



The DOOM TRAIL

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WNU SERVICE

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CHAPTER VI—Continued

"Above everything else, I must know what is happening at Jagara," he said. "The Doom Trail may wait. The news which Ta-wan-ne-ars brought of the intent of the French to replace Juncalre's trading post with a stone fort is the most menacing tidings we have had since the peace was signed. It makes manifest what I have always contended: that there can be no real peace whilst we and the French sit cheek by jowl, each striving for more power than the other."

"Peace on paper there may be; but the French will be breaking it, as they have done in the case of Juncalre's post and as they now plan to do by building a fort upon English territory. I must know what they do there. Master Ormerod, I must know beyond a doubt, I must have a man I can trust who will see for himself on the spot."

"Surely, Corlaer—" "Corlaer cannot speak French. Moreover, if he could, his face is known along the whole frontier. He and Juncalre are old opponents. 'Tis you who must go. Masquerade as a Frenchman. There are plenty of lads who go out every year to Canada to have a try at the fur trade. You should be able to pass for one of them. At any rate 'tis worth the attempt."

"'Tis well worth trying," I agreed. "Also, 'tis possible I may pick up some news of the Trail from Juncalre."

"Possible," he assented; "but keep the Trail in the back of your mind. 'Tis this fort which concerns me now. For look you, Master Ormerod, if I secure proof the French meditate in earnest to grave a breach of the treaty 'twill strengthen by so much my case against Murray. Then might I dare indeed to stir the Iroquois to hostilities against him, as Peter suggested. 'I will do what I may,' I promised."

"'Tis well. And be not reluctant to accept advice from Corlaer and the Indians. They are schooled in the forest's craft. Good by, sir, and be vigilant."

He gave me a hearty clasp of the hand and bowed me out. In the street Corlaer awaited me.

"Der tide is flooding," he said, and without another word set off at a good round pace.

We came presently to a wharf at the foot of Deve street, where lay the sloop Betsy, her sails unstopped, hand-lines slack. She cast off as we stepped aboard, and presently I was looking back over her stern at the dwindling skyline of the quaint little city.

On the fourth day the river bore us through a country of low, rolling hills and plains that lifted to mountainous heights in the distance. There were farms by the water's edge, and sometimes the imposing mansion of a patron with its attendant groups of buildings occupied by servants, slaves and tenants.

On the fifth day we sighted in the distance the stockades of Fort Orange, which the English were beginning to call Albany, nestling close to the river bank under the shelter of a steep hillock. We made the tottery pier, and hastened up into the town, delegating to the master of the sloop and his boy the task of conveying our baggage to the tavern. We learned that Murray had spent but twenty-four hours in the town and was gone two days since.

We spent the forenoon in purchasing for me the regular trappings of the frontiersman—moccasins of antelope hide and leather leggings and shirt, all Indian manufacture. The weapons Juggins had supplied me were warmly praised by my comrades.

For the rest there were slim stores of salt, sugar, powder, flints and ball to be packed upon our backs. My garments of civilization I made into a package which I consigned to the innkeeper's care.

We took the road to Schenectady. It was the last white man's road I was to see, and I long remembered its broad surface and the sunlight coming down between the trees on either hand and the farms with their log houses and stockades.

But I knew I was on the frontier at last, for the stockades were over high for mere herding of cattle and the house walls were loop-holed. In several of the villages there were square, log-built forts, two stories tall, with the top story projecting out beyond the lower, so that the garrison could fire down along the line of the walls.

"Twas sixteen miles to Schenectady, and night had fallen when we halted the gate for admission.

We were afoot again early the next morning. Beyond Schenectady a few farms rimmed the road, but presently we came to a clearing, and on the west side a green barrier stretched across our way. From end to end of the clearing it reached, and as far on either hand as I could see, a high, tangled, apparently impervious green wall of vegetation.

"The road stops here," I said to Ta-wan-ne-ars. "How shall we go on?" "The road of the white man stops—yes," he answered. "But the road of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee begins."

"What is that?" He made no answer, but kept on his way until we were under the bole of the first of the forest trees.

There at my feet was a deep, narrow slot in the earth, a groove some eighteen inches wide and perhaps twelve inches deep, that disappeared into the gloom which reigned under the interlacing boughs overhead. It did not go straight, but crookedly like a snake, curving and twisting as it chanced to meet a mossy boulder or a tree too big to be readily felled or uprooted. As I stooped over it I saw that its bottom and steeply sloping sides were hard-packed, beaten down by continual pressure, the relentless pressure of countless human feet for generations and centuries.

Ta-wan-ne-ars instantly led the way into the groove of the trail, and as if instinctively swung into an easy loping trot. I followed him and the Dutchman brought up the rear.

It was cool under the trees, for the sun seldom penetrated the foliage, dense already although it was only the fug-end of spring. And it was very silent—terribly, oppressively silent.



The crack of a stick underfoot was like a gunshot. The padding of our feet on the resilient leaf-mold was like the low rolling of muffled drums. The timorous twittering of birds seemed to set the echoes flying.

Yet I was amazed when Ta-wan-ne-ars halted abruptly in mid-afternoon, and inclined his ear toward the trail behind us.

"What is it?" I asked, and so completely had the spirit of the forest taken possession of me that I whispered the words.

"Something is following us," he answered.

Corlaer put his ear to the bottom of the trail, and a curious expression crossed his face.

"Ya," was all he said.

CHAPTER VII

Along the Great Trail

"Shall we return and face them?" I asked eagerly.

Ta-wan-ne-ars permitted himself a smile of friendly sarcasm.

"If we can hear them, surely they can hear us," he said. "No, we will keep on. There is a place farther along the trail from which we can look back upon them. Come, Ormerod, you and I will run ahead. Peter will follow us."

Ta-wan-ne-ars shifted his musket to his shoulders, and broke into a long, loping stride. I followed him.

Half a mile up the trail he stopped. "Walk in my tracks, brother," he

said. "And be certain that you do no bruise a twig."

With the utmost caution he parted the screen of underbrush on our right hand, and revealed a tunnel through the greenery into which he led the way, hesitating at each step until he had gently thrust aside the intervening foliage. Once in the tunnel, however, his care was abandoned, and he ran quickly to the trunk of a huge pine which soared upward like a monumental column, high above the surrounding trees. He leaned his musket against the pithy bole.

"The symbol of the Long House," he said tapping the swelling girth of it. "Strength and symmetry and grandeur. We will climb, brother."

He swung himself up into the branches, which formed a perfect ladder, firm under foot, behind the screen of the pine needles. When the other treetops were beneath us, he straddled a bough and cleared a loophole from which we might look out over the forest we had traversed.

We looked for so long, without anything happening that my eyeballs ached. But at last there was a movement like the miniature upheaval which is caused by an ant in breaking ground. Boughs quivered, and a figure appeared in the open. 'Twas Corlaer. He glanced around him and strode on. In a moment he had passed the clearing and disappeared in the forest.

Ta-wan-ne-ars hitched forward and peered through the loophole with tense muscles. And again there was a wait which seemed endless. My eyelids blinked from the strain of watching.

The desolation and loneliness of the wilderness were so complete that it seemed inconceivable another human being could be within view. And whilst this thought occupied my mind a dark figure crawled on hands and knees from the mouth of the trail. At that distance all we could see of his costume was the clump of feathers that bristled from his scalplock.

He followed Peter into the trail on our side of the clearing, and there was a second and briefer pause. Then as silently as ghosts a string of figures flitted into the clearing. There were six of them, each with musket in the hollow of his arm, each with bristling feather headress.

Ta-wan-ne-ars emitted a guttural grunt, quite unlike his usual rather musical utterances.

"Down!" he rasped. "Down! The time is scant!"

At the foot of the pine he snatched up his musket without a word, and turned into the green tunnel that debouched upon the screen of the trail.

As we stepped into the worn slot Peter came into view.

"Well?" he said phlegmatically.

"Cahnaga dogs! They dare to invade territory of the Long House!"

"We can cross der Mohawk to der south branch of der trail," proposed Corlaer. "They would not dare to follow us there."

"No," snarled Ta-wan-ne-ars; "we shall not step aside for them. We will attend to them ourselves. They will not attack unless they have to for we are still near the Mohawk castle, although 'tis upon the opposite bank of the river. They will leave us alone until night."

"But why cannot we attack them?" A look of ferocity which was almost demonic changed his usually pleasant features into an awful mask.

"In an ambushade one might escape. No, my brother Ormerod, we will wait until they attack us. Then—"

He paused significantly.

"Not one of the Keepers shall return to tell Murray how his brothers died."

We took up the march. 'Twas already mid-afternoon, and shortly the dimness of twilight descended upon the trail, as the level rays of the setting sun were turned aside by the interlacing masses of vegetation.

Twilight faded into dusk and still we kept on. Ta-wan-ne-ars had eyes like a cat's, and I, too, accustomed myself to perception of hanging branches and the unexpected turns and twists in the groove of the path. The stars were out in the sky overhead when we stepped from the shelter of the forest into a rocky dell divided by a tiny brook.

"We will camp here," said Ta-wan-ne-ars.

He rested his musket on a boulder and began to collect firewood.

"Why a fire?" I asked.

"The trailers must not think we suspect them," he replied curtly. "If we lit no fire they would know for certain that we were suspicious."

I helped him, whilst Corlaer crouched by the opening of the trail on watch. We soon had a respectable pile of wood, but before kindling it the Seneca bade us strip off our leathern shirts and stuffed them with underbrush into a semblance of human shapes. A third figure to represent himself he contrived out of the packs and several branches.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Message Sticks" Open Books to Aborigines

One of the mysteries of the aboriginal of Australia is the ease with which he reads "message-sticks" regardless of whether they have been written by one of his own tribesmen or a member of a distant tribe with which he has never come into contact.

The signs and symbols apparently are the same among the aboriginal tribes, according to a writer in the Sydney Bulletin, who asserts that he has "seen an old aboriginal, to whom a stick from another tribe many miles distant had been shown, translate the strange markings with fluency, and when some time afterward the same stick was shown again to another na-

tive, the second one's translation agreed with that of the first."

A few white men have learned to decipher the conventional markings and symbols on the "message-sticks."

Eat Lots of Apples

The American people lead the world as apple eaters. Although we fall considerably short of the proverbial "apple a day," we average about three apples a week per capita. The British consume an average of two apples a week per capita. The consumption of this fruit is comparatively light in Europe.

The Dean and Molly Anne

By JANE OSBORN

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"I WONDER why Dean Dudley never married."

Molly Anne, who had come to Handon to take charge of a book, candy and gift shop just off the campus, asked this question one day as she tied a packet of books and candy for one of the professors' wives. Dean Dudley had just come in to ask for a new book on psychology which Molly did not have on hand. She had promised to order it. Both she and her customer looked with considerable admiration after his tall, erect, well-dressed figure.

"Too many women want to marry him, I suppose," sighed the professor's wife, who gossip said had finally consented to marry her own near-sighted, stoop-shouldered husband when all efforts to catch the dean had failed. "It's a monstrous shame the way the women make a set for him. They've made him woman-shy."

"Pshaw," said Molly. "I'm not so sure I like him after all. Conceited men are always tiresome."

Several times within the next week the dean dropped into Molly's shop, and every time Molly greeted him with a rather aloof tilt to her pretty head and told him that the book had not come.

"He's not so woman-shy as they say," Molly told herself. The dean, she concluded, was a first-rate philosopher. Doubtless he had encouraged all these women who had subsequently set their caps for him. He had buzzed around them for a time just as he was now buzzing around her.

Finally the book came, and because the dean had asked her to do so, she telephoned to his office and left word. Fifteen minutes later the good-looking dean appeared in her store. Molly held her head even more saucily aloof than ever.

Looking embarrassed, almost hurt, the dean started away, and then turned back.

"By the way," he said, "I am going out of town over the week-end—have to take a day's trip by rail—make a speech in Pittsburgh and then come back again. I want some books to read. Now suppose you make up a packet of, say, six books. You just pick them out—something you think I'd like. Books I ought to have read—something highbrow, I suppose—may give me a cue for my speech."

"Very well," said Molly very formally. "I'll send them around."

"Don't bother," insisted Dean Dudley. "I'll just stop and get them. I might forget to take them if you sent them."

"You might forget to stop for them," said Molly.

"No chance of that," said the dean with boyish eagerness, and in spite of herself Molly blushed.

Molly plotted her revenge. Dean Dudley had made her blush and she would punish him for it. She'd make up a packet of books that would show her complete indifference to him. The packet as it was finally decided upon contained "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," a new book on practical vegetable gardening, a volume of bedtime stories, a life of the saints translated from the work of an Italian monk, a "Poker Player's Manual," and a little volume containing the world's most famous love poems.

That will finish him, thought Molly, and after he had called for the books she began to regret just a little her rash selection.

The next Monday she was strongly tempted to hide in the back of her shop when she saw him entering.

To her surprise he held out his hand—a hand of unusual magnetism.

"You are a rare mind-reader," he told her. "Every one of those books was just what I wanted. That book about the blonde I read first on my way out. It's ripping—made me forget my worries. Then I waded through the vegetable book—and as I was making a speech before an agricultural college it gave me just the information I needed. There were two or three little anecdotes in the 'Lives of the Saints' that surprised every one—and made the hit of the evening. I stayed for the night with the president of the college. He has two lovely kids and I didn't have anything for them—till it occurred to me the bedtime stories would be just the thing. That night I couldn't sleep so I read the poker book—and the next day coming home I fell in with a couple of millionaires in the smoking car. I'd never held a poker hand before in my life, but I had become an expert overnight—and playing with them I got well acquainted—had a chance to talk Handon college to them, and before I left they had agreed between them to give enough to pay for a new science building. So you see how wise you were in choosing just the books you did."

"You haven't told me what you did with the sixth book," archly observed Molly Anne.

"Usually love poems would have seemed out of my line—but the truth is, Miss Molly Anne, that I can somehow sympathize with the poor fellows that wrote them. You see I'm very much in love with you, Molly Anne."

"I knew from the first," said the professor's wife, "that she was setting her cap for him. Why, she told me herself she thought it was funny he'd never married. Oh, well, she's ordinary, but at least she's good-natured."

Current Wit and Humor



TOUGH JOB

"Ah got a notion to quit mah job," announced a gentleman of color in an aggrieved voice. "Mah boss won't lemme have a day off."

"Dat's tough," commented his sympathetic friend. "Whah's yo' wukkin'?" "Ah sweeps out de 'leckshun boots' after de Presidential 'leckshun.'—American Legion Weekly.

UNINVITED



He—I was brought up in the country. She—Not by me. I never asked you to come here.

Easier Work

Unto the distant stars we turn With calculation breezy; These earthly tasks are hard to learn. Astronomy seems easy.

Dear Hunting

McJigger—They say it costs \$2,000 a shot to fire one of those big guns in the navy.

Thinbug—Yes, I gave up deer hunting on account of the cost. The idea of paying \$30 a shot.

"Nonsense!"

"Not at all. That's what the farmer said his cow was worth."

Stronger Attraction

Grocer (harshly)—How about that bill?

The Man—I sent my wife over with the money.

Grocer—She never came here, sir. The Man—Well, that's what you get for running a grocer's shop next to a milliner's.

Automatic

Dealer—Here's a splendid cocktail shaker, sir.

Mr. Rednasn—Don't need one. Always ride my horse around the block after I take a drink.

COULD SEE THE RUST



"That red-headed chap has a head of iron."

"I believe you—I can see the rust."

So Different

I like to have A handy cap— But do not crave A handicap.

Tactful

Miss Oldgirl (rescued from drowning)—How can I ever thank you, noble young man? Are you married?

Rescuer—No; have you a daughter?

A Tough Job

"You say you have a debt you want us to collect?" asked the head of the collecting agency for bad debts.

"Yes," said the seedy-looking individual. "I want you to try to collect the living the world owes me on a fifty-fifty basis."

Oh, Papa!

"Did father ask you any questions?"

"Just one."

"What was it?"

"How much cash I had to spare."

Something Broke Loose

"Did you tell your father over the phone that we were engaged?"

"Yes."

"What did he reply?"

"I'm not sure whether he replied or whether the line was struck by lightning."

So Do We

Brown—I like cheerful people. Why, I know a dentist who sings at his work.

Smith—I'll bet his patients don't.

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Servant Problem

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