

DEVIL-MAY-CARE

by ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD RILEY

Faunce dived into his cabin; he returned carrying a double-barreled shotgun. And now Lucy noted a bulge in her husband's hip pocket; a delightful anticipatory shudder ran up and down her spine. This promised excitement. Well, she had always thrived on it.

Over his shoulder, dog-trotting toward the waterway, Stevens called back to his two followers:

"They've probably blocked the roads leading down to the development, and we'd never get through the guard. If we sneak up in your row boat, Fergus, old kid, we'll beat them to the punch."

What, thought Lucy, had inspired, or caused, or aroused this apparent intimacy between Tim and Fergus? Was it money, the surest bond of all? Did Fergus accept Tim because he hoped to be made wealthy? But that did not seem like Fergus.

Tim ceased rowing. Ahead could be heard the confused murmur of many voices.

"They're on the first bridge," whispered Tim.

"Then we're too late," Lucy said. She heard an inarticulate ejaculation from her husband. Then:

"Thought you wanted to see a fair fight, Lucy. Well, be patient." He leaned toward Faunce, yet in the calm night she heard the words.

"If I can keep one bridge standing, I'm all right. So we'll throw them off this first one. All set? All right."

He dug his oars in the water, and the skiff shot around a bend; it was beneath a bridge before the men on it realized what was in their midst. Stevens stood up; his big hands gripped a bridge timber and he had climbed, like a huge cat, upon the bridge itself. She heard his great booming voice:

"Welcome, friends! Didn't expect you or you'd have had a better reception. But, surprised as we are, we'll do the best we can. Do you prefer to be pushed off this bridge or thrown off? We aim to please."

The skiff had drifted under the bridge, and now Faunce was standing up, gripping the timbers above. She would not be left alone; rising, she stepped the length of the boat, and placed her fingers upon the planking of the bridge. She was standing by her husband just as a voice cried:

"Knock him over; he's all alone."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," commented Faunce. His shotgun was slung across one arm.

From the shore of the stream another voice called:

"Three of them. Well, there are twenty of us—"

Tiger-like, Stevens moved. There was a stifled cry, a choking protest, something whirled through the air,

and a splash from the stream.

"Only nineteen now," said Stevens. "Who's next for the bath?"

There were four men upon the bridge, but as he moved closer, they shrank back.

"Wait a minute," cried a third voice. "I'm the sheriff of this county, and I came here to see that law and order is observed. These people expected trouble and called upon me for aid. These men are all my deputies and I order you to cease resisting their lawful occupation and consider yourself under arrest."

No one could put it more beautifully," laughed Stevens. "Getting a nice fat, bribe, sheriff?"

"By God! don't you hint at me doing anything crooked!" cried the sheriff.

"Was I hinting? Didn't mean to. Let me state it again. I accuse you of being bribed. You're a nasty fat crook, and if you don't take your men to hell off my property I'll kill a few of you. Do you get me?"

The humor had died from his voice; it was menacing, ugly, fraught with deadly intent.

"Look here, Stevens. This is Clem Clary speaking." The copper magnate stood upon the bank, close to where the man hurled into the stream had clambered ashore.

"Well, speak."

"The law's with us, Stevens," said Clary. "Better give in, or we'll rush you."

Steven's answer was not in words but in action. He leaped forward; his big fist thudded on the jaw of one of the men on the bridge. The man went down, rolled over, and fell into the water. The skirmish ended there. The other three fled. Stevens pursued to the end of the bridge.

"With Faunce at his elbow, he addressed Clary.

"I am armed; so is Dr. Faunce. If one man puts his foot on this bridge we'll shoot to kill. Get it?"

"You're under arrest," bawled the sheriff.

Stevens laughed.

"All right; come and take me."

The sheriff moved toward the bridge, but stopped ten feet away.

"Go on, Maddox!" cried Clary.

"Don't let him bluff you out of it."

"The only way to find out if a man is bluffing is to call him. My chips are on the table. Who calls?"

"Resisting arrest, breach of the peace—"

Stevens cut short the sheriff's cries.

"I haven't resisted arrest, Maddox,

In fact, I've invited you to come over here and arrest me. But you're such a shy little crook—" his voice suddenly broke in rage: "Maddox, you're yellow! Your parents ran away from the Confederate army and came down to the Florida swamps and spawned like the vermin they were. You'd lynch a nigger when you are a hundred to one, but one bandit laughs at a thousand like you. You shoot in the back and never face to face. You want to arrest me. Well, here I am."

He paused and turned to Lucy. "Sorry; promised you a real fight, but it takes two to make it."

"You'll regret this, Stevens," said Clary.

"Not half as much as you're regretting it right now," retorted Stevens. "But you are not going to pull down this bridge tonight, old man. Nor any other night. You may buy a sheriff or a marshal, but a judge is something again, old top. And say, I'm getting tired of all this. The land you are on is my property, just as this bridge is. Get off it."

"Don't overplay your hand, Stevens," advised Clary.

"No? Much obliged for the advice. But when I gamble I bet all I have. Now I'm betting that there is not a man in your gang that has the real sand of a rat. Fergus, let's clean them out. Shoot the first man that hesitates."

Lucy had read of men dominating a mob, frightening them, but this was no mob that Stevens and Fergus overawed. These were obviously hired bullies and among them was an officer of the law. Yet as Tim and Fergus advanced upon them the superior numbers retreated. Even old Clary, who stood ground until the last, suddenly turned and ran. What had promised great excitement, even tragedy, degenerated into farce, into burlesque.

And yet it had not been Tim's fault. The way he had tossed a man into the water, knocked another off the bridge—And Fergus had shown gallantry. These were two magnificent men, no matter what might be said about one of them. As fighting animals—

"This midnight stuff is my justification," Stevens was saying. "But when they come back, in daylight, with a proper warrant for my arrest, I shan't have the excuse that I did not believe Maddox was the sheriff. Fergus, we must have an injunction by morning. Now, Judge Leaming is in Palm Beach. He has jurisdiction

over this territory. He's at El Verano hotel. Wake him out of bed, get him to issue an injunction against Clary, against the sheriff, against the town officials, against everybody, ordering them to refrain from destroying these bridges. We've saved the others, you'll notice. They're afraid we mean business and will start shooting. Come back here. Round up a few people to make it look better. They might buck an injunction, you know."

He whistled gustily.

"Slip into the skiff; you'll have to wade or swim for it; see it down there, against the bank? Row back to Mango Key, hop into your car, and make your get-away. Of course they may be laying for you on the way, but show them the old shotgun."

"We'll hope you make it."

"Why couldn't I go, leaving you two to handle them if they decide to try again, if they summon up courage enough," suggested Lucy.

Stevens frowned.

"They won't rush us, but they might try a surprise—block the way for a car, and when you stop, jump you, I don't like the idea of my wife in the hands of that gang."

"Mr. Clary wouldn't let them actually harm me," said Lucy. "He's a wicked old devil, but, after all, I'm a friend of his wife—"

"She's right, Tim, said Fergus. I ought to stay here with you."

"How in blazes is she going to find her way back to Mango Key?" objected Stevens.

"I can row a boat, and when I reach the mouth of the creek I simply turn north, to the left, and when the waterway narrows I'm opposite Mango Key. The moon's gone, but the stars give enough light. Of course I can do it, if you'll get the boat for me. I hate to be all muddy."

"She's right, Tim," said Faunce again.

Stevens shrugged, then yielded. He fetched the boat, placing the oars in Lucy's hands, and shoved her off.

"I think I owe you a lot of thanks," he whispered. You certainly saved my bacon."

"You owe me nothing," she replied.

"I owe whatever I did to you."

"How do you figure that?"

"Because I believed you were engaged in a swindle. It seems that you were not. One should make payment for unjust thoughts. I've tried to pay."

"This time, then, I'm not a thief?" he said.

"This time you're not," she said.

"Much obliged," he said dryly.

His body bent and the skiff went whirling out into the middle of the narrow stream; she bent to the oars.

Judge Leaming descended to the Lobby of El Verano and heard Lucy's impassioned statement of the case. The judge, no cracker, but a southern gentleman, smiled sleepily

at the pretty girl. "Any man that's wise enough to pick you for a wife, Mrs. Stevens, is bound to get an even break in anything, because he's no fool. And he'll get a fair break in this court. You may go home and get some sleep and I will attend to the rest of the matter."

She could trust him, and so she went home, wild though she was to return to Seminole Creek and learn how Tim—and Fergus; Fergus was an afterthought—were getting on.

TO BE CONTINUED

GIRLS' VALENTINE PARTY HUGE SUCCESS FRIDAY

A beautifully decorated gymnasium was the setting for the Valentine costume party sponsored by the Girls' League at the high school last Friday afternoon between the hours of 3:15 and 5:00. The party was a strictly girls affair and was planned with the assistance of Mrs. William Baker, the girls advisor.

Gladys Porter with Velda Bartholomew, and Bernice Cline with Lela Maxwell as their boy friends, were awarded the prizes for having the best costumes.

Refreshments consisted of brick ice cream with a red heart shaped center and cookies with the initials G. L. on the top of them in icing.

Pictures of the costume winners were taken during the afternoon.

AUBREY-HACK NUPTIALS PERFORMED LAST NIGHT

Miss Juanita Hack, of Springfield, became the bride of Lloyd Curtis Aubrey, of Pleasant Hill, last night at 8:00 o'clock at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben F. Skinner of this city. The service was read by Rev. Veltie Pruitt, pastor of the First Christian church of Springfield.

The ceremony was witnessed only by the immediate relatives of the couple. A wedding dinner was served following the marriage.

Returns from Portland—Mrs. Clifford Wilson returned to her home here this week after spending some time with her parents at their home in Portland.

SPRING WEATHER CAUSES RUSH FOR GARDEN SEED

The balmy weather of Sunday and Monday caused a rush here Monday for garden implements and seed envelopes. Marion Adams, of Grays feed store, reports that about the only thing he sold on Monday was seeds. Other merchants reported a good business in seed on that day.

Many local people could not resist the temptation to plant a few early seeds. Some commented that they did not want to be caught in the predicament in which they found themselves last year when we had a few days of nice dry sunshine weather and then it rained and kept the ground wet until late in the spring. Those who planted early had early crops, and those who did not had to plant in the mud.

EASTERN STAR HEARS PROGRAM BY CHILDREN

An impromptu program by the children was a feature of the Tuesday evening meeting of the Eastern Star this week. The children attended a supper and later were called upon for an impromptu program. Miss Ann Gorrie, teacher at the Brattain school, was in charge of the affair. The next meeting of the group will be held February 26, at the home of Mrs. Levi Neet.

Electric Range Bargains

Reposessed, Slightly Used and Shop-worn Ranges. They must all go. Several Washers and Ironers must also be cleaned out.

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Special Chicken Dinner

SUNDAY

At the New Buss Cafe

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SPECIALS FOR FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND MONDAY

HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO BUY CAN GOODS AT WHOLESALE PRICES. AT THIS TIME OF YEAR YOUR WINTER SUPPLY OF CAN GOODS USUALLY SHOW SIGNS OF BECOMING EXHAUSTED. RESTOCK NOW AND SAVE THE DIFFERENCE

Broken Sliced Pineapple, 2 1/2 size.....	ONE CAN EACH FOR
Peaches in syrup, halves or sliced, 2 1/2 size	\$ 1.00
Boiled Vegetable Dinner, 2 1/2 size	
Beans, green, cut stringless, 2 size	
Tomatoes, 2 1/2 size	
Peas, sifted, 2 size	
Corn, white, 2 size	
Corn, yellow, 2 size	
TOTAL 8 CANS	

Lend your voice and support to the Cantata

Libby Crush Pineapple, 15c size, 3 cans for	29c	9 lb. sack white or yellow Corn Meal, 33c
Grape Fruit, broken slices, 2 size, 2 cans for	35c	Shrimp, Royal Club fancy, 3 cans for 49c
Sunbrite and Litehouse Cleanser, Each	5c	Crab Meat, No. 1/2 size tins
Armour's very best Apricots, 2 size 3 cans for	63c	Tuna Fish, white meat, 1/4 size tins, 3 cans
1 can Cocomalt and Shaker	35c	1/2 size tins, 3 cans
Fruits for Salad, All Gold brand. Extra fancy, No. 1 size	27c	2 lb. Box Candy
No. 2 size	33c	Jam or Jelly, No. 5 tins
Van Camp's Chili Con Carne, 15c size, 3 cans	36c	No. 10 tins
43 oz. Box Washing Powder	14c	Cream Cheese, per 1 lb.
Spinach, All Gold fancy, 2 1/2 size, 3 cans for	49c	Asparagus Tips, 20c size, 3 cans for 55c
		Renso, large size
		Kraut, All Gold Fancy, 2 1/2 size, 3 cans for
		Pumpkin, All Gold Fancy, 2 1/2 size, 3 cans for

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PREVIEW THURSDAY

COMING SUNDAY "THE TIME THE PLACE and the GIRL" All Talking — Singing

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ZANE GREY'S "LONE STAR RANGER" All Talking Thrills