

BLACKSHEEP!

By Meredith Nicholson

Illustrations by Henry Jay



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INTRODUCTION

Isabel Perry recommends a life of crime, adventure, romance and excitement as a cure for Archibald Bennett's nerves. Archie goes to Bailey Harbor to investigate a house for his sister—and spends the night in the empty house. He is awakened by footsteps during the night; the intruder fires at him and misses. Archie fires in return. He doesn't know whether he has killed or only wounded the man, but fearing the publicity, plans to make his escape. In his flight he meets "The Governor"—a master-mind criminal who mistakes him for a fellow criminal. Archie afraid to tell the truth, falls in with "The Governor." A series of events lead him to believe he has shot Putney Congdon—the owner of the house. They proceed to New York, where they are visited by Julia, the Governor's sister. Archie promises her he will stick with the Governor through the strange phase she claims he is passing through. While strolling in the park, Archie sees Mrs. Congdon with her two children, and is witness to the kidnapping of the little girl, Edith. He learns from the Governor that the father-in-law of Mrs. Congdon—a very wealthy man—is engaged in the circulation of counterfeit twenty-dollar gold pieces. The go to Rochester, where the Governor receives a letter from Ruth, the girl he loves, in which she tells him he may be able to serve her. At a dance at Ruth's home, Archie meets Isabel and they are reconciled. Archie and the Governor promise to find Edith Congdon and whisk her away to Isabel's camp. They secure work on Eliphalet Congdon's farm, where Edith has been taken. They learn that Putney Congdon—the man Archie shot—is also there. While Archie is teaching Edith to ride the Governor kidnaps her.

When Putney Congdon leaves the farm, Archie follows him. They become friendly and Archie agrees to go with Putney to Huddleston, where they meet the Governor. The Governor tells Archie that Carey, Isabel's cousin, has blocked the camp and they are unable to get supplies.

Isabel and Ruth attempt to run the blockade. They are run down by Carey's launch and the canoe overturns. Archie, Leary and the Governor, on the way to the camp, rescue them. The next day the Governor's tug runs through with a cargo of supplies.

"Please don't think of it!" pleaded Archie. Things are bound to come out all right.

"Yes; it will be only a little longer," muttered the Governor listlessly.

He had responded instantly to Ruth's confession of her premonition of impending evil, and Archie, troubled by his friend's change of mood, hastened to end the interview.

"We're not going to lose!" he declared. "It's when the world is brightest that the shadow of a cloud sometimes makes us fear to trust our happiness. Good-by and good luck!"

She was not reassured, however, and as she shook hands with them there were tears in her eyes.

The Governor quickly recovered his spirits and with characteristic enthusiasm began putting the new launch through its paces. When he found that Putney was skilled in the handling of such craft he cheerfully turned the launch over to him.

"You take it and run up to Calderville, where you'd better get supper. Pick up the Heart O' Dream's mail and meet us on the wharf at night fall. We've got a heavy night's work ahead of us. Archie and I are going aboard the tug to study your father's case carefully. You may rely upon us to extricate him from his embarrassments."

As they boarded the Arthur B. Grover the Governor bade Archie follow him to the bow where Eliphalet was moodily gazing into the water.

"Mr. Congdon," the Governor began, "as a mere looker-on at the passing show I'm persuaded that you're not getting much out of life."

"What I do or do not do," cried the old man, "is none of your infernal business."

"An error of considerable magnitude. I am qualified to offer you excellent advice based on exact information as to your intimate domestic affairs. You're a meddlesome person, Mr. Congdon, with a slight element of cruelty in your makeup, and morally you are skidding. As a result of your

miserly ways and your selfishness you've just about ruined your life. The penitentiary yawns for you. But in spite of your cowardly conduct I'm rather disposed to pull you out of the hole."

"I'll make you a proposition. I've heard that you make a habit of carrying your will around in that umbrella. Give me the thing!"

Eliphalet hesitated, but the Governor gently pried it from the old man's fingers. It was a heavy, bulgy, disreputable-looking umbrella with a battered curved handle. The Governor opened it, shook out a number of manila envelopes, all carefully sealed, and flung the umbrella from him. As it struck the water it spread open and the wind seized it and bore it gaily away. The Governor watched it or a moment—then began opening the envelopes and scanning the contents.

"It's evident from the dates of these wills that you've been steadily cutting down the amount of your bequest to your son," the Governor was saying.

"Watch me Archie, so you can bear witness to the destruction of these things; they're all going to feed the fishes except this earliest one, which divides the property in generous lumps between Putney Congdon and his children, with a handsome personal recognition of Mrs. Congdon. That shall be preserved."

"Now, Mr. Congdon, if you will promise me never to make another will without consulting me, but will let this one stand. And if you will agree not to interfere any further with your son's family or his wife or his children, I'll guarantee that in due season you'll leave this tug a free man."

"I promise," said the old man steadily. And his face expressed infinite relief. The pathos of the weakened little figure, now stripped of its arrogance, and the assertion of a long-latent kindness in his countenance, encouraged the hope that happier times were in store for all the Congdons.

The Governor and Archie were waiting on the Huddleston wharf when Putney and Leary returned from Calderville, bringing two sacks of Heart O' Dreams mail.

"That's fine," said the Governor. "Archie, you and Leary take the launch and carry the mail over to Heart O' Dreams. At twelve o'clock meet me about a quarter of a mile this side of Carey's barricade; Leary's got the place spotted so he can find it in the dark."

"I have a surprise for you," said Ruth, when Archie handed over the mail. "If you step to the door, bear left ten yards and stop by a bench under our tallest pine, some one you pretend to like rather particularly may appear."

"Isabel!" he exclaimed, as she came toward him out of the shadows and paused by the bench.

"I haven't yet had the opportunity to say how happy I am that you are able to be up. I'm grateful for this glimpse of you. It's always just glimpses. But those glimpses do funny things to my heart."

"That heart of yours! How did it ever manage to survive the strain and excitement of last night?"

"Oh, it functioned splendidly. But it was at work in a good cause. I love you Isabel, I love you!" he said softly.

"You must never say that to me again," she said slowly and determinedly. "After my stupid, cruel thoughtlessness you must hate me. I've had time to do a good deal of thinking, and my opinion of myself isn't very high. Out of sheer contrariness that night in Washington I teased you into doing things that led you into danger—and the danger is still about us. I'm sorry; with all my heart I'm sorry! If anything should happen to you it would be my fault—my very grievous sin! And maybe there are other men that I may have said similar things to—oh, you were not the first!" she laughed forlornly. "They, too, may have plunged into the same pit I dug for you. Oh, how foolish I've been!"

"I want you to promise," she was saying, "that you won't in any way interfere with my cousin here. I can't have you taking further risks."

"You would have us run just as the game grows interesting. Of course we're not going to quit the field and leave that fellow here to annoy you! He's a dangerous character and we're going to get rid of him."

She was depressed, much as Ruth

had been a few hours earlier, and his efforts to win her to a happier frame of mind were unavailing.

She jumped up quickly and hurried away, her head bowed. He watched her until she was swallowed up in the darkness.

Shortly before midnight Archie and Leary left the Arthur B. Grover and paddled cautiously toward the point fixed by the Governor for their rendezvous. They were fortified with a rifle, a shotgun, and several packets of rockets for signaling the tug. Leary, restless because he couldn't smoke, was silent. He managed his paddle so deftly that there was hardly a drip that could announce their proximity to any one lying in wait on the bay. Several minutes before Archie caught the listless wash of calm waters on the beach, Leary heard it and paused, peering at the opaque curtain of the woodland beyond the lighter shadow of the shore.

"We struck it right," he announced, returning from an examination of the shore markings. They carried the canoe into the wood and lay down beside it, communicating in whispers. He himself on the ground beside them.

An instant later the Governor threw himself on the ground beside them. He rested for a moment—then jumped up.

"Well, boys, everything's ready!"

One by one his little army assembled, rising from the ground like spectre. Leary was already deploying the men. The Governor laid his hand on Archie's shoulder. In the contact something passed between them, such a communication as does not often pass from the heart of one man to another.

"If it comes to the worst for me, you and Isabel will look out for Ruth. I needn't ask you that. Use the tug quickly to clear things up here; there must be nothing left to tell this tale. See old man Congdon keeps his promise. That will of his is in my blue serge coat in the closet of my room. If I die, bury me on the spot; no foolishness about that. I died to the world seven years tonight, so a second departure will call for no fowers!"

When they reached the little stream that defined the boundary of Heart O' Dreams territory the Governor, Archie and Leary got in readiness for their dash across the bridge and over the barricade. The purl of water eager for its entrance into the bay struck upon Archie's ear with a spiteful insistence. There was not a sound from the further side of the stream. They crawled across the bridge and Archie ran his hand over the frame of logs against which stones had been heaped in a rough wall, as the Governor explained to him. Archie had determined to lead the assault, but while he was seeking a footing in the crevices the Governor swung himself to the top. His foot struck a stone perched on the edge and it rolled down into camp with a great clatter.

As though it had touched a trigger a shotgun boomed upon the night, indicating that Carey had not been caught napping. Orders given in a shrill voice and answering shouts proclaimed the marshaling of his forces. Archie and Leary reached the Governor as he was crawling over the stones. Some one threw a shovelful of coals upon a heap of wood that evidently had been soaked in inflammable oil, for the flames rose with a roar.

It may have been that Carey had grown wary of murder as a means of gaining his end after the escapade of the previous night, for the first move of his men was to attempt to drive out the invaders with rifles swung as clubs. Carey screamed at them hysterically, urging them to greater efforts.

The great bonfire kept the belligerents constantly in sight of each other, sulking, dodging, engaging in individual encounters poorly calculated to bring victory to either side. One of Carey's men lay near the barricade, insensible from a crack over the head from a rifle butt. His plight was causing uneasiness among his comrades, who began drawing back toward the shadows. Carey, seeing that their pluck was ebbing, cursed them.

"We ain't gettin' anywhere!" growled Leary at the end of a third inconclusive hand-to-hand struggle with only a few battered heads as the result. "There's gold for all of you!" screamed Carey to his men, and urged them to another attack.

They advanced again, but Archie

was quick to see that they came into the light reluctantly and precipitated themselves backheartedly into the struggle. The Governor, too, was aware of their diminished spirit and got his men in line for a charge.

"We'll clean 'em up this time, boys!" he called encouragingly.

He took the lead, walking forward calmly, and in a low tone pointing out the individual that each should attack. The quiet orderliness of the movement, or perhaps it was a sense of impending defeat roused Carey to a greater fury than he had yet shown. As the invaders broke line for the assault, he leaped at the Governor and swung at him viciously with a rifle. The Governor sprang aside and the gun slipped from Carey's hand and clattered against the barricade.

Angered by his failure, and finding his men yielding, Carey abruptly changed his tactics. He ran back beyond the roaring fire and caught up another rifle. Leary began circling round the flame in the hope of grappling with him but he was too late. Without taking time for aim, Carey leveled the weapon and fired through the flames.

Archie struggled with a big woodsman, beat him down and turned as the shot rang out. The Governor was standing apart, oddly and strangely alone it seemed to Archie, and he was an sternly falling. He raised himself slightly, carrying his rifle high above his head, and his face was uplifted as though in that supreme moment he invoked the stars of dreams. Then he pitched forward and lay very still.

Carey's shot seemed to have broken the tacit truce against a resort to arms. There was a sharp fusillade, followed by a scramble as the belligerents sought cover. The men who had been left outside now leaped over the barricade. The appearance or reinforcements either frightened Carey or the success of his shot had awakened a new rage in his crazed mind, for he emptied his rifle, firing wildly as he danced with a frantic step toward the prone figure of the Governor.

Carey now seemed oblivious to everything that was happening about him as he continued his lance of triumph. In the midst of this weird performance, suddenly widening the circumference of his operations, he stumbled. As he reeled, Archie rushed in gripping his throat and falling upon him.

The breath went out of the man as he struck the ground, and Archie jumped up and left him to Congdon and Leary.

Perky was kneeling beside the Governor tearing open his shirt which was already crimson from a fast-flowing wound.

"He's hurt bad; it's the end of him!" muttered the old man helplessly.

"There's nothing to be done here," said Archie. "We must cross to Huddleston as quickly as possible."

At Carey's downfall his men fled through the woods, pursued by several of the Governor's party. Perky seized the rockets and touched one after the other to the flames of the bonfire. The answering signal rose from the bay.

"The tug's moving up," said Perky. A thousand and one things flitted through Archie's mind. The Governor had not opened his eyes; his breath came in gasps, at long painful intervals. To summon aid through the usual channels would be to invite a scrutiny of their operations that could only lead to complications with the law and a resulting publicity that was to be avoided at any hazard. It was hardly fair to call upon the young woman physician at Heart O' Dreams, and yet this was the only safe move. While Perky and Leary were fashioning a litter for the Governor, he dispatched two messengers to Heart O' Dreams, one through the woods and the other in a canoe.

They would make the crossing in Carey's launch, while the tug now showing its lights close inshore could be sent for the doctor. Two men had already started for the beach with Carey bound and gagged and he was to be kept on the tug until some way could be found of disposing of him.

"I'll stay behind; I gotta clean up here; you don't need to know nothing about it," said Leary gruffly.

One of Carey's men had been shot and instantly killed. Another still lay unconscious near the barricade from his battering on the head early in the fight. Leary grimly declared that the others would not be likely to talk of their night's adventure.

It had been a foolhardy undertaking, with potentialities and danger that added fear to the grief in Archie's heart at the Governor's fall. At best the thing was horrible, and but for the coolness with which Leary and Perky were meeting the situation Archie would have been for abandoning any attempt at secrecy.

"It was the old Governor's way o' doing it," said Leary, as though reading Archie's thoughts. "Ole Governor never made no mistakes. We ain't a goin' to make no mistake now, doin' what he tole us not to do. I'll go back and bury that poor devil and cover up the place. All you got to do is to fer-

get about it and take care of ole Governor."

Archie was very humble as he reflected that he hadn't done justice to the intelligence and charm, to say nothing of the professional skill of Dr. Katherine Reynolds in his hurried glimpse of her at Heart O' Dreams. His fears that a woman doctor, who was really only a girl of the age of Ruth and Isabel, would not be equal to the emergency were dismissed an hour after she reached Huddleston. She brought the camp nurse with her and was fortified with boxes of instruments and hospital supplies.

She went about her examination without a question; made it as though she were daily in the habit of dealing with wounded men; specifically called for boiling water, laid out sponges and bottles and oddly shaped trinkets of steel, and the Governor's room in the ramshackle hotel was quickly transformed into a surgery. Perky had gone aboard the tug, which was to remain in the bay until the outcome of the Governor's injury could be learned. Putney Congdon kept Archie company in the hall outside the sick room.

The morning was breaking when the door was opened.

"There's about one chance in a thousand," said Dr. Reynolds, looking very tired but smiling bravely; "but we've taken the chance. There are reasons, I assume, why this matter should be kept quiet, and of course you know the danger,—to you and all of us!"

"It's splendid of you to accept the responsibility; be sure I appreciate it!"

"But I have no right to take it. I've done all I know how to do, but there should be another head and a surer hand. Dr. Musgrove of Chicago has a summer home twenty miles from Heart O' Dreams. He's an old friend of my family and one of the most skillful surgeons in America. I've written him a note and I'm sure he will come instantly."

The note was sent to the tug for delivery and at eight o'clock the surgeon was at Huddleston. He went into the sick room immediately, and it was an anxious group who silently awaited his verdict.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Here From Fall Creek—Roy Brewer of Fall Creek paid Springfield a visit Tuesday.

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OBITUARY

Henry Neff, one of a family of seven children, was born near Cleveland, Ohio, June 13, 1846, passed from this life, at the family home near Marcola, Tuesday morning being 81 years, 5 months and 3 days of age.

In his boyhood the family moved to near Cocomo, Indiana, and it was there that Henry grew to manhood and met and married Sarah Kirkley of Tyner, Indiana. The new family soon settled in Tennessee near the town of Portland where they lived about 15 years, returning to Indiana for several years and in 1896 emigrated to Oregon, living here in Springfield several years. For the past twenty years the family has lived on Parson creek near Marcola. Mr. Neff's last sickness was of several months duration, though he was seriously ill only three weeks. He was always active and even during his illness it was nearly impossible to keep him from his work and home duties.

He was a kind and considerate man respected and loved by neighbors, friends and relatives. Mrs. Neff passed away November 1, 1920.

The immediate remaining relatives are: one daughter, Mrs. Mabel Ellingsen of Marcola, one step-daughter, Mrs. Nettie Fisher also of Marcola and also several other more distant relatives.

The funeral was held from the Walker chapel Thursday at 2 o'clock Rev. S. E. Childers of the Church of Christ officiating. Interment in the Laurel Hill cemetery.

Wending Man In—James Blakely of Wending was a visitor here Tuesday.

Went to Sweet Home—Charles R. Poole of the local undertaking parlors, made a business trip to Sweet Home and Lebanon early this week.

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