

The INDIAN DRUM

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Illustrations by
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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Wealthy and highly placed in the Chicago business world, Benjamin Corvet is something of a recluse and a mystery to his associates. After a stormy interview with his partner, Henry Spearman, Corvet seeks Constance Sherrill, daughter of his other business partner, Lawrence Sherrill, and leaves from her in promise not to marry. He then disappears. Sherrill learns Corvet has written to a certain Alan Conrad, who appears to think him and exhibited strange agitation over the matter.

CHAPTER II.—Corvet's letter summons Constance, a youth of unknown parentage, to Chicago.

CHAPTER III.—From a statement of Sherrill it seems probable Constance is Corvet's illegitimate son. Corvet has deserted his home and his contents to Alan.

CHAPTER IV.—Alan takes possession of his new home.

CHAPTER V.—That night Alan discovers a man ransacking the desks and bureau drawers in Corvet's apartments. The appearance of Alan tremendously agitates the intruder, who appears to think him a ghost and raves of "the Miwaks." After a struggle the man escapes.

CHAPTER VI.—Next day Alan learns from Sherrill that Corvet has deserted his property and introduced to Henry Spearman. Alan is astonished at the discovery that he is the man whom he had thought to be the ghost before.

CHAPTER VII.—Alan tells no one of his strange encounter, but in a private interview tells Spearman with the fact. Spearman laughs and defies him.

CHAPTER VIII.—Corvet's Indian servant, Waasquan, tells Alan he believes the employer is dead. He also tells him the legend of the Indian Drum, which according to old superstitions beats once for every life lost on the Great Lakes. Twenty years before, the great freighter, *Miwaka*, had gone down with twenty-five on board, but the drum had sounded only twenty-four, leaving the inference that one person had been saved, since it was general belief that the drum never errs. Pursuing a stranger who had disturbed him at his house, Alan is slugged and rendered unconscious.

CHAPTER IX.—Conrad recovers, and the affair remains a mystery.

CHAPTER X.—Alan learns from Waasquan that the sum of \$100 in the house, apparently to meet the demands of a certain "Luka," who appears periodically in the absence of Waasquan. "Luka" comes to the house demanding to see Corvet. He is evidently in a dying condition. Alan to alcohol and exposure. Conrad tries without avail to get him to explain his connection with Corvet. The man dies. Waasquan gives Conrad a paper on which is a list of names.

CHAPTER XI.—From the document Alan thinks he may have a clue to the mystery surrounding Corvet's life and disappearance. He leaves Chicago to visit the Lake Michigan and spends the night in persons whose names were on the list.

CHAPTER XII.—Constance receives a package wrapped in a muffler which she recognizes Corvet was wearing on the day he went away. It contains a few dollars, a watch, and woman's wedding ring. She believes them to have been the property of Corvet, and sends them as a proof of his death. Spearman urges Constance to marry him. She consents, but refuses his demand for an immediate ceremony.

CHAPTER XIII.—Inquiries show that the watch in the package had been the property of a Captain Stafford, commander of the *Miwaka*, who had gone down with his ship.

(Continued from last week.)

Alan had been three then. This was wild, crazy speculation. The ship was lost with all hands; only the Drum, believed in by the superstitious and the most ignorant, denied that. The Drum said that one soul had been saved. How could a child of three have been saved when strong men, to the last one, had perished? And, if he had been saved, he was Stafford's son. Why should Uncle Benny have sent him away and cared for him and then sent for him and, himself disappearing, leave all he had to—Stafford's son?

Or was he Stafford's son? Her thought went back to the things which had been sent—the things from a man's pockets with a wedding ring among them. She had believed that the ring cleared the mother's name; might it in reality only more involve it? Why had it come back like this to the man by whom, perhaps, it had been given? Henry's words came again and again to Constance: "It's a queer concern you've got for Ben. Leave it alone, I tell you!" He knew then something about Uncle Benny which might have brought on some terrible thing which Henry did not know but might guess? Constance went weak within. Uncle Benny's wife had left him, she remembered. Was it better, after all, to "leave it alone?"

A telegraph envelope addressed to her father was on the table in the hall. A servant told her the message had come an hour before, and that he had telephoned to Mr. Sherrill's office, but Mr. Sherrill was not in. There was no reason for her thinking that the message might be from Alan except his presence in her thoughts, but she went at once to the telephone and called her father. He was in now, and he directed her to open the message and read it to him.

"Have some one," she read aloud; she choked in her excitement at what came next—"Have some one who knew Mr. Corvet well enough to recognize him, even if greatly changed, meet Car ferry Number 25 Manitowoc Wednesday this week. Alan Conrad."

Her heart was beating fast. "Are you there?" she said into the phone.

"Yes."

"Whom shall you send?"

There was an instant's silence. "I shall go myself," her father said.

She hung up the receiver. Had Alan found Uncle Benny? He had found, apparently, some one whose resemblance to the picture she had showed him was marked enough to make him believe that person might be Benjamin Corvet; or he had heard of some one who, from the account he had received, he thought might be. She read again the words of the telegram. . . . "even if greatly changed!" and she felt stirring and terrifying warning in that phrase.

CHAPTER XIV

Old Burr of the Ferry.

It was in late November and while the coal carrier Pontiac, on which he was serving as lookout, was in Lake Superior that Alan first heard of Jim Burr. The name spoken among some other names in casual conversation by a member of the crew, stirred and excited him; the name James Burr, occurring on Benjamin Corvet's list, had borne opposite it the legend "All disappeared; no trace," and Alan, whose investigations had accounted for all others whom the list contained, had been able regarding Burr only to verify the fact that at the address given no one of this name was to be found.

He questioned the older who had mentioned Burr. The man had met Burr one night in Manitowoc with other men, and something about the old man had impressed both his name and image on him; he knew no more than that. At Manitowoc—the place from which Captain Stafford's watch had been sent to Constance Sherrill and where Alan had sought for, but had failed to find, the sender! Had Alan stumbled by chance upon the one whom Benjamin Corvet had been unable to trace?

Alan could not leave the Pontiac and go at once to Manitowoc to seek Burr; for he was needed where he was. It was fully a week later and after the Pontiac had been laden again and had repassed the length of Lake Superior that Alan left the vessel at Sault Ste. Marie and took the train for Manitowoc.

The little lake port of Manitowoc, which he reached in the late afternoon, was turbulent with the lake season's approaching close. Alan inquired for the seamen's drinking place, where his informant had met Jim Burr; following the directions he received he made his way along the river bank until he found it.

The proprietor knew old Jim Burr—yes. Burr was a wheelman on Car ferry Number 25. He was a lakeman, experienced and capable; that fact, some months before, had served as introduction for him to the frequenters of this place. When the ferry was in harbor and his duties left him idle, Burr came up and waited there, occupying always the same chair. He never drank; he never spoke to others unless they spoke first to him, but then he talked freely about old days on the lakes, about ships which had been lost and about men long dead.

Alan decided that there could be no better place to interview old Burr than here; he waited therefore, and in the early evening the old man came in. He was a slender but muscular built man seeming about sixty-five, but he might be considerably younger or older than that. His hair was completely white; his nose was thin and sensitive; his face was smoothly placid, emotionless, contented; his eyes were queerly clouded, deepset and intent.

Those whose names Alan had found on Corvet's list had been of all ages, young and old; but Burr might well have been a contemporary of Corvet

took a seat beside the old man.

"You're from Number 25?" he asked, to draw him into conversation.

"Yes."

"I've been working on the carrier Pontiac as lookout. She's on her way to tie up at Cleveland, so I left her and came on here. You don't know whether there's a chance for me to get a place through the winter on Number 25?"

Old Burr reflected. "One of our boys has been talking of leaving. I don't know when he expects to go. You might ask."

"Thank you; I will. My name's Conrad—Alan Conrad."

He saw no recognition of the name in Burr's reception of it; but he had not expected that. None of those on Benjamin Corvet's list had had any knowledge of Alan Conrad or had heard the name before.

Alan was silent, watching the old man; Burr, silent too, seemed listening to the conversation which came to them from the tables near by, where men were talking of cargoes, and of ships and of men who worked and sailed upon them.

"How long have you been on the lakes?" Alan inquired.

"All my life."

"Do you remember the *Miwaka*?"

Old Burr turned abruptly and studied Alan with a slow scrutiny which seemed to look him through and through; yet while his eyes remained fixed on Alan suddenly they grew blank. He was not thinking now of Alan, but had turned his thoughts within himself.

"I remember her—yes. She was lost in '95," he said. "In '95," he repeated.

"Did you know Benjamin Corvet?" Alan asked.

Old Burr stared at him uncertainly.

"I know who he is, of course."

"You never met him?"

"No."

"Did you receive a communication from him some time this year—a request to send some things to Miss Constance Sherrill at Harbor Point?"

"I never heard of Miss Constance Sherrill. To send what things?"

"Several things—among them a watch which had belonged to Captain Stafford of the *Miwaka*."

Old Burr got up suddenly and stood gazing down at Alan. "A watch of Captain Stafford's?—no," he said agitatedly. "No!"

He moved away and left the place; and Alan sprang up and followed him.

He was not, it seemed probable to Alan now, the James Burr of Corvet's list; at least Alan could not see how he could be that one. Among the names of the crew of the *Miwaka* Alan had found that of a Frank Burr, and his inquiries had informed him that this man was a nephew of the James Burr who had lived near Port Corbay and had "disappeared" with all his family. Old Burr had not lived at Port Corbay—at least, he claimed not to have lived there; he gave another address and assigned to himself quite different connections. For every member of the crew of the *Miwaka* there had been a corresponding, but different name upon Corvet's list—the name of a close relative. If old Burr was not related to the Burr on Corvet's list, what connection could he have with the *Miwaka*, and why should Alan's questions have agitated him so? Alan would not lose sight of old Burr until he had learned the reason for that.

He followed, as the old man crossed the bridge and turned to his left among the buildings on the river front. Burr's figure, vague in the dusk, crossed the railroad yards and made its way to where a huge black bulk, which Alan recognized as the ferry, loomed at the waterside. He disappeared about it, Alan, following him, gazed about.

A long, broad, black boat the ferry was, almost four hundred feet to the tall, bluff bow.

Alan thrilled a little at his inspection of the vessel. He had not seen close at hand before one of these great craft which, throughout the winter, brave ice and storm after all—or nearly all—other lake boats are tied up. He had not meant to apply there when he questioned old Burr about a berth on the ferry; he had used that merely as a means of getting into conversation with the old man. But now he meant to apply; for it would enable him to find out more about old Burr.

No berth on the ferry was vacant yet but one soon would be, and Alan was accepted in lieu of the man who was about to leave; his wages would not begin until the other man left, but in the meantime he could remain aboard.

All that was known definitely about old Burr on the ferry, it appeared, was that he had joined the vessel in the early spring. Before that—they did not know; he might be an old lakeman who, after spending years ashore, had returned to the lakes for a livelihood.

The next morning, Alan approached old Burr in the crew's quarters and tried to draw him into conversation again about himself; but Burr only stared at him with his intent and oddly introspective eyes and would not talk upon this subject. A week passed; Alan, established as a lookout now on Number 25 and carrying on his duties, saw Burr daily and almost every hour; his watch coincided with Burr's watch at the wheel—they went on duty and were relieved together. Yet better acquaintance did not make the old man more communicative; a score of times Alan attempted to get him to tell more about himself, but he evaded Alan's questions and, if Alan persisted, he avoided him.

On deck, one night, listening while old Burr talked, excitement suddenly seized Alan. Burr claimed to be an Englishman born in Liverpool. He had been, he said, a seaman in the British navy; he had been present at the shelling of Alexandria; later, because of some difficulty, which he glossed over, he had deserted and had come to "the States"; he had been first a deck-

hand, then the mate of a tramp schooner on the lakes. Alan, gazing at the old man, felt excitement leaping and throbbing within him. This life which old Burr was rehearsing to him as his own, was the actual life of Munro Burkhalter, one of the men on Corvet's list regarding whom Alan had been able to obtain full information!

Alan sped below, when he was relieved from watch, and got out the clippings left by Corvet and the notes of what he himself had learned in his visits to the homes of these people. His excitement grew greater as he pored over them; he found that he could account, with their aid, for all that old Burr had told him. Old Burr's stories were not, of course, true; yet neither were they fictitious. They—their incidents, at least—were actualities. They were woven from the lives of those upon Corvet's list! Alan felt his skin prickling and the blood beating fast in his temples. How could Burr have known these incidents? Who could he be to know them all? To what man, but one, could all of them be known? Was old Burr . . . Benjamin Corvet?

Alan telegraphed that day to Sherrill; but when the message had gone doubt seized him. Benjamin Corvet, when he went away, had tried to leave his place and power among lakemen to Alan; Alan, refusing to accept what Corvet had left until Corvet's reason should be known, had felt obliged also to refuse friendship with the Sherrills. When revelation came, would it make possible Alan's acceptance of the place Corvet had prepared for him, or would it leave him where he was? Would it bring him nearer to Constance Sherrill, or would it set him forever away from her?

CHAPTER XV

A Ghost Ship.

Officially, and to chief extent in actuality, navigation now had "closed" for the winter. Further up the harbor, beyond Number 25, glowed the white lanterns marking two vessels moored and "laid up" till spring; another was still in the active process of "laying up." Marine insurance, as regards all ordinary craft, had ceased; and the government at sunrise, five days before, had taken the warning lights from the Straits of Mackinac, from Ile-aux-Galets, from north Manitowoc, and the Fox islands; and the light at Beaver Island had but five nights more to burn.

Having no particular duty when the boat was in dock, old Burr had gone toward the steamer "laying up," and now was standing watching with absorption the work going on. There was a tug a little farther along, with steam up and black smoke pouring from its short funnel. Old Burr observed this boat too and moved up a little nearer. Alan, following the wheelman, came opposite the stern of the freighter.

"They're crossing," the wheelman said aloud, but more to himself than to Alan. "They're laying her up here," he jerked his head toward the Stoughton. "Then they're crossing to Manitowoc on the tug."

"What's the matter with that?" Alan cried.

Burr drew up his shoulders and ducked his head down as a gust blew. It was cold, very cold indeed in that wind, but the old man had on a mackinaw and, out on the lake, Alan had seen him on deck coatless in weather almost as cold as this.

"It's a winter storm," Alan cried.

"It's like it that way; but today's the 15th, not the 5th of December!"

"That's right," Burr argued. "That's right."

The reply was absent, as though Alan had stumbled upon what he was thinking and Burr had no thought yet to wonder at it.

"And it's the Stoughton they're laying up, not the—" he stopped and stared at Burr to let him supply the word and, when the old man did not, he repeated again—"not the—"

"No," Burr agreed again, as though the name had been given. "No."

"It was the Martha Corvet you laid up, wasn't it?" Alan cried quickly. "Tell me—that time on the 5th—it was the Martha Corvet?"

Burr jerked away; Alan caught him again and, with physical strength, de-



"Answer Me; It Was the Martha Corvet!"

tained him. "Wasn't it that?" he demanded. "Answer me; it was the Martha Corvet?"

The wheelman struggled; he seemed suddenly terrified with the terror which, instead of weakening, supplied infuriated strength. He threw Alan off for an instant and started to flee back toward the ferry; and Alan let him go,

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only following a few steps to make sure that the wheelsman returned to Number 25.

Because of the severe cold, the watches on the ferry had been shortened. Alan would be relieved from time to time to warm himself, and then he would return to duty again. Old Burr at the wheel would be relieved and would go on duty at the same hours as Alan himself. Benjamin Corvet! The fancy reiterated itself to him. Could he be mistaken? Was that man, whose eyes turned alternately from the compass to the bow of the ferry as it shifted and rose and fell the same who had sat in that lonely chair turned toward the fireplace in the house on Astor street? Were those hands, which held the steamer to her course, the hands which had written to Alan in secret from the little room off his bedroom and which pasted so carefully the newspaper clippings concealed in the library?

(Continued Next Week.)

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