This devilish conception made Lee's blood run cold. For even now his eyelids were drooping—drooping, and the other watched with cunning eyes.

He tried to find strength to leap, read him with teeth and nails if his bruised fists and weakened arms failed him. But the other, reading what passed in his mind, crouched, ready for him.

Lee shot an arrow at a venture. "Leboeuf!" he said softly.

The other started. "Eh, you have learn my name? That makes no difference."

"Why do you wish to kill me, Leboeuf? Is it that you think I have come here to seize the mine?"

"Listen, then. I swore to my master before he died that no one shall take the gold away. Therefore, since you have found the way into the tunnel, you shall never leave it."

"Suppose I am a friend?"

"No, no friend. You have come for the gold. You came to seize my master, who is dead, to take his gold away. There he lies dead and he has come to me in dreams and told me he must not be buried till Ma'n'zelle Joyce has got the gold. Ah, you shall never have his gold!"

"Listen, Leboeuf! Miss Joyce and I love each other—"

"No, no, you are lying, and besides, it would make no difference. Did I not hear her in the house, telling you, 'Go! Go!' No, you shall never take her gold."

Lee desisted from sheer weariness. He strove desperately in his mind, trying to find some way by which he could convince this madman—but his eyelids closed, and suddenly, with a snarl, Leboeuf was upon him, his fingers twining around his throat.

Lee shook himself free. He sprang at him, the last of his waning strength put forth. They clinched, they fought, Lee's fists beat against the bruised face, drawing fresh blood. Leboeuf released him, but springing to a distance, began hurling stones at him, cursing him.

Then he sat down and waited.

Lee must stay awake till nightfall. He would find some way out of the gorge. He would outfootstep in the granite with a stone—wild and impossible thoughts ran through his mind. He strode to and fro beside the river bank.

Some little distance away Leboeuf sat, watching him. Lee's hatred for that bruised, impassive face was ele-

mental. He flung a stone. The aim was true; it cut Leboeuf's lip open. Blood began to drip, but Leboeuf never stirred.

Lee sat down. He must conserve his strength—he started up. He had slept for a moment, and Leboeuf was creeping toward him. The sun-blazed, over the edge of the gorge.

Leboeuf squatted down nearer Lee, watching him as a vulture might watch a dying animal.

A moment later Leboeuf was almost at his side, yet he was not conscious of his having moved, or of having closed his eyes. He got up wearily, picked up a stone, and flung it into Leboeuf's face, gashing his cheek.

Leboeuf never moved.

Lee looked about him for a larger stone.

He was lying upon his back, and Leboeuf was kneeling on him, gripping his throat. He tried to struggle. The wiry fingers ripped the tatters of his shirt away.

Next moment a cry broke from Leboeuf's lips. He was fingering the coils of Joyce's hair. He knew them, perhaps by the faint odor of her that clung to them.

He fell upon his knees. "Monseigneur, it is hers! Forgive! Forgive! I am an old fool! So among my people the maidens give their hair as tokens of love! Ah, Monsieur, Monsieur—see, I will show you the entrance, and you shall take the gold for her. So my master spoke in a dream—but I did not know you!"

And, darning from Lee's side, he scrambled straight up the face of the cliff between the saplings. He dragged away a stone, fitting so closely into the tunnel's mouth that Lee had never guessed it had been placed there.

—And, with a mournful cry, Leboeuf disappeared within the tunnel.

Lee staggered to the cliff bench, tried to ascend, dropped back, and in a moment was fast asleep upon the bottom of the gorge.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.)

ANY WOMAN'S DRESS
— or —
WOOL COAT
CLEANED AND PRESSED
FOR \$1.00

Carolina Dry Cleaning Co.
Phone 5590
1608 Barnwell Street. Columbia, S. C.

KODAKERS!

Send your films to us for developing and printing. One day service. Write for prices.

Lollar's Studio
1423 Main Street
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA
We sell Eastman Films

LONG TERM MONEY to LEND

6 per cent. interest on large amounts. Private funds for small loans.

BROWN & BUSH
LAWYERS BARNWELL, SOUTH CAROLINA.

ANNOUNCING
THAT THE
DODGE CARS
And Dodge Graham Trucks are Sold in this Territory now by
The Jordan Auto Co.
Allendale So. Car.
Distributors for Aiken, Barnwell and Allendale Counties.