

# THE TIGER TRAIL

by Edison Marshall

Illustrations by PAUL FREHM



**WHAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE—**

Dr. Long, out fishing with Alexander Pierce, a detective, tells of his projected trip to Southley Downs. Pierce advises him to keep his eyes wide open while there. On the way in a train Dr. Long is attracted by a girl, who later faints. Dr. Long trots her, and looking into her bag, is astounded to find a loaded revolver. Dr. Long meets Ahmad Das, an Oriental, who conducts him to Southley Downs, where he meets Mr. Southley and his son, Ernest Southley. Mr. Hayward and his son, Vilas, and then Josephine Southley, who is the girl he had met on the train. Josephine tells him the story of Southley Downs and its ghost, which is not the ghost of a human being but of a tiger.

Dr. Long has a quarrel with Vilas Hayward over Josephine, and finds that the Haywards have a strange authority over the Southleys. He is ordered to leave Southley Downs. The rain prevents him leaving at once. Dr. Long and Ernest go out on the road in the rain looking for the tracks of a tiger that Ernest says are there. They find the tracks. Later Ernest and Dr. Long see a prowling creature in the hall at Southley Downs. This frightens the elder Hayward, who also sees it. Ernest begins to feel that Ahmad Das is perpetrating some devilry.

The elder Hayward is later found dead, his neck broken as if by a giant's blow. The coroner and police arrive in order to investigate. Because of the murder, Dr. Long must remain at Southley Downs. All the persons there are questioned by Inspector Freeman.

Freeman and I ran and cried out and hunted over the hill in vain. And after a while we met again, on the path. "If that doesn't beat the devil!" the detective groaned. He was panting and he swore softly between his gasps. "Long, there's plenty of things you about this case that I don't know."

"Do you think that was Ahmad?" "Couldn't have been. The Hindu was in the house when we left. But there isn't any doubt but that he committed the crime. I'm sure of that much, anyway. And now here's nothing to do but go down and find that stone that the colored man told us about."

We found the place where the body had been found, and struck off fifty yards directly to the left. The detective flashed his light about. He called out when he saw the stone. It was the only white rock in the vicinity, and it could not be mistaken. He knelt quickly beside it.

Then he got up with a little snort of disgust. "That colored man was crazy. Nothing here—but by the Lord!" He scarcely breathed as he rubbed his hand over the surface of the rock. He bent until his eyes were within a few inches of its rough face. "What now?" I asked.

"Somebody's beat us to it, that's all. This rock has just been washed off, with water. Either there's another amateur detective around this place—cleaned off the clots to make blood tests—or else the walls of that old house have ears!"

"What do you think?" "What is there else to think but that someone came down here and destroyed the evidence?"

Freeman made a close examination of the soil about the rock. The man who had preceded us had left one clew at least. There was a bare bit of soil just beside the stone where no grass had grown, and in it we found the clear, sharp imprint of a man's heel.

"But it might be the track of the colored man that told us about it," I suggested.

"And it might not be, too. If I don't do anything else I ought to, at least, observe whom I'm talking to and all about him. That darky was bare-foot."

"Then it's the track of the man we chased a moment ago?"

"Of course. He'd come up here, just before we did. He either collected the evidence for some amateur experiments of his own, or, what's more likely, destroyed it to protect the murderer. But there's something funny about this print." He bent over it with his light. "You see it's perfectly clear—a perfect imprint. Never saw a better. Ground happens to be particularly sticky, and there are no grass roots to interfere. Probably the water drained off the stone and softened it, in yesterday's rain. And the odd thing about it is that the heel

hasn't any nails in it." "A rubber heel, then?" "Evidently—but not the kind of rubber heel you wear. Most of them have some sort of non-skid devices. This heel is solid rubber."

He took a long-bladed hunting knife from his pocket, and with infinite care, cut the earth around the imprint, and lifted it from the ground. I thought it would crumble at first. But the soil itself had a sticky quality, and some of the grass roots around it helped to hold the little cube of earth together.

"It isn't safe to leave it here," he explained. "But I'll be lucky if I got it to the house. And this, Dr. Long, gives us something else to think about."

We thought about it as we walked back toward the house. And I thought of many things else, particularly those never-to-be-forgotten words of the elder Southley:

"My daughter is going to marry Vilas Hayward," the old man had said.

Her face had given no sign whether or not he had spoken the truth. In the seconds that followed, it might have been that she glanced at me. But she didn't hold the glance long enough for me to tell for sure. Her face as it had been was still before my eyes; soft-lined, shadow-eyed. And I was scornful at my senseless optimism that I even presumed to doubt but that her father had spoken the truth—that I was even fool enough to hope otherwise.

Of course she had loved Vilas from the first. Nothing else mattered. She was the kind of woman whose love subjugated all other things. Her kindness to me, the gentleness with which she looked and smiled might have been simply the expression of a sweet girlishness such as most men, some time in their lives, are fortunate enough to know. And again it might have been contrivance, design, the purpose of which was hidden in the intricate web of the mystery. Perhaps unconsciously I was playing a part in the drama of the old house, and her relations with me were in some mysterious way involved.

Yet I couldn't bring myself to question her motives. It was simply impossible for me to accuse her of actual craft.

But in the test her true feelings had stood forth. She had shown where she really stood. The fact that I was to leave the house in disgrace meant nothing to her. Her love had spread its wings above all such things as this I had not mattered a grain of dust on the window-sill. Of course I hadn't forgotten her hesitancy. Perhaps there had been regrets—indecision—but the truth had come out in the end.

And it had come out again in the little scene beside the marsh, when I had been ready to leave the estate with the coroner. It was not to be forgotten that her lips had told the detective of my dispute with the Haywards, bringing down upon me a certain measure of suspicion.

I remembered how she and Vilas Hayward had always been together. And it only cost a laugh to remember that I had attributed this fact to the mysterious forces that were at play in the old mansion, rather than to her own wish. Her love for him was evidently the most passionate, intense kind, hardly to be expected in the slender, appearing girl. She showed this fact in her willingness to sacrifice for him.

But why had she been ready to kill him that night in the den? The look in her eye as she leaned across the table could not be mistaken. Yet many times before, in the long years of the world, women have killed the men they loved. Conditions have arisen in which love itself was the power that pressed back the finger against the pistol trigger. It was not for any man to say. The question went deep into the mystery of a woman's heart. She had tried to kill him and yet she loved him. He brought sorrow to her eyes; and yet it had made no difference. It was seemingly a love not to be measured. And I wished that I could go beyond the dull, strange reaches of the swamps, and never return to Southley Downs again.

"After all," I heard Inspector Freeman saying, "I don't know why I should worry about these things. Such things as the tracks that the niggers tell about in the road—and that chap who ran away from us on the hill—and all the rest of this funny business, I've got my man, and that's the only thing that matters."

I don't know how much he had said that I had not heard. My thoughts had been too busy.

"So you're sure of it, are you?" "It's a clear case. Blood-stained shirt—ancient enmity—above all things the fact that he's the one man, except of course Hayward's own son, that hasn't an alibi. He went outdoors with him. Nothing to it at all, Long."

We climbed the steps of the great house and parted in the hall. The detective took the clod that held the imprint up to his room to deposit with the shirt. He was to meet me in the library immediately after.

I waited a long time for him to come. And when at last I heard him on the stair, he walked as slowly as a pallbearer with a bier. Every step was distinct and slow, instead of the usual tap-tap of his quick motions.

Then I saw him in the candlelight at the door of the library. And never have I seen such bewilderment upon the face of a human being.

"This is the damndest house I ever saw!" he cried.

He stalked into the room with eyes wide and staring from sheer amazement. He sat down in a great chair, and rocked himself back and forth, his eyes on the floor. And now and then he swore gently, dazedly. I have seen the same look, in my professional experience, in the faces of men just picked up alive after startling automobile accidents.

"You look a trifle upset, inspector," I said. "What's the matter now?"

He turned slowly, still numbed and dazed. "I say the damndest! No case I was ever in had quite the devilish, upsetting, aggravating features that this one has. When I started to put away that clod that held the footprint, I opened the drawer where I had put the stained shirt."

"Yes." "Somebody had unlocked the drawer with a screw-driver."

"And the shirt was gone?" "Gone nothing! Someone had just torn a solid square foot out of the front part of the shirt-tail. And it dazed me so that I dropped the clod."

The moon that night cast every square of light on the floors. The orchestra of the marshes started up again—the call of birds, the noise of insects, the rustling of branches, all deeply remote and hushed. In the daytime the occupants of the manor-house had all been ordinary, sensible Aryans, not afraid to look in a dark corner. In the night, you could see a different expression on their faces.

I kept remembering the strange legend of the tiger. Then I thought of Ahmad Das, and the theory of reincarnation; and finally came around to the memory of those two curious scratches on the face of the dead man. Again and again I had that same cycle of thought.

I had the drawing-room to myself, except for the younger Southley. The detective was at work in his room. Southley himself had gone into the den; whether he had come out again I did not know. The negroes had retired to their cabins as usual in the latter part of the evenings. Vilas was in the library, trying to read.

I don't think he was having any too good success. The last two days had made stupendous changes in Vilas. He had picked up two or three little nervous habits, too, that were particularly distressing to watch. The mysterious death of his father was of course the greatest influence; and the ever-present menace, the shadow and the darkness, had stretched his nerves almost to the breaking point.

I had noticed a curious thing, as evening drew on. It seemed to me that the other occupants of the house were avoiding Vilas. Perhaps it was just a coincidence; yet the thing had happened three or four times. From eight to ten he had spent most of his time roving from one room to another. Whoever was in the room when he came greeted him courteously enough, but soon had business elsewhere. I saw it work out with not only Southley, but his daughter as well. Of course there were reasons; but I couldn't even get a glimpse of them. I imagined that Vilas would not have cared to be alone in the library at that moment, if there had been any other choice. From time to time he summoned the servants, seemingly for the most trivial services.

About eleven I walked out onto the grounds, mostly because the atmosphere of the house had begun to strangle me. I wanted fresh air, the wind blowing off the water, the sight of a friendly moon in the sky. Of course the tragedy of the night before had occurred outside the house, on the very hill on which I stood, but there remained the feeling that the crime had its root and source and causes in

the house itself. But the moonlit hillside wasn't much of a relief. What wind there was brought curious smells from the marsh. The moon looked wan and pale and strange.

There was a light in the powerhouse—a little building at the rear of the manor-house that contained the engine which had previously generated electric light for the house. Hoping for a friendly word from some mellow, African voice, I walked around to it. The workmen were busy at the plant, trying to repair the break.

But the workmen weren't colored people, after all. They were bending over the engine when I first approached the door, and I couldn't see their faces. They didn't hear me coming in the soft grass, and they seemed very intent. Then they started up as my foot grated on the threshold.

One of them was the elder Southley. The other was the lean, bewhiskered old man who had brought the boat—Robin, he called himself. I noticed just one impressing thing about him. He wore rubber boots.

He was the only man on the plantation, so far as I knew, who did. They were little, ankle-length, quaint affairs; and I was amazed at my own stupidity that I had not remembered the fact before. I had noticed the boots the minute he had stepped from the motor boat. They had plain rubber heels, such as had made the track we had found on the hillside, beside the white stone. Beyond all doubt or question, he had been the man we had chased just after nightfall.

My eyes leaped over him. He had long legs—the kind that could stride swiftly. He was agile, too.

"Howdy, sir," he greeted me. "Would you like a job?"

Southley looked up with a smile. "We're trying to get these lights so they'll work," he explained. "I'm getting tired of candle-light. I don't suppose you know anything about electric generators?"

"I knew quite a bit about them when I had the engineering bug—in college," I confessed. "I might be able to help you."

Then I had a curious impression. It seemed to me that a swift expression of apprehension and dismay flashed across my host's face. It wasn't in the least distinct. And it was so senseless a thing I concluded I had been mistaken. Robin looked up, too, somewhat quizzically.

"I can fix the thing," he said hurriedly, "and, besides, I need the job."

"I guess he can do well enough," Southley agreed.

But I couldn't resist the impulse to make a cursory examination of the generator. Perhaps it was love of the engine. Perhaps it was that irresistible human impulse to tinker—and more than that, to exhibit knowledge. At first I found it difficult to believe that the plant was really severely damaged. It looked in the most perfect condition. But Southley called me away in a moment, and invited me to walk back with him to the manor-house.

Inspector Freeman would have been dismayed if he had known my thoughts as Southley and I went back to the drawing-room. For before another hour had passed, there was to be further amateur interference in the working out of the Southley mystery. Even while I chatted with my host, I was planning the best means to get back to the powerhouse. I was going to keep a close watch on that garrulous, long-legged longshoreman, Robin.

(Continued Next Week)



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**SILVERTON WOMAN BADLY INJURED IN AUTO CRASH**

Mrs. H. A. Hutton of Silverton received serious injuries and her husband and children suffered minor hurts when the car in which they were riding collided with a machine driven by Tom Cowen, Berkeley, Cal., 25 miles east of here on the McKenzie highway yesterday afternoon.

Mrs. Hutton sustained a fractured skull, fractured nose and other injuries. Mr. Hutton had a scalp wound and the children were badly bruised and shaken. The woman was taken to the Pacific Christian hospital, where she was reported recovering this morning.

Their trip up the McKenzie has been in their plans for several years, Mr. Hutton said.

**LOGGES HOLD SOCIAL**

Forty members of the I. O. O. F. and Rebekah Lodges last night enjoyed a social time at the lodge hall. Following the regular business meeting of the Odd Fellows, a committee took charge of the entertainment. Rebekahs furnished cakes and Odd Fellows provided the ice cream for the refreshments which followed.

**SUMMONS**

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON, FOR LANE COUNTY.

Lewvena Wright, Plaintiff, versus Chick C. Wright, Defendant.

To Chick C. Wright, the above named defendant: IN THE NAME OF THE STATE OF OREGON, You are hereby required to appear and answer the complaint filed against you in the above entitled court and cause, on or before the expiration of the time prescribed in the Order for Publication, to-wit: On or before the expiration of four weeks from the date of the first publication hereof, and if you fail to appear or answer, for want thereof, plaintiff will take a decree against you for the relief prayed for in the complaint, which is in substance as follows:

For a decree of the court dissolving the marriage contract now existing between plaintiff and defendant, and for such other and further relief as to the court may seem just and proper.

This summons is published pursuant to an order of the Honorable C. P. Barnard, County Judge of Lane County, Oregon, made and entered August 14, 1928, and the date of the first publication hereof is August 16, 1928, and the date of the last publication hereof is September 13, 1928.

HOWARD M. BROWNELL, Attorney for Plaintiff. Residence: 177 East Seventh Ave., Eugene, Oregon. A-16-23-30: S. 6-13

**MRS. BAINBRIDGE LEAVES ON VISIT TO OLD HOME**

Leaving here Sunday, Mrs. M. Bainbridge is enroute for Iowa where she will visit for three months with relatives at her former home. Mrs. Bainbridge is the mother of Frank and John Bainbridge of Springfield. This will be her first trip to her old home in many years.

She will spend most of her time near Des Moines. This fall a large group of the members of her family will gather there for a reunion which has been planned for several years.

**REV. C. H. BLOM WILL BE UNION SERVICE SPEAKER**

Rev. C. H. Blom, pastor of the Baptist church, will be the speaker at the union church services Sunday evening in the Methodist church. His subject will be "The Ascension."

At his church in the morning the pastor will speak on "The Trio of Worlds." Sunday school will be at 10 o'clock. Young people's organizations will hold a joint meeting at the Methodist church at 7 o'clock.

The Mission Circle of the Baptist church met last Tuesday at the home of Mrs. Wilfred Cook.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

Tuesday, September 4, we will open in our new quarters in the Miner Building. As this will be the first day of the regular Fall Term, it will be a good time to enroll for a Stenographic, Bookkeeping, or Secretarial course. Ask about it.

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