

The Free Press Short Story

WITH WATER AND NERVE

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With an uneasy shudder Ben Howard, lying on his back, drifted from the blackness of oblivion into the vague realm of semi-consciousness.

Instinctively his hand went to his head and touched a lump that seemed to be the size of a coconut. With returning consciousness he became aware of a peculiar chill through his body, but it was only when his hand fell back at his side and caused a splash that he realized that he was lying in a pool of water.

He sat up. From the waist down his body was completely submerged; his head had lain in two or three inches of water on a mass of sticky clay. Had he fallen with his head where his feet lay he would have been killed. All was pitchy darkness round him. He groped outward and touched a rough wall at one side. Looking upward, he spied the twinkling stars through a circular opening and knew that he was at the bottom of a deserted mine or an old well. He moved backward and leaned dizzily against the wall. With his aching head between his hands he tried in vain to remember what had happened to him.

After a knock on the head a man often finds a gap in his memory when consciousness returns. Remote happenings may be perfectly clear; it is the hours immediately preceding the accident that are likely to be blotted out. The last thing Howard could recall was shovelling coke at the Cactus Wells copper smelter. That had been in the forenoon he was sure. He wondered if he had been unconscious ever since then. Only when he felt the spurs buckled to his boots did he remember riding among the gnarled Joshua trees and the sharp-bladed yuccas of the desert. As he sat there in the darkness groping in his mind for the broken thread, he heard the murmur of voices. He was on the point of calling out when he caught words uttered in a curiously familiar tone that restrained him.

The next moment two men were at the top of the shaft. The outline of one was visible against the sky as he leaned over to peer downward into the darkness. "I tell you, Shad, we got to git that pay-roll list," one of the strangers was saying. "This letter won't git us nowhere 'cept into trouble. Sure to look suspicious without the little book."

"That's good talk, Bill, but it gives me the creeps to fool round a dead man," the other replied.

"Huh! Your're mighty finicky now. You wasn't so tender-hearted when you roped him off'n his horse an' broke his neck on the hard ground."

"Now, look here, Bill, Sanford, you know I didn't git in for no murder," Shad retorted hotly. "It's one thing to do a rich minin' company, an' it's something else to kill a man. Anyway I ain't sure he was plumb dead when we throwed him down there."

"Oh, he's not ary, Shad," Sanford said hastily; "if he ain't dead, he ought to be. We lost too much time already. Ought to be in old Mex before this time to-morrow."

Shad was silent while his companion continued: "I guess it ain't dead men I'm most afraid of, so here goes. Git me that lariat rope off your saddle horn."

Howard's mind bridged the gap with a jump. Now he remembered everything distinctly up to the moment he had turned his head at a sound like the splash of a rope. He was then riding down the bank into Rock Arroyo at the nightfall. He had started from the smelter at noon to ride to Stover, a town on the railway thirty miles distant. He was carrying the company pay-roll book as well as a letter of introduction from the superintendent to the general manager. It was before the company began paying with checks, and Howard, who had taken the place of the regular messenger, had instructions to bring back three thousand dollars in cash. The robbers had shown unusual ingenuity in getting possession of the letter while the messenger least expected trouble instead of waiting to rob him of the money on the return trip next day when he would be prepared. It was not likely that anyone in Stover could identify Howard by sight.

Barring some unusual slip, it would be comparatively easy for one of the rascals or a confederate to impersonate the messenger and receive the money. Howard had never heard of Bill Sanford, but the other man, Shad Conner, had worked at the smelter for the past three weeks. In fact Howard remembered passing him at the door as he came from the superintendent's office the evening before. Doubtless the fellow had been spying.

The rascals in their haste to dispose of the body of their victim had evidently overlooked the importance of the pay-roll list and had taken only the letter. Now they were back for the little book, which Howard could feel in his water-soaked pocket. There was not much doubt in the mind of the messenger what disposition the robbers would make of him if they should learn that he was alive and had overheard their incriminating conversation.

The two men had got the rope, and Howard heard them fumbling about as they tied an end of it to the timber at the top. In a few seconds he should have to face a situation that required

more nerve than he felt he had just then. Except by feigning unconsciousness he could see no chance for his life; and he feared that even then he might betray himself when the ruffian began rolling him about in search of the pay-roll. Besides Howard hated to yield without a struggle.

A coil of rope dropped and splashed in the water. The next instant loose earth and gravel rattled down as a man let himself over the edge and came hand over hand down the rope. In twenty seconds at most he would be standing at the bottom of the old mine.

Weakened by the injuries that he had received, Howard knew it would be foolhardy to risk a simple physical encounter with the man. The surplus rope splashing about gave the hesitating messenger an idea. He stooped over and swept his hand through the water till he touched the end of the rope. A deft turn and he had formed a loop.

The descending robber's feet were within two yards of the bottom when a dripping noose swung sensibly toward him. Guided only by the swinging rope, Howard held the water-stiffened noose with trembling hands. Well he knew that the miscalculation of an inch might prove disastrous. His only hope of success lay in taking his enemy by surprise.

A booted foot struck the arm of the excited messenger. In an agony of suspense he widened the noose to catch its mate. He groped futilely for the kicking member.

With a grunt of surprise the burly ruffian brought his heels together and, letting the rope slip through his hands, dropped the remaining distance to the bottom. But before the heavy boots splashed in the muddy water Howard, sure that his noose had encircled both dangling legs, surged backward on the short length of rope. The wet noose drew tight, and with a smothered exclamation the astonished outlaw tumbled headfirst into the water at the side of the shaft where it was more than a foot deep.

Determined to prevent an outcry that might bring upon him the mar left at the top, Howard was thrown from side to side as he struggled to maintain his hold on the muscular legs. In spite of the messenger's tenacious grip the robber succeeded in turning on his side. A powerful arm swung round, and Howard felt his own leg caught at the knee. Thrown off his balance, he tumbled backward. Instantly his head was pushed under water, and he felt the weight of his antagonist crushing him.

That the robber intended to drown him was too evident. Knowing the futility of struggling, Howard held his breath and allowed himself to be forced down till his head rested on the muddy bottom. At the same time his arms encircled the neck of the man on top of him and drew the bewhiskered jaw down against his own cheek. A man with his legs bound is robbed of half his strength in a rough and tumble scrimmage. The robber, already winded by his ducking, struggled in vain to break loose.

Howard's only hope of life lay in his ability to hold his breath longer than his antagonist, who was wasting his strength. Aware that the issue hinged on the last second, Howard tightened his grip with fresh determination. He knew that he had almost reached the limit of his strength. His head roared, and his chest heaved spasmodically with the overpowering impulse to breathe.

For many seconds he endured the strain, he was unable to guess. It seemed an age. Vaguely aware that the struggles of his opponent had all but ceased, he released his hold and pushed upward. He staggered weakly to his feet. He was filled with an overwhelming desire to drop on the muddy bottom and rest, but he dared not hesitate lest he lose all he had gained.

While the robber was still gasping weakly for breath and choking with the water that he had swallowed, Howard sprang upon him and pinned his arms. With his soft leather belt he securely tied the rascal's hands behind him and with his big cotton handkerchief effectively gagged him.

When he had turned a half hitch of the rope for further security, Howard drew the vanquished rogue up till his head lay on a mound of clay at the side of the shaft. Now with his enemy at his mercy he fell back, panting for breath. The past sixty seconds had been eventful!

As he leaned weakly against the wall Shad Conner, who had been occupied with the horses, appeared suddenly at the top of the old shaft. "What's the noise, Bill? Ain't havin' no trouble with a dead un, are ye?" he called derisively.

Though he knew that prolonged silence would lead to suspicion, Howard felt that he had no breath to answer naturally, not to mention imitating the gruff voice of Bill Sanford. He swept his hands about till he found the hat of his fallen foe. He put it on his own head.

Conner was becoming impatient. "What you doin', Bill?" he shouted anxiously. "Ain't you got that book yet?"

"Uh, huh!" Howard ventured in a muffled tone.

In order to stop further questioning he gave the rope a twitch as if about to climb out. Then he bent swiftly, and ran his hand under Sanford's coat till he found the pistol that the outlaw had been unable to reach in the tussle. With a trembling hand Howard thrust the weapon into his pocket. He grasped the rope uncertainly and with difficulty drew himself up. He would not have been surprised to feel a blow on the head as he neared the top, for he was by no means sure that he had fooled the man waiting there.

Exhausted with the effort of climbing, he drew himself out upon the ground and staggered weakly to his feet. With a determined grip on himself he swung round with the pistol in his hand. There was a suggestive click, and even in the darkness the astonished Conner could not mistake the shining barrel of the weapon thrust toward him.

"Hands up, Shad!" Howard called in a tone of forced naturalness. "Be-quick about it!" he added as the robber hesitated through sheer astonishment. Conner's hands went over his head, and he came near tumbling backward into the old mine. He mumbled and started as if he were looking at a ghost.

Howard went up behind him and felt about his waist till he was satisfied that the fellow carried no concealed weapons. Then with his knife he stooped and cut a two-foot length from the rope. The rest he let fall into the shaft. Admonishing his captive to keep his hands up, he tied them with the piece of rope under this class. "Hydrangeas arborescens" "Now get on your horse and ride ahead of me," he ordered. And Conner obeyed silently.

Reeling with blind dizziness, almost overcome by sudden nausea, Howard staggered to the other horse and mounted. He knew that it would be disastrous to let the captured robber suspect that he was in such a condition.

An hour later, with his prisoner still riding before him, Howard reigned up in front of a general store in Stover and called for the marshall. Then when he had turned his prisoner over to the officer and given directions for finding the other man he slipped from his horse, tottered weakly for a step or two, dropped to his knees and then let the earth rise up gently to meet him.

Douglas' Egyptian Liniment, always quick, always certain. Stops bleeding instantly. Cauterizes wounds and prevents blood poisoning. Splendid for muscular rheumatism.

SANDWICHES AGAIN

Whatever its present position may be, the sandwich is of noble origin. We are told that it was the Earl of Sandwich who first sponsored the custom of serving meat between two slices of bread. This idea marks the Earl as a fastidious, as well as a practical man. The sandwich was a forward step in improving both table manners and convenience in dining. For in the Earl's day, roast meat was a big part of the menu and forks had not come into general use.

Some of the sandwiches we see to-day give no hint of nobility. However, even the humblest one can be a noble work if it is fresh and trim. And some of the very elaborate ones often are tawdry and unappetizing in spite of the good ingredients which go into their making.

The whole is not better than its parts. A good sandwich starts with good materials. First of all there must be bread. It can be almost any kind. It should be moist and fresh, but several hours or a day old so that it is easy to cut and handle. If the crust is very crisp, wrap the loaf in a damp towel for a few minutes. It can then be cut without breaking and crumbling.

Of course, for cutting, a sharp knife is needed. Select one that is thin-bladed and flexible, but strong. It should be long enough to cut a loaf the long way, when needed. A knife with tiny, sharp saw-teeth on the cutting edge is good. An advantage of the saw-tooth knife is that it is not very good for cutting other foods and you will keep it especially for bread.

It will save time and materials if you will cut the bread to get the largest possible slices. Whenever practical, slice the bread the long way of the loaf. Spread and make the sandwiches in long slabs and when finished cut them into the sizes you like. If you are using nut bread or any rich bread that crumbles easily, it is better to cut small slices. Sometimes it helps to cut the loaf in half down the center the long way, then slice.

Thin, smooth mixtures can be spread onto the cut surface of the loaf before cutting each slice. This will prevent seeping the slices. Another precaution is to have butter at room temperature and to cream it thoroughly before spreading the bread. Cheese and pastes mixtures can be thinned with liquids, such as cream or milk, fruit juices or salad dressings, according to seasoning and flavoring desired.

Fillings should be finely chopped, thinly sliced or in pieces which will stay in or on the sandwich when it is being eaten. It should not be necessary to eat a sandwich with knife and fork. If you like sandwiches in mountainous or haystack formation, it is helpful to arrange them so that they can be taken off in layers for eating.

Vegetables and fruits for sandwiches should be crisp, firm and dry. Cut or chop them finely, but do not crush. Some spreads are made by mashing vegetables. In this case, mash the vegetables thoroughly and moisten with butter, cream, oil or mayonnaise to form a smooth paste.

Chill the fillings for cold sandwiches. If the sandwich is to be served hot, be sure the filling that goes into it is hot.

PRUNING FLOWERING SHRUBS

Shrubs should be pruned to promote development of strong branches and good foliage. Old or dead wood should be removed, particularly from the centre of the bush, so that light and air may circulate freely.

If the new growth is too crowded this also should be thinned out. It is not advisable to "trim" a shrub all round as this tends to make the growth more dense and the graceful habit of the shrub is lost. Of course, branches that have grown too long can be shortened but as a general rule growth should be cut out either from the ground or within a few inches of it.

Spring flowering shrubs form their buds early in summer of next season's bloom so that pruning must be done immediately after the bloom is over. If delayed until winter many of the flower buds will be destroyed and next year there will be little bloom.

Among the shrubs that should be treated in this way are lilac, mock orange, spiraea and viburnums. A fairly safe rule is to remove one-fifth of the oldest stems each year. In lilacs the difference between the size of the flowers on old wood and that on younger branches, is so great that it is difficult to believe they come from the same bush.

Summer bloomers which bloom on shoots of the current season's growth, should be pruned when dormant so that strong new growth is formed in spring; hydrangea paniculata, hybrid tea and hybrid peony roses and Tamarisk come under this class. Hydrangeas arborescens is cut down to the ground each year at the Central Experimental Farm and makes new growth and blooms well each season.

Many rose species, barberries and bush honeysuckles only need the dead wood removed. Old plants of rosa rugosa should have the old wood cut out near the base so that new strong shoots will grow and renew the plant.

Too much of our democracy consists in considering ourselves quite as good as anybody else, but stops short of considering anybody else quite as good as ourselves.

For the most part, simple fillings well seasoned make the best sandwiches. Often a spread of creamed butter is sufficient. With plain breads, add something to give flavor, such as chopped parsley and onion juice, horseradish, chutney, chopped ginger or other highly flavored ingredients.

Bran bread makes unusually good sandwiches. Bran has the property of absorbing and holding moisture. The bread itself will keep nicely for several days. Even very thin bran bread sandwiches do not dry out quickly. Bran is healthful, too. It adds bulk which most of us need in our diets. Many of the bran breads are rich in flavor and you can make bran bread sandwiches with very simple spread or just butter.

CREAM SHORTENING AND SUGAR WELL ADDED. Mash bananas, water and bran. Sift flour with baking powder, salt, and soda. Mix nuts with flour and add gradually to the first mixture. Stir in vanilla. Pour into greased loaf tin. Let stand 30 minutes and bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) one hour. Let cool before cutting. Yield: 1 loaf (8 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches).

BANANA BRAN NUT BREAD

1/2 cup shortening
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg (well beaten)
1 1/2 cups mashed banana
2 tablespoons water
1 cup bran
1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon soda
1/2 cup chopped nut meats
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

ALL-BRAN WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF MY DIET

Delicious Cereal Corrected His Constipation

If you suffer from constipation, read this fine letter:

"I have been troubled for years with constipation. During this time, I have tried almost every known remedy. Then some one recommended eating Kellogg's ALL-BRAN, and the proper results followed immediately."

"Since eating Kellogg's ALL-BRAN each morning, there has been a general improvement in my health without the ill effects that I formerly experienced when taking laxatives. Hereafter, Kellogg's ALL-BRAN will always be a part of my diet."—Mr. E. G. Himes (address furnished upon request).

Research shows Kellogg's ALL-BRAN provides "bulk" to exercise the intestines, and vitamin B to aid elimination. ALL-BRAN also supplies iron for the blood.

The "bulk" in ALL-BRAN is much like that in leafy vegetables. Isn't this cereal way safer than risking potent medicines?

Two tablespoons daily are usually sufficient to relieve ordinary constipation. With each meal, in serious cases, if not relieved this way, see your doctor.

Be sure to ask for Kellogg's ALL-BRAN. It contains much more needed "bulk" than part-bran products. In the red-and-green package. Made by Kellogg in London, Ontario.

MORE TOURISTS THIS YEAR

Motor tourist traffic to New Brunswick shows an increase of about 19 per cent. over the corresponding period of 1933, and inquiries from non-resident anglers seeking fishing dates in New Brunswick have jumped more than 40 per cent.

GUESS WHO'LL BE THE ELEPHANT

Harold—Mummy, we're going to play elephant at the zoo, and we want you to come.

Mother—What on earth can I do? Harold—You can be the lady who gives them peanuts and candy.

CENT A MILE ROUND TRIP BARGAIN FARES From ACTON AUG. 4 To TORONTO To MONTREAL and QUEBEC CITY AUG. 3-4 RETURN up to Monday, Aug. 6 Special Attractions—TORONTO—Aug. 4-5-6 Toronto Centennial Celebration—Canadian Corps Reunion Ask Agent for handbill with program. Fares, Tickets and Train Information from Agents CANADIAN NATIONAL F. H. BEATTIE, Station Agent—Phone 13

Did You Ever Stop to Think? By Editor R. Waite, Shawnee, Oklahoma E. J. Stackpole, Editor-in-Chief of the Harrisburg (Pa.) Telegraph, says: "Long since the value of advertising was recognized in commercial and business circles as a necessary asset of modern business practice. On a certain occasion I had a talk with the late John Wanamaker, whose firm has spent millions of dollars in advertising and tried to elicit a statement from him as to how he proved the advertising of his outstanding firm. "Well," said he, "we make no effort to check up on any particular advertisement or series of advertisements. We have discovered, however, that when we cease advertising or limit it too much the results are at once apparent in our sales. We believe that the newspaper is highly valuable as an incentive to purchasing the various commodities and when it is dropped for alleged economic reasons the effects are immediately noticeable in our stores. "There could be no higher testimony to the value of advertising than this of the great Merchant Prince who knew the game from the bottom up. "Emerging from an unparalleled economic depression which has had some influence upon advertising, I am persuaded that the use of newspaper space by merchants and others will contribute largely to a return to normal conditions of prosperity and business activity. Already in our own newspapers we find a disposition to return to those practices which have already been accepted as consistent with good business. "Another thing which might be mentioned is the necessity for Consistent Advertising, avoiding sporadic bursts of special sales which do not greatly impress the shopper. What we need today is return of faith in the country and in each other, and this can be accomplished through intelligent Advertising Programs"