

# THE MASTER KEY

By JOHN FLEMING WILSON



COPYRIGHT, 1914, BY JOHN FLEMING WILSON

A Novelized Version of the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company. Illustrated With Photographs From the Picture Production.

### CHAPTER XIX.

#### A Message From the Grave.

WILKERSON'S fall from the trestle had not been unnoticed by his outlaws, and before any one in the camp could make sure that the man was dead a couple of the Mexicans had quickly slipped down the hill to him. They found him still alive. Without paying any attention to John Dorr's men, who were still doubtful of the outcome of the battle, they dragged their fallen leader away and up into their own temporary camp.

It was not long before Wilkerson revived. He was terribly bruised and almost insane from physical pain and wild rage at his defeat. It was with difficulty that the unsmiling outlaws restrained him. Their chief took upon himself the task of making it plain to Wilkerson that this was no time for rash and unorganized attack.

"They have beaten us so far, senior," he said quietly, "and you are very sick. Tomorrow we shall see."

The next morning's sun had scarcely touched the peaks of the mountains when Wilkerson stretched his stiff, sore limbs and began a frenzied campaign. He made it clear to the leader of the Mexican outlaws that they must work swiftly.

"It won't be long before the news of this fighting gets out and the authorities take a hand," he said. "But if we can just get this mine into our possession in the next three days I can hire you and your men as peaceable workmen and swear that Dorr and his gang are trying to take our property away by force. I guess my word will be as good as his."

"Very well," agreed the Mexican after thoughtfully considering the matter. "We can get back into Mexico in twenty-four hours from here. So long as you pay us and let us—what do you call it—loot, my men are with you."

Wilkerson covertly studied the desperado's impassive visage. Jose Vigos bore a renowned name on the border for daring, shrewdness and wickedness. He was known as "The Merciless." For five years he had had a price set on his head, yet because of the loyalty of his adherents and his own fearlessness he had escaped.

No man better fitted for a sinister purpose could have been found. Yet mingled with Wilkerson's satisfaction at having such a tool to his hand was a dread of the man himself, and his calm insistence on the privilege of looting the camp when it was captured gave him a sense of nausea.

After all, they were Americans down there in the "Master Key" camp. Through his binoculars he could see Ruth on the porch of the bungalow. Vigos, too, saw her. He took no pains to conceal the cruel interest in his eyes.

The next few days resulted in little advantage to either side. John Dorr could not reopen the mine nor even send in for much needed supplies because of the constant menace of the outlaws, who occasionally fired scattering shots down into the gulch as a warning that they were vigilant.

On the other hand, Wilkerson found it impossible to seize the camp without precipitating a battle, from which he shrank. Deeply involved as he already was in crime, he dreaded to cross the border line which would forever place him beyond the pale and make him an outlaw.

Instead, he used every method to put himself outwardly in the right. He sent plea after plea to the sheriff of the county to come and restore order, asserting that he had been driven from his rightful property by violence and that the situation was such that, without interference from the authorities, there would be serious trouble and very likely bloodshed.

These pleas availed only partially. The sheriff made a trip into the mine, talked with John Dorr and Tom Kane and then sought out Wilkerson.

"It looks to me as if this was a case for the courts," he said slowly when



Ruth on the Porch of the Bungalow.

he had examined Wilkerson's forged deeds. "I knew old Gallon pretty well, and he thought a sight of that Ruth girl. Fact is, he told me he intended her to have the mine and left it to her in his will. Now you toddle along with these papers and want to take it away from her."

"Gallon and I were partners years ago," Wilkerson insisted. "We located this mine together, and when I came back he gave me over my share."

"But you want it all," the sheriff said dubiously.

"Sure; it's all mine," persisted the other. "Didn't Gallon use all the money he got out of it while I was away? And when we came to a settlement he found that the mine wouldn't pay half he owed me."

"I'm simply a peace officer," the sheriff said finally. "I don't know who's in the right. That's for the court to decide."

"Wasn't I in possession?" demanded Wilkerson. "Haven't I been driven out by force, me and my workmen?"

"From what I've seen of your workmen," was the curt response, "I don't like their looks. And there are tales going around that Vigos is in the country."

"How can I help who's in the country?" demanded Wilkerson, much injured. "That's your lookout, not mine. All I'm asking for is protection."

The sheriff departed without giving him any satisfaction, and Wilkerson determined that he would act. The

Mexicans were getting restless, and the sardonic Vigos hinted sharply that he was impatient.

"All right," Wilkerson agreed. "We'll just go down to the road in the morning and then walk into the camp. Leave it to me. I'll simply say I've come back to take charge and you are my miners."

Vigos twirled his wiry mustaches. "And then?"

The men looked each other in the eye. That evil glance was sufficient. John Dorr and Tom Kane, meanwhile, had been in constant consultation. One thing was constantly in their thoughts.

"Ruth oughtn't to be here," John would say dismally. "If it weren't for her we could quickly settle those outlaws, for that's all they are."

"I reckon nobody would cry at the inquest," the cook returned. "If we did put a few of them. But, as you say, the girl is here, and that puts fighting out of the question. Unless they start it," he added cautiously.

"Wilkerson is bound to make some kind of a move mighty soon," said Dorr. "He can't satisfy those fellows



"Ruth oughtn't to be here."

of his for long."

Yet when Wilkerson appeared at the entrance to the camp one morning with a motley train of followers Dorr was at a loss to know what to do. Wilkerson was apparently peaceful and expected a peaceful reception. His boldness had almost carried him through when the ignorance and cupidly of one of Vigos' men gave John and Kane the sorely wished for opening.

The Mexican peered into the window of one of the cabins and saw a gold watch on the table. Instantly he broke the glass with the butt of his carbine and reached in for his booty.

Dorr and Kane had warned the miners at the first appearance of Wilkerson that there might be trouble brewing, but that the first blow must come from the other side.

"Boys," said the old cook, "you know the sheriff. He's listened to both sides, and he don't rightly know which is the one to take. But one thing is certain—he's got to keep order and protect human life and our property. If those fellows make a wrong move we've got the sheriff on our side. See?"

They had seen the point, with many mutterings. They had quietly prepared themselves for just the occasion which the Mexican's act now gave. As the bandit pulled his arm back with the watch in his hand a revolver cracked, and the arm fell shattered to his side. And as Wilkerson glanced furiously about him he saw the camp ready. He cursed the maddened Mexican and grasped Vigos by the arm.

"Stop your men!" he implored. "Don't let them fire a shot or we are lost!"

It was too late. Passions long restrained now broke out, and within a minute a battle was raging between the walls of the gulch.

The miners had the advantage. They fought from the shelter of their own cabins, and they were united by a common purpose. Their attackers were scattered, were divided between lust for loot and thirst for blood and had no sure refuge nor rendezvous. Yet they would eventually have made the camp untenable had not the thoughtful sheriff prepared a surprise for both parties.

After consultation with his advisers in the county seat he had appealed to the governor on the ground that as one of the opposing forces was Mexican he felt that a superior authority should handle so delicate a situation. The governor had agreed and ordered a troop of cavalry to the "Master Key" to preserve order. It was just when Wilkerson had seen his chance for a grand coup that the troopers arrived.

Ruth, with some of the women, had taken refuge in John's house on the hill, with old Tom Kane as their body-

guard. Wilkerson knew that if he could capture Ruth he could make his own terms. He directed several of his men to make a detour around the hill and effect this. Meanwhile he set fire to a cabin below in order to distract the attention of Dorr and his men.

The ruse had nearly succeeded but for Kane's quickness. Though he had not used his gun for many years, he had lost none of his old time skill, and when the marauders made their final dash on the porch of the house the cook, with a single glance over his shoulder, shot from the hip. His man tumbled dead at Ruth's feet, and his companions sneaked back.

At that instant the cavalry rushed in, and before five minutes were passed their commander had separated the combatants and proceeded to disarm them.

He then called Dorr and Wilkerson to him and curtly stated that his orders were to see that there was no trouble. "What your quarrel is I don't know," he said.

Wilkerson tried to argue, but neither the officer nor the sheriff, who now arrived, would listen to him. They also turned a deaf ear to John Dorr's statement of Wilkerson's crimes, including the kidnapping of Ruth in San Francisco.

"If you have anything against Wilkerson," the sheriff asserted, "swear out a warrant for him. I'll serve it quick enough."

With this John must perforce be satisfied, but after a conference with Kane it was agreed that the latter should go to the county seat and make formal complaint and procure a warrant for Wilkerson's arrest on the ground of forgery.

"You and I know those deeds he flourishes aren't genuine," John said earnestly. "Let's make it an issue and try it in court. At any rate, we'll be rid of him for awhile."

"I know you're right," the old cook assented heartily. "I'll be off today. With these troopers around the greasers won't dare do anything openly. But keep your eyes open, John! They will sneak something across if they can."

"Trust me for that," was the reassuring response.

But when Kane had gone Dorr realized that he was in a nasty predicament. Wilkerson was desperately play-



The Cook Shot From the Hip.

ing so bold a game that it would take every resource at his disposal to meet him successfully. Ruth must be protected in her rights. The "Master Key" mine must remain in her possession undisturbed. That would be impossible until Wilkerson was eliminated. And that man was after great stakes; otherwise he would never have ventured so far.

As he debated this inwardly John went over in memory all the events of the brief period since old Thomas Gal-

## "TIZ" FOR ACHING, SORE, TIRED FEET

Good-bye sore feet, burning feet, swollen feet, sweaty feet, smelling feet, tired feet.

Good-bye corns, calluses, bunions and raw spots. No more shoe tightness, no more limping with pain or drawing up your face in agony.

"TIZ" is magical, acts right off. "TIZ" draws out all the poisonous exudations which puff up the feet.

Use "TIZ" and forget your foot misery. Ah! how comfortable your feet feel. Get a 25 cent box of "TIZ" now at any drugist or department store. Don't suffer. Have good feet, glad feet, feet that never swell, never hurt, never get tired. A year's foot comfort guaranteed or money refunded.



Get a 25 cent box of "TIZ" now at any drugist or department store. Don't suffer. Have good feet, glad feet, feet that never swell, never hurt, never get tired. A year's foot comfort guaranteed or money refunded.

**Cut the Cost of Living!**

A plate of hot biscuits or muffins, a fresh, home-baked cake, a loaf of brown or nut-bread, rescues any meal from the commonplace, and more expensive things are never missed.

With K C, the double acting baking powder, good results are doubly certain. There's economy too, in the cost of K C.

lon had died, leaving his daughter in his charge. Before his mind's eye ran the pictures of the last scenes and then—

Like a flash it came to him! What was in that letter the old man had so carefully cherished and handed him at the last? Had Gallon foreseen something like this and prepared for it? In his last days had his failing powers concentrated on his single aim and evolved a final safeguard for the "Master Key"?

With the sealed letter in his hand John Dorr stared at the superscription: Not to be opened until my daughter's eighteenth birthday or before then if her welfare is threatened.

Quickly he tore the envelope open. The inclosure fell out in two portions. He put them together, with a muttered ejaculation at his own carelessness and read the crabbid script:

Silent Valley, Cal., June 21.  
Little Girl—Read carefully what I write. On this depends your future welfare.

The "Master Key" mine discovered by me five years ago contained a mother lode of inestimable worth. The exact location of the lode is written on a slip of paper, which I placed in the head of an Indian idol in an old sea chest, which went down with the ship on which I was wrecked.

On the master key, the key to that chest, and which you wear on your neck, is carved the location where the vessel went down. Find that slip of paper and the wealth is yours. Your devoted father, THOMAS GALLON.

(To be Continued Tomorrow.)

### Notice of Final Settlement.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned Administratrix of the estate of John M. Chapman, deceased, has filed with the County Clerk of Union County, Oregon, her final account as such Administratrix, and the Court has set Tuesday, March 9, 1915, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, at the County Court room, in La Grande, Oregon, as the time and place for hearing any objections that may be made to said final account, and for the final settlement of said estate.

ANNIE CHAPMAN,  
Administratrix.  
d 28 15 22-3 18.

G. W. Gess traveling salesman and demonstrator for the Pacific Coast Sales Co., of Portland is in town and will make demonstrations at your

homes of a new line of Sanitary household goods such as the dustless dusters the Dunsen Cedar Polish Mop also, the three in one take-down sweeper rack that we guarantee to be the best or the market. We sell the best electric Cleaners. Parties out of town may see Mrs. Gess at 1904 Third St. —Adv. 2 28 6tp.



### Why Take Chances on Having Your Watches Destroyed?

by placing them in the hands of incompetent workmen this is sure to happen. We can refer you to watches we have kept in repair for over twenty years and they are as good today as when they left the factory. We do nothing but first class watch, clock and jewelry repairing and guarantee every piece of work done. Do not take any unnecessary chances. We will lend you a good time keeper whilst we repair your own. La Grande's leading Opticians and Jewelers

J. H. Peare & Son

## Retail Department—Phone Main 8

For Lumber, Lath Shingles, Sash and Doors Ruberoid Roofing

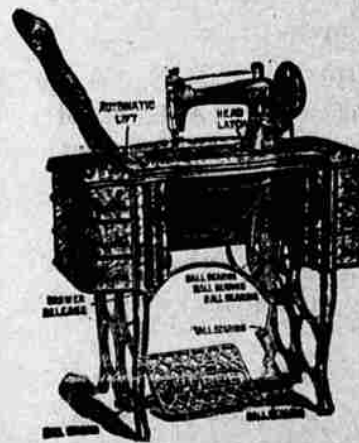
GEORGE PALMER LUMBER CO

## D. R. FONG MEDICINE CO. CHINESE ROOT AND HERB REMEDIES

Cure Bodily Diseases With Root and Herb Treatment Phone 762 Free Consultation La Grande Ore. 141 1/2 Adams Ave.

## THE FREE SEWING MACHINE

IS GUARANTEED FOR LIFE



and with every machine we give you a paid up FIRE INSURANCE policy..... [for..... FIVE YEARS, this insures you against less in case of fire. I have replaced 2 machines here. Sold on very easy payments. \$1.00 down and \$1.00 per week.

Old sewing machines for sale and rent, all in good condition.

F. D. HAISTEN Furniture on Easy Payments