

# The Protector of Finance

Tales of Reasilus Marvel, Guardian of Bank Treasure

By WELDON J. COBB

## WITHOUT BENEFIT OF WAYBILL

Copyright, W. G. Cobb

CRY, a crash, a general commotion, and echo and stir brought Reasilus Marvel to his feet as such though on springs. Such do not transpire in a well-regulated bank save for some potent reason and the quick mind of the head of the United Bankers' Protective association seemed to analyze the situation in a flash. I believe he had crossed the threshold of the private office of the president of our institution, a peculiarly large room that told him that one of immense plate glass windows of the currency pen had sufficed; that the cry was that of a man of the cages; that the commotion was the mingled shuffling of the of the house officers drawn to an istible focus by some extraordinary occurrence.

was in the wake of Marvel at instantly, impelled by curiosity and wonder. The president of the bank had been going over a list of average balances, and some clients whose business affairs showing symptoms of rot, was planning to have not somewhere else, and bring a package to hand to some brother banker. So far as of ethics would permit, he peered at the open doorway at the gathering about the currency pen in an effective way. I was close at heels. A picturesque spectacle he kept shouting wildly: "What's going on? What's going on? What's going on?"

He threw red pepper! spluttered teller. "I dodged. See—where it is the stab. A little went in my eye. I could get my revolver here and had an arm over to the window led."

What did he get? Special package—\$80,000. Where is it? "The window—the street!" rambled the clerk. "He must have weighted it for it went through that window a cannon ball, and—"

A flash Marvel, both feet on the swing over the wire netting, and scanning the street. All that he was a gathering, aiping crowd two policemen pointing to a noted officer down the roadway. "Automobile, I suppose," commented my friend, and was back at the of the culprit by the route he left him. "Get us out of this," he directed me, and I made led for him through the mob to the rest office.

The prisoner needed no urging to the pressure of Marvel's urging. Our cashier had come up, and floor closed on the four of us. "What did you expect to make out of this foolish break, Dan?" inquired friend, not unkindly. "Not ten years," responded the felon, with a ghostly shadow of a smile, "will be no trial, for the doctor given me just ten days. I'm doped with strychnine, or I couldn't hold up. Get me where I can lie down, you'll have to carry me."

The man looked all he indicated—poor wretch in the last stages of emption. He had partially cooled, and lay rather than sat in the arm chair. All the time, however, there was a certain contented look on his face. "You know me, Mr. Marvel," he observed weakly—"not yet obtundized, though the records had it so. I can't pull this off for myself." "Rather not," replied Marvel. "Then why?"

soon sink," he said with a slight laugh. The officer had taken from his pocket the one article his clothes contained—a watch. "I'll keep that to count the few hours left me, if you don't mind," said Dan, but Marvel was giving the time-piece a close inspection. He opened the cases. I saw him gaze searchingly at the inside of the back case, then at the outstretched hand of Derby Dan, and then into Derby Dan's eyes. The mocking smile drifted from the face of the prisoner.

"Have I hit it, Dan?" challenged Marvel, with one movement of the back case from the watch and handing the denuded timepiece to its owner. "Then I faced the case, and I had less desire to stow it in my hand. So I placed it on a cobwebbed shelf, and tried to be patient, and hoped to be useful somewhere along the line."

"Here" was a weapon—compact, deadly looking and ready for use. I accepted it with some temerity. Its possession certified to a promotion as friend and counsel of Reasilus Marvel, yet it gave me an uncanny shiver. "Eighty thousand is no bagatelle, remember," observed Marvel.

"I suppose you read the article?" he interrogated, and then I looked dubious he produced the one-half of the watch case. Pasted over its inner surface was the photograph of a woman as one would expect a man of Derby Dan's character to select—coarse featured, loud eyed, tawdry as to neck and waist adornment. "Still, a woman; and to Derby Dan the picture seemed so dear, that I doubted not for her sake he had risked a shot, to enrich her he had consented to spend the last poor fragment of his life behind steel bars."

"He is clear game," announced Reasilus Marvel, "and will never equal his hopes, however, must hinge on a division of the spoil. Of course it's the woman her pals will make for sooner or later." "So you must find her." "So I shall find her," said Marvel swiftly. "The raid must have been timed to a second—and an inch. Derby Dan loitered up to that cage, and knows enough about bank routine to look over the notations on the package. Then the red paper that looked like a grab, the weighted loot, and a close calculation that did not miss, and I dare say a landing directly in the automobile, where his pals were ready for the word 'Go.'"

My friend had drawn the right picture of an actual happening we found when we reached the street. The crossing policeman told of the crash of glass, a flying object, the whir of the auto, and a flash to the corner ahead with a mounted officer in pursuit, who lost the trail amid the confusion of too many vehicles, with less than one-half a mile accomplished. And then as two of the bank policemen appeared leading Derby Dan between them, he gave a slight start of recognition.

"Know him?" inquired Marvel. "Saw him before, that's all," was the response. "Where?" "Right at this letter box About twenty minutes ago. I saw him lean on it and watch the big clock up in the Board of Trade. Then he looked up and down the street. Then he drew an envelope from his pocket. He kept his eyes fixed on it for a few minutes, as if thinking deeply. Then he lifted the cover of the slot, shot it into the letter box and walked briskly into the bank."

Marvel whipped about. He was scanning the printed schedule for collection of mail on the front of the box. He glanced at his watch. His face expressed satisfaction. I knew it be tokened that no collection had been made since Derby Dan had deposited a letter in the box. Marvel took a pencil and a card from his pocket and scribbled a name and a telephone number. "Phone from the bank," he directed me. "I will have to remain here. Tell Leslie to join me at once." It was not fifteen minutes before a post office inspector arrived. He opened the box after a few words of conversation with Marvel. I lacked twenty minutes of ten o'clock, and very few letters were mailed in the business section as early as that in the morning. Some twelve or fourteen were all that dropping shelf displayed. Most of them bore return addresses on the corner, and clearly to be afforded the privilege of remaining, where he was until the men he expected should arrive. Marvel experienced no uneasiness as to Derby Dan sending his wife a warning, for he had given the police explicit instruction respecting their prisoner.

the widow weeds, and settle down somewhere out of range of the old life. The boys will bring you the share soon as they feel they're safe. I've done this for you and the kid. Kiss her for me. Good-by, Dan."

Marvel beckoned to me from the doorway of the next room. He had two wardrobes open, and thrown across a table a part of their contents. I noted two suits of coarse common clothes and caps to match. "We may have some rough work, at least an experience among rough people," he advised me, and proceeded to exchange his attire for one extremely unbecoming. I know that the garments I donned were ill fitting and smelled musty. The suggestion of rough people was fully carried out as we reached the vicinity of Markham street. No. 42 turned out to be a ramshackly two-story house. It backed on extensive freight yards and its rear fence was in ruins—used up for fuel—its shed kitchen ready to fall over. We passed it on the other side of the street, and made a complete circle of it several times before Marvel determined on a decisive course of procedure. He halted in the shelter of a freight car.

"I am going to visit this Nance of our friend, Derby Dan," he said. "When I go around to that side door, slip across the yard and get into that old shed. The men we are after may be there now, may have been there and gone, may arrive at any moment here."

"I shall find her," said Marvel swiftly. "The raid must have been timed to a second—and an inch. Derby Dan loitered up to that cage, and knows enough about bank routine to look over the notations on the package. Then the red paper that looked like a grab, the weighted loot, and a close calculation that did not miss, and I dare say a landing directly in the automobile, where his pals were ready for the word 'Go.'"

Marvel watched her eyes dilate, her throat throbb, the hand holding brief scrawl grow shaky with excitement. Then the woman stood looking at the floor and evidently trying to digest the contents of the missive. She raised her eyes next, boring Marvel through and through. "Is that all?" she challenged. "Until the boys come," replied my friend succinctly. "I'm to say nothing—only to look on."

"To see that the pie is cut in three equal pieces. It's a big one." Nance sat down in a chair and let the little one toddle about the floor. Now she was trying to think things out harder than ever. She spelled her way laboriously a second time through the scrawl. Then she pressed it to her lips, threw her apron over her face and sobbed as if her heart would break. Anon she lifted a tear-stained but stony face, and fell to studying Marvel.

My friend had so placed himself that he had as complete a view from the window of the room of the street and the yard as was possible. His senses were on the alert, to ward off suspicion on the part of the woman, to be afforded the privilege of remaining, where he was until the men he expected should arrive. Marvel experienced no uneasiness as to Derby Dan sending his wife a warning, for he had given the police explicit instruction respecting their prisoner.

The little child had roved about with Marvel. She was quite friendly with him. She hung about his knee and he paid her some attention. She played with the buttons of his coat and climbed up on the rounds of the chair he sat in. My friend experienced some unrest and considerable chagrin as he saw the little one toddling across the room to her mother, crowing triumphantly. In one hand the child had Marvel's handkerchief. In the other the envelope that had contained the letter he had just delivered to its mother. The mother had a keen eye. Marvel dared not manifest any particular interest in the recovering of the envelope. He simply smiled, tracing the incipient pick-pocket in this progeny of crime as the mother snatched the envelope from the hand of her child. Nance regarded the envelope with a stony eye. Illiterate though she was, she was discerning enough to

envelope extended a stony hand. "I am a lawyer," stony and apocryphally spoke the woman. "I don't say so," observed Marvel. "My good woman, do not disturb yourself with arriving at any conclusions until our friends arrive."

"The woman was on her guard, but did not venture to commit herself by asking any leading questions. Apparently she accepted the situation as it presented. The instructions of Derby Dan influenced her to act as a spy figure in the case. She arose finally and busied herself washing out a tattered red neck scarf. Then she went out into the yard and hung it across a bit of clothes line."

Marvel told me afterwards that he was certain this was a signal for prospective visitors. At least it probably was a notification that some one was in the house—a stranger. Still, the woman acted natural, although expectant and restive during another hour. Then something happened. I had meanwhile kept at my post in the shed, peering from its darkest corner through the many gaps in the broad, warped boards of which the rattletrap was constructed. I was nervous about the weapon Marvel had given me. I did not wish to keep it in my hand. I had less desire to stow it in my hand. So I placed it on a cobwebbed shelf, and tried to be patient, and hoped to be useful somewhere along the line."

I crouched back, feeling the crisis had arrived, as the door by the shed facing the alley moved sharply on its creaking hinges. Then a voice—low, imperative: "Hold on—don't go in."

"Why not?" "Look at that red scarf." I could not view the speakers, but the sunlight illuminated two figures in shadow, their attitude strained and full of caution. "That's right, but it's not the stay away call. Go slow, that's all."

"We'll take the roof route. No first—follow or wait, suit yourself." "I'll follow—go ahead." The crazy roof of the tottering shed creaked ominously. The shallow boards bent until I could see a pair of nimble feet scudding for safety to a window sill on the second story. The flight was made with apparent success. Then the rubbery roof again rebounded. Number two tried to follow his leader. There was a sharp snap. A board crashed in two, and with the parted timbers the man came hurtling downward, struck the ground with a groan, and lay there inert.

I acted on impulse. There was not a doubt in my mind that the two men were the persons for whom Marvel was waiting. Through the open roof I could see the first man clinging to the sill of window, wavering as if in doubt as to what course he should pursue. I hastened his decision. Reaching out for the weapon Marvel had given me, I "pumped it dry" against the ground in a corner of the shed. The fallen man stirred, but he did not open his eyes. The man overhead must have seen me. With an exclamation of manifest dismay he made go of the window support. He made a smooth, splendid slide the length of the roof and landed with a dead clump on the ground with both feet.

The next instant he was swung into view at the open doorway of the shed. A glance revealed the condition of his comrade, the same glance took me in, empty with a scowl, ditted across the yard and cleared about all that was left of the fence, the top stringer, on the fly. I heard a door in the house slam. It was Marvel, coming out. It was Marvel, his eye fixed on the flying fugitive, to whom I shouted, rather incoherently: "The two men—I've got one here, unconscious." Then I saw, first the fugitive disappear around the corner of a long line of freight cars, then Marvel in pursuit, vanishing in turn. I took it upon myself to stand not two feet away from my captive. I leaned over and prodded his clothing, dreaming of sure glory should I find the \$80,000 package aboard of him. It was not, the man ceased up under my rather clumsy handling. He rolled over and finally sat up, rubbing his contused head with a wry grimace of pain. "Sit still," I ordered full valiantly, the empty weapon extended, and it served as a quieting menace. As I glanced towards the house I saw the woman Nance come out into the yard, leading the little one by the hand. She returned bearing an envelope, and I saw that it was the one that had been snatched from the hand of her child. Nance regarded the envelope with a stony eye. Illiterate though she was, she was discerning enough to

envelope, and I have unhesitatingly would have detained her for a moment in a measure one of the central figures in the case in hand. However, I reasoned that my duty was with the man who had fallen into my power so accommodatingly. My prisoner had an evil eye, and in a clear test of physical strength he was far my superior. His fall had clearly crippled his normal activity, and the leveled weapon did the rest.

It was nearly half an hour before Marvel reappeared. One hand was in a side coat pocket. In front of him, two paces ahead, was the man who had slid the roof. As soon as my caplay figure in the case. She arose finally and busied herself washing out a tattered red neck scarf. Then she went out into the yard and hung it across a bit of clothes line."

Marvel told me afterwards that he was certain this was a signal for prospective visitors. At least it probably was a notification that some one was in the house—a stranger. Still, the woman acted natural, although expectant and restive during another hour. Then something happened. I had meanwhile kept at my post in the shed, peering from its darkest corner through the many gaps in the broad, warped boards of which the rattletrap was constructed. I was nervous about the weapon Marvel had given me. I did not wish to keep it in my hand. I had less desire to stow it in my hand. So I placed it on a cobwebbed shelf, and tried to be patient, and hoped to be useful somewhere along the line."

I crouched back, feeling the crisis had arrived, as the door by the shed facing the alley moved sharply on its creaking hinges. Then a voice—low, imperative: "Hold on—don't go in."

"Why not?" "Look at that red scarf." I could not view the speakers, but the sunlight illuminated two figures in shadow, their attitude strained and full of caution. "That's right, but it's not the stay away call. Go slow, that's all."

"We'll take the roof route. No first—follow or wait, suit yourself." "I'll follow—go ahead." The crazy roof of the tottering shed creaked ominously. The shallow boards bent until I could see a pair of nimble feet scudding for safety to a window sill on the second story. The flight was made with apparent success. Then the rubbery roof again rebounded. Number two tried to follow his leader. There was a sharp snap. A board crashed in two, and with the parted timbers the man came hurtling downward, struck the ground with a groan, and lay there inert.

I acted on impulse. There was not a doubt in my mind that the two men were the persons for whom Marvel was waiting. Through the open roof I could see the first man clinging to the sill of window, wavering as if in doubt as to what course he should pursue. I hastened his decision. Reaching out for the weapon Marvel had given me, I "pumped it dry" against the ground in a corner of the shed. The fallen man stirred, but he did not open his eyes. The man overhead must have seen me. With an exclamation of manifest dismay he made go of the window support. He made a smooth, splendid slide the length of the roof and landed with a dead clump on the ground with both feet.

The next instant he was swung into view at the open doorway of the shed. A glance revealed the condition of his comrade, the same glance took me in, empty with a scowl, ditted across the yard and cleared about all that was left of the fence, the top stringer, on the fly. I heard a door in the house slam. It was Marvel, coming out. It was Marvel, his eye fixed on the flying fugitive, to whom I shouted, rather incoherently: "The two men—I've got one here, unconscious." Then I saw, first the fugitive disappear around the corner of a long line of freight cars, then Marvel in pursuit, vanishing in turn. I took it upon myself to stand not two feet away from my captive. I leaned over and prodded his clothing, dreaming of sure glory should I find the \$80,000 package aboard of him. It was not, the man ceased up under my rather clumsy handling. He rolled over and finally sat up, rubbing his contused head with a wry grimace of pain. "Sit still," I ordered full valiantly, the empty weapon extended, and it served as a quieting menace. As I glanced towards the house I saw the woman Nance come out into the yard, leading the little one by the hand. She returned bearing an envelope, and I saw that it was the one that had been snatched from the hand of her child. Nance regarded the envelope with a stony eye. Illiterate though she was, she was discerning enough to

envelope, and I have unhesitatingly would have detained her for a moment in a measure one of the central figures in the case in hand. However, I reasoned that my duty was with the man who had fallen into my power so accommodatingly. My prisoner had an evil eye, and in a clear test of physical strength he was far my superior. His fall had clearly crippled his normal activity, and the leveled weapon did the rest.

It was nearly half an hour before Marvel reappeared. One hand was in a side coat pocket. In front of him, two paces ahead, was the man who had slid the roof. As soon as my caplay figure in the case. She arose finally and busied herself washing out a tattered red neck scarf. Then she went out into the yard and hung it across a bit of clothes line."

Marvel told me afterwards that he was certain this was a signal for prospective visitors. At least it probably was a notification that some one was in the house—a stranger. Still, the woman acted natural, although expectant and restive during another hour. Then something happened. I had meanwhile kept at my post in the shed, peering from its darkest corner through the many gaps in the broad, warped boards of which the rattletrap was constructed. I was nervous about the weapon Marvel had given me. I did not wish to keep it in my hand. I had less desire to stow it in my hand. So I placed it on a cobwebbed shelf, and tried to be patient, and hoped to be useful somewhere along the line."

I crouched back, feeling the crisis had arrived, as the door by the shed facing the alley moved sharply on its creaking hinges. Then a voice—low, imperative: "Hold on—don't go in."

"Why not?" "Look at that red scarf." I could not view the speakers, but the sunlight illuminated two figures in shadow, their attitude strained and full of caution. "That's right, but it's not the stay away call. Go slow, that's all."

"We'll take the roof route. No first—follow or wait, suit yourself." "I'll follow—go ahead." The crazy roof of the tottering shed creaked ominously. The shallow boards bent until I could see a pair of nimble feet scudding for safety to a window sill on the second story. The flight was made with apparent success. Then the rubbery roof again rebounded. Number two tried to follow his leader. There was a sharp snap. A board crashed in two, and with the parted timbers the man came hurtling downward, struck the ground with a groan, and lay there inert.

I acted on impulse. There was not a doubt in my mind that the two men were the persons for whom Marvel was waiting. Through the open roof I could see the first man clinging to the sill of window, wavering as if in doubt as to what course he should pursue. I hastened his decision. Reaching out for the weapon Marvel had given me, I "pumped it dry" against the ground in a corner of the shed. The fallen man stirred, but he did not open his eyes. The man overhead must have seen me. With an exclamation of manifest dismay he made go of the window support. He made a smooth, splendid slide the length of the roof and landed with a dead clump on the ground with both feet.

The next instant he was swung into view at the open doorway of the shed. A glance revealed the condition of his comrade, the same glance took me in, empty with a scowl, ditted across the yard and cleared about all that was left of the fence, the top stringer, on the fly. I heard a door in the house slam. It was Marvel, coming out. It was Marvel, his eye fixed on the flying fugitive, to whom I shouted, rather incoherently: "The two men—I've got one here, unconscious." Then I saw, first the fugitive disappear around the corner of a long line of freight cars, then Marvel in pursuit, vanishing in turn. I took it upon myself to stand not two feet away from my captive. I leaned over and prodded his clothing, dreaming of sure glory should I find the \$80,000 package aboard of him. It was not, the man ceased up under my rather clumsy handling. He rolled over and finally sat up, rubbing his contused head with a wry grimace of pain. "Sit still," I ordered full valiantly, the empty weapon extended, and it served as a quieting menace. As I glanced towards the house I saw the woman Nance come out into the yard, leading the little one by the hand. She returned bearing an envelope, and I saw that it was the one that had been snatched from the hand of her child. Nance regarded the envelope with a stony eye. Illiterate though she was, she was discerning enough to

envelope, and I have unhesitatingly would have detained her for a moment in a measure one of the central figures in the case in hand. However, I reasoned that my duty was with the man who had fallen into my power so accommodatingly. My prisoner had an evil eye, and in a clear test of physical strength he was far my superior. His fall had clearly crippled his normal activity, and the leveled weapon did the rest.

It was nearly half an hour before Marvel reappeared. One hand was in a side coat pocket. In front of him, two paces ahead, was the man who had slid the roof. As soon as my caplay figure in the case. She arose finally and busied herself washing out a tattered red neck scarf. Then she went out into the yard and hung it across a bit of clothes line."

Marvel told me afterwards that he was certain this was a signal for prospective visitors. At least it probably was a notification that some one was in the house—a stranger. Still, the woman acted natural, although expectant and restive during another hour. Then something happened. I had meanwhile kept at my post in the shed, peering from its darkest corner through the many gaps in the broad, warped boards of which the rattletrap was constructed. I was nervous about the weapon Marvel had given me. I did not wish to keep it in my hand. I had less desire to stow it in my hand. So I placed it on a cobwebbed shelf, and tried to be patient, and hoped to be useful somewhere along the line."

I crouched back, feeling the crisis had arrived, as the door by the shed facing the alley moved sharply on its creaking hinges. Then a voice—low, imperative: "Hold on—don't go in."

"Why not?" "Look at that red scarf." I could not view the speakers, but the sunlight illuminated two figures in shadow, their attitude strained and full of caution. "That's right, but it's not the stay away call. Go slow, that's all."

"We'll take the roof route. No first—follow or wait, suit yourself." "I'll follow—go ahead." The crazy roof of the tottering shed creaked ominously. The shallow boards bent until I could see a pair of nimble feet scudding for safety to a window sill on the second story. The flight was made with apparent success. Then the rubbery roof again rebounded. Number two tried to follow his leader. There was a sharp snap. A board crashed in two, and with the parted timbers the man came hurtling downward, struck the ground with a groan, and lay there inert.

I acted on impulse. There was not a doubt in my mind that the two men were the persons for whom Marvel was waiting. Through the open roof I could see the first man clinging to the sill of window, wavering as if in doubt as to what course he should pursue. I hastened his decision. Reaching out for the weapon Marvel had given me, I "pumped it dry" against the ground in a corner of the shed. The fallen man stirred, but he did not open his eyes. The man overhead must have seen me. With an exclamation of manifest dismay he made go of the window support. He made a smooth, splendid slide the length of the roof and landed with a dead clump on the ground with both feet.

The next instant he was swung into view at the open doorway of the shed. A glance revealed the condition of his comrade, the same glance took me in, empty with a scowl, ditted across the yard and cleared about all that was left of the fence, the top stringer, on the fly. I heard a door in the house slam. It was Marvel, coming out. It was Marvel, his eye fixed on the flying fugitive, to whom I shouted, rather incoherently: "The two men—I've got one here, unconscious." Then I saw, first the fugitive disappear around the corner of a long line of freight cars, then Marvel in pursuit, vanishing in turn. I took it upon myself to stand not two feet away from my captive. I leaned over and prodded his clothing, dreaming of sure glory should I find the \$80,000 package aboard of him. It was not, the man ceased up under my rather clumsy handling. He rolled over and finally sat up, rubbing his contused head with a wry grimace of pain. "Sit still," I ordered full valiantly, the empty weapon extended, and it served as a quieting menace. As I glanced towards the house I saw the woman Nance come out into the yard, leading the little one by the hand. She returned bearing an envelope, and I saw that it was the one that had been snatched from the hand of her child. Nance regarded the envelope with a stony eye. Illiterate though she was, she was discerning enough to



ANON SHE LIFTED A TEAR-STAINED BUT STONY FACE, AND FELL TO STUDYING MARVEL.

ROMAN... This stock company... "What's 'it'?" he demanded... "You're right when you say... "Help!" interrupted Zepp... "So the girl coaxed him out to the... "Oh, boy!" gurgled Zepp... "Forrest was leaving his office... "What?" queried Forrest... "That!" And Cannoles pointed... "Here, wait a minute till I read... "The whole thing's a kick," sniggered... "I experimented with the... "But what good was that when your... "Ah," retorted the triumphant... "How about the mushroom?"... "Some Notable Dignitaries..." "Beware the 'Jack-of-All Trades'..." "Products of Genius..."