

The Riddle of the Riderless Horse

By JEAN & CYRIL CASALIS

ALONG THE ROAD AGAIN

As they drove through the gathering darkness fear once again gripped Malcolm. Here he was once again driving slowly over that dusty road in search of someone who was missing. But on that first drive the search meant nothing more than trying to find a man he did not know, who had taken a loss. Now they were going desperately to find someone he did know, and whom he liked very much.

Loftus seemed to echo his thoughts.

"This is the last gasp, Green," he said. "I'll swear we haven't missed her in the camp. There's just a hope she might have walked along here. But if we don't find her soon, we'd better go back."

They were descending the slight hill to van Stollen's spruit.

"It's hopeless," said Loftus; "we may as well turn."

They crossed the spruit in second gear and the car climbed slowly up the opposite slope, casting its bright lights into the sky. They reached the top and as the flood of light found the road again, Malcolm, who meant to turn, jammed on his brakes, and he and Loftus leapt from the car. Cynthia lay at the side of the road. She was tightly bound from head to feet, and a heavy pad was fastened over her mouth.

Loftus was already on his knees beside her, feverishly cutting the rope that bound her. He tore the pad from her mouth and raised her head, calling her name and soothing her.

"Cynthia, my dear, my little girl. It's all right, Cynthia; we've found you. We are with you, Cynthia, dear."

But Cynthia lay as if dead, her unresponsive face pale and cold. Loftus called more loudly, a note of desperation in his voice.

"Cynthia, can't you hear?" he appealed. "Cynthia, Cynthia."

Then panic seized him, and the face he turned to Malcolm was stricken with terror.

"She's dying! She can't be dying! What can we do, Green?" She's dying! Oh, Cynthia, Cynthia!"

Malcolm was fumbling with Cynthia's hand, clumsily trying to feel her pulse. Then he and Loftus leapt to their feet. Someone was at the car. A rending hoot had come from its horn.

"What on earth..." began Malcolm but a self-possessed voice answered him from the dark: "Be patient, take the Missie to the doctor, Baas. Baas Cornelle," he added, "him want to know the Missie him found, Baas."

It was Maraka.

"Yes, quite right; we must take her at once," Loftus said suddenly sober, and with Maraka's help, they carried Cynthia to the car, and later in the back seat, with Loftus beside her to steady her.

The hard-worked practitioner of Brandon was torn from his home, and his wife at once also came out, and between them they carried Cynthia into one of the bedrooms, where after examining her, the doctor pronounced her to have been drugged. But under treatment she soon showed signs of reviving, and the doctor was able to assure them that save for the bruises on her arms and legs, where she had been bound, there was no other sign of injury. Her unconsciousness was purely due to the effects of the narcotic.

Loftus insisted on remaining with her, so Malcolm drove back to the farm alone. Half-way to Bon Espoir he met Cornelle and Channing riding like fiends. They stopped for just long enough to gather up Malcolm's reassuring news, then raced on into the night.

At Bon Espoir Adhemer, who had heard from Maraka of the finding of Cynthia, availed him impatiently, and piled him with innumerable questions.

Then Malcolm went thankfully to

his rendezvous. But he had hardly begun to undress when there was a knock at the door, and Maraka came in.

"Oho, Baas," he said, shaking his head, "work of him Left-Hand him plenty bad."

CHAPTER XX WHO IS LEFT-HANDED?

"Left hand," said Malcolm. "What do you mean, Maraka?"

"Him Left-Hand that catch Baas Mortimer, him catch the Missie to-night, Baas."

"What are you talking about, Maraka? What left hand caught Baas Mortimer? And what do you know of a left hand tonight?"

By way of reply Maraka unbuttoned the old jacket he wore, and kneeling down, drew out and laid out on the floor, two pieces of tangled rope which Malcolm recognized as the remains of that which had bound Cynthia.

"Let the Baas look well," said Maraka. "This rope him tie the Missie, and Baas Loftus him cut straight on top of the Missie, when the Missie him lie on him back on the ground on the road. Let the Baas think now him stand by the Missie's feet here. This piece rope fasten feet on right side of Missie, one time, and another time—two times, Baas, and he pointed to the shorter piece of rope.

"Then him rope him go across the Missie—not round the Missie, Baas on top, that is why him rope him cut in two pieces. Now him rope fasten again on other side of Missie—on left side, Baas—four times—so, and so, and so, and so. If the Baas look well, him see how it is."

Malcolm studied the rope as he was bid, and certainly what Maraka said seemed perfectly reasonable, though he had failed to notice it when Loftus had freed Cynthia.

Then another thought struck him. "How, by the way, did you get there to-night?" he asked.

"Maraka him come in motor car, Baas."

"The dickens you did! You drove with us? Did you see the Missie and the rope before Baas Loftus cut it?"

"Maraka him see, Baas; Maraka him stand just behind the Baas, when Baas Loftus him cut."

"Well, that's all right then," said Malcolm, glad to have some corroboration of the somewhat complicated evidence of the rope. "But where does Left-Hand come in?"

"Him rope, Baas," said Maraka patiently. "Him fastened by Left-Hand. See Baas, the Baas lie down."

He grabbed Malcolm unmercifully by the arm, and made him lie down on the floor.

"Look, Baas," he said, kneeling at Malcolm's feet on his side. Maraka him work with him right hand. Him tying rope round the Baas—plenty quick, plenty tight, Baas. When him tie, him put left hand on the Baas and push and pull rope with him right hand. Maraka him tie rope two times, but achi him left hand him not work fast enough, him get in way plenty enough. Maraka him plenty angry—him in plenty big hurry. Him throw rope across the Baas, and him tie on other side, so. Oho, Baas, now him work plenty easy. Maraka him tie plenty quick—plenty tight—so, and so, and so, and so.

He paused, and then, looking straight at Malcolm, went on:

"But, Baas, Maraka work with left hand, him like to work on left side of Baas. Left-Hand him tie the Missie. Him start to tie on right side of Missie. Him fasten the rope two times, Baas, but him in plenty big hurry—him go other side, him tie rope better and him finish plenty quick."

Malcolm, with hands behind his head, lay still for a moment, thinking it out. Certainly, he reflected, a left-handed person, tying knotted half-hitches over a body, would as inevitably prefer, both for speed and purchase, to work on the left side, as he himself, being right-handed, would choose to work on the right. And supposing one was working anxiously and in haste, and made the mistake of starting on the difficult side, it was probable that one would cross over to the other. It seemed sound as corroborative evidence—that is assuming that one was in search of a left-handed man. He said so to Maraka, who replied promptly:

"Yes, Baas, but same Left-Hand him catch Baas Mortimer."

"Baas Mortimer?" Malcolm exclaimed incredulously. "How? I can't see that."

"Maraka him tell the Baas, when

Maraka him speak with that poor black boy Jani, and by-and-bye with the Baas and Cornelle."

That saddle and bridle incident again. Did it, then, hold still more secrets that he had overlooked?

"Let's see, Maraka," he said. "It was the left ring of the snaffle that was dirty, and the right side of the saddle that was scratched; so when Baas Mortimer was caught, somebody grabbed his horse by the bridle on the left side, and somebody pulled him off on the near side. Isn't that so?"

"The Baas him remember," said Maraka.

"Well, where does Left-Hand come in?"

"Look, Baas! The Baas him standing here. Him work..."

right hand. Maybe his want to catch horse coming by quickly. The Baas know him got to run little bit to catch horse by him bridle, and then maybe him got to pull bridle hard to stop him horse. Maybe the Baas got plenty time; him got plenty time make ready. Him horse coming far away. The Baas see him. The Baas wait. The Baas know him right hand him stronger than him left hand. The Baas know him may be got run by horse, and him like right hand to near horse, so the Baas can catch him easy. The Baas him run on left side of horse. But if the Baas him work with left hand, him run on right side of horse. The people him catch Baas Mortimer, him know plenty well. Him know one man must stand one

side of horse, and other man must stand other side of horse. Baas Mortimer him must be in middle. Hard job, Baas, is catch him horse. And Left-Hand him must catch horse, and the other man go on left side."

"Just so," said Malcolm. "And I never twigged it—I missed it all along. What a fool! I give you best there, Maraka. We'll let Left-Hand have it."

"Maraka him think Left-Hand work all the time, Baas. Maybe Missie, when him come back to-morrow, can tell the Baas. Look, Baas, this rope," he said, pointing to the floor and raising his voice slightly. "him same kind rope as Maraka find where Baas Japie him killed."

"Great Scott! So it is!"

"Him Left-Hand work plenty quick. Maybe Missie can tell the Baas. Him rope come from Missie; Missie him got him rope for calves."

Malcolm felt the blood rush to his face. Cynthia could not be at the bottom of all this—and yet that was how the really clever murders were committed. But not Cynthia! And then he remembered; of course, it couldn't be. She had been drugged and carried off that very evening. And what was more, there was no make-believe about it; the doctor himself had testified to that. Someone must have stolen her rope—if it was hers. His rioting thoughts reverted to Left-Hand. Who was this sinister Left-Hand?

He was pacing up and down the

room, and now he swung round with the question on his lips. But he found himself alone. Maraka had slipped away. (To be Continued)

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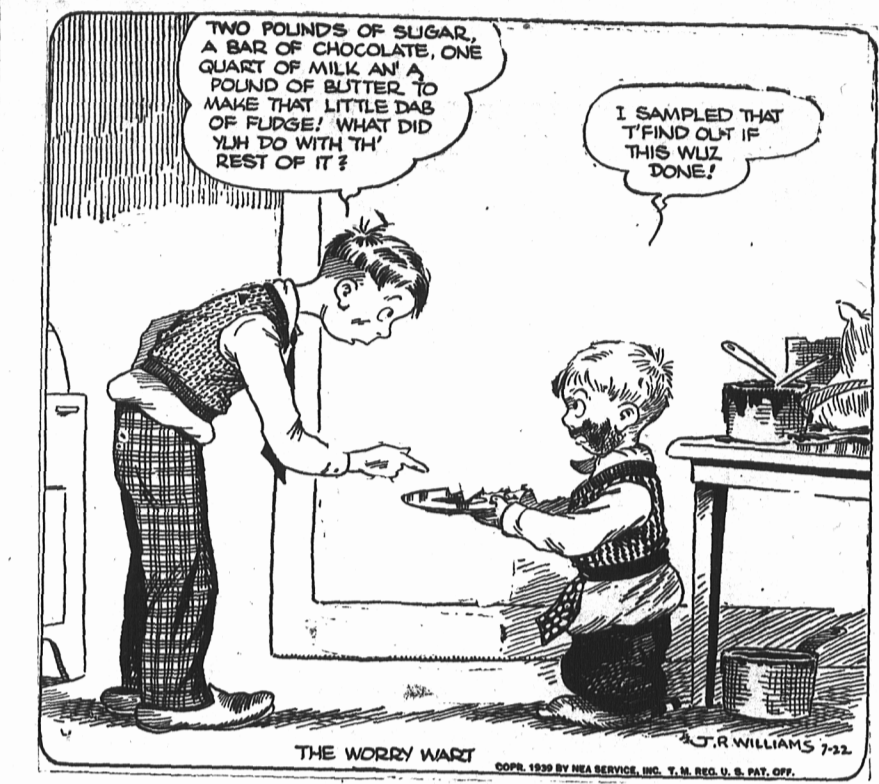
from the seat of government in their home city of Albany, New York. They will remain at least two weeks, probably including in their itinerary a visit to the famous Columbia Icefield in Jasper National Park.

GOVERNOR LEHMAN ENJOYS HOLIDAY IN ROCKIES

JASPER PARK LODGE, Alta., July 20—In the quieture of a picturesque rocky mountain lodge Governor Herbert H. Lehman, of the state of New York, relaxed today and diverted his attention from governmental duties to planning a two weeks vacation in the Canadian West. Accompanied by Mrs. Lehman, the Governor took up holiday residence Wednesday in a log bungalow along the shores of the Placid Lac Beauvert far

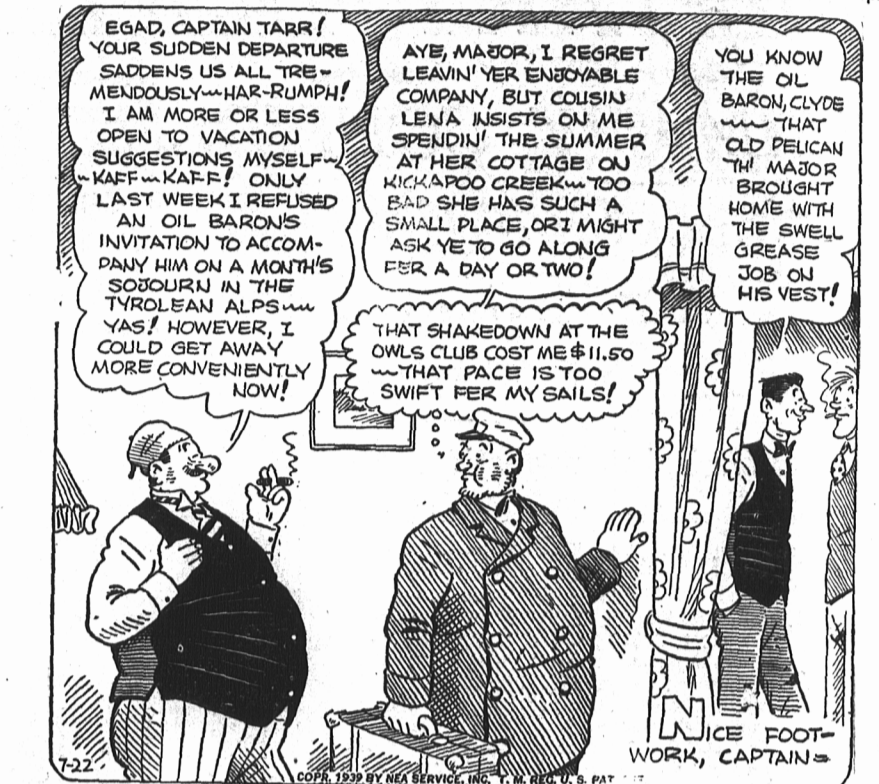
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