

The Free Press' Short Story

The Roar of Black Water

DENNIS H. STOVALL

EDWIN BANNARD carried the heavy express box down the slippery river bank and set it in the rowboat. He gave no hint, by look or manner, that the chest contained twenty thousand dollars in gold and currency; yet he was uneasily aware of the lynx-eyed youth who stood quietly by, watching him transfer the mail and express from his pack horses to the skiff.

James Rice had appeared at the pole stable just as Edwin arrived over the trail. He was openly annoyed when the lanky youth made the request to cross the river with him in the rowboat. Edwin wanted to be accommodating, but he was thinking of that express box and its safety. He took one of the big revolvers that hung from James' belt, and he inwardly recalled the unfavorable reports he had heard about the fellow.

His uneasy gaze measured the mad rogue while he silently debated. He heard the deep-toned thundering of the muddy torrent as it roared through the canyon a mile below. The spring thaw was on, and the black water, at freshet level, whipped the tall willows on both shores. "I've a heavy load this trip, Jim," he told the waiting one. "The skiff won't carry both of us and the pack."

"You can make two trips," said James. "I'll wait. It would be a heap of bother, I know, but I'm mighty anxious to cross. I want to get home to-night. You see—I'm expectin'—"

His drawing words broke off falteringly while he gave Edwin a sidelong glance. "I'm expectin' Dad home," he finally said. "It's gone on for four years now since I saw him. I got word down at the Forks that he was let out on 'Tuesday.'"

"Oh, sure, Jim. That's fine!" stammered the carrier, struggling for the best thing to say. This unexpected announcement increased his uneasiness. While he transferred the last of the four mail pouches from the upper bank to the rowboat, he did some rapid calculating. If Burke Rice was released from prison on 'Tuesday, he probably had reached the Twin Peaks country by now, for this was Saturday morning. Four years ago old Burke had been tried and convicted of robbing a homesteader's cabin during the owner's absence.

He had served his term, and was coming home. He may already have reached the shanty back in the hills, or he might be waiting—somewhere on the trail. "I'm sorry, Jim, but I can't take you over," Edwin finally answered. "This boat won't carry both of us and the pack."

"I don't mind waitin'," persisted James, as he came down to the bank where the carrier was unlocking the mooring chain and putting the oars in the locks. "Honest, Ed, I'm mighty anxious to meet Dad. He will take the Mule Creek trail, and come straight through from the railroad. Four years—is a long time to wait."

Again the lanky youth broke off falteringly. A yearning, wistful look once more filled his eyes as he gazed beyond the river.

Edward Bannard paused, with one foot on the gunwale of the bobbing skiff. He felt constrained to take James over, although it would mean an extra trip with the boat; besides, he would be obliged to leave the express box and the mail unprotected. The code of the trail, however, is to render favors when possible. It seemed to Edwin that James deserved this one.

"I'll take you over!" the carrier suddenly decided. "Wait here till I come back!"

After fifteen minutes of hard rowing, Edwin landed the skiff on the opposite bank, where he unloaded the pack and stacked it in a pile at the foot of a tall pine. He covered it with a canvas tarpaulin and went to the corral gate to stroke the warm muzzles of the two ponies that had been whinnying to him. They would carry the load the remaining twenty miles to Twin Peaks.

"You'll have to wait a little while longer, boys!" said the carrier, with a final slap on their necks. "I'm going back across the river again."

"He thought he heard a noise just then from the log barn. He looked around the squatly structure and searched the clearing, but saw nothing other than a pair of busy pine squirrels carrying green cones to their nest. Everything was as he had left it on his outgoing trip three days ago.

He returned to the boat and was soon out on the swirling river. While his muscular arms moved rhythmically back and forth with each sweep of the oars, Edwin kept his gaze fixed on the tall pine that rose from the receding shore. He could see the canvas-covered pile lying undisturbed at the foot of the tree, and the two ponies patiently waiting at the corral gate. Not another moving object came within range of his vision.

James was at the river's edge, ready to get aboard when the skiff nosed up to the muddy bank. "Hold on—a few minutes—while I blow!" said Edwin.

He rested a while, and sent another searching gaze over the black water. All was quiet and peaceful on the other shore. "Take the stern seat, Jim!" he shortly ordered. "We'll go!"

Again he shoved off. During the trip that had elapsed since his first trip across the river, Edwin had been a fool. He had let his gaze drift to the treacherous current. The carrier now had his back to the tall pine, and he dared not look around even when he detected a changed expression in the squinting eyes of his passenger. Once or twice James muttered something, but his words could not be heard above the roar and the thunder of the mad river.

The skiff was now more than half way across, but with the most dangerous portion yet to cover. Edwin found himself suddenly gripped by an overwhelming anxiety. James gave a start and partly lifted himself from the seat. "Sit still!" shouted the carrier. "You'll capsize the boat!"

James slumped down but did not shift his gaze from shore. It was a hazardous thing to do, but the uneasy carrier decided to take one quick backward glance. His darting gaze took in every detail near the tall pine. He saw the canvas-covered pack at the foot of the tree, and something more. A stooped, gaunt-framed man was creeping like a chimpanzee near the border of the clearing. He was moving from the woods straight toward the pine!

Edwin Bannard became at once confused. He muddled a stroke and the skiff alighted from its course. A dreadful fear and anxiety for the safety of the express-box and its treasure seized him.

"Look out, Ed! Hold 'er! Hold 'er!" cried James in a voice of terror. He leaped up and made a wild reach for the oars. He might have seized them but for Edwin's upstart boat. The carrier kicked him squarely in the chest and hurled him back to the stern seat. James narrowly missed going overboard.

The skiff was sucked into a whirlpool. It spun dizzily, drawn closer and closer to the centre of the maelstrom. Without warning it reared on end. "We'll have to jump and dive!" yelled Edwin. "We're going down!" He dropped the oars and tensed his muscles, ready to leap, filling his laboring lungs with all the air they would take.

James clung to the boat, shouting a hoarse and desperate call shoreward. "Dad! Dad! Help—help! We're in the whirl—"

His cry was cut off by the terrific crash of the boat as it was sucked into the growing maelstrom. Like a thing of paper it was crumpled into a shape-

less mass and drawn beneath the black water.

At the instant of its going under, both youths jumped. Edwin felt himself drawn down, down, as though he were in the grip of a giant hand. He held his breath until his lungs burned and his whole body stung with pain. He failed to touch bottom, and rose at last, strangling and struggling, to the surface.

When he had cleared his eyes of the dirty water, he discovered James Rice floundering in the black current only a yard away. Another second and they were both in the grasp of the whirlpool again. Struggle as they might, they could not free themselves.

"Help, Dad! Help!" cried James in a strangled voice. He was fast wearing himself out.

Edwin tried to get near him. Both were drawn down together. This time Edwin struck bottom. He seized James' arm and pushed him off, to shove him clear of the whirlpool. He then swam under water as far as he could before coming up.

At last he rose, spluttering and coughing, his strength almost gone. The icy current chilled him to the bone. He barely could keep afloat. When his eyes cleared, however, he saw James shore-ward through the willows near the shore. The long arm of the man on the bank reached out and drew him in.

The swift current was taking Edwin rapidly downstream. He gave a muffled call for help.

All manner of thoughts and emotions swept through Bannard's agonized mind during the short period of black uncertainty. The carrier lifted his head when he heard a shout from shore. Through blinded eyes he saw that gaunt, stooped figure running along the crest of the bank, swinging a rope, his own pack rope.

"Pull in, boy! Come closer if you can!" called Burke Rice. "I'll throw you a line!"

Edwin summoned the last ounce of his latent power for the feeble strokes that bore him nearer shore, close enough to clutch the rope when it splashed the muddy current near his hand. The relentless grip of a drowning man was in his benumbed fingers. In his ears sounded the roaring thunder of black water.

When the carrier returned to consciousness, he was lying in the warm sun with his saddle blanket wrapped about him. The deep-set eyes of Burke Rice peered anxiously into his own. He saw the lined prison-pallid features break into a smile. "Mighty glad to see you comin' round agin, boy," said the returned mountaineer. "That was a close shave, for both you and Jim."

"It sure was, Dad!" A familiar voice spoke from near by.

"I never would have gotten out only for your help, Ed," said James gratefully. "It's mighty fine to be with Dad once more!"

The carrier raised up and stretched his sore arms. His gaze shifted quickly to the big pine. Scarcely-anxiety quickly troubled him.

Burke Rice's knotty hand touched him in kindly restraint. "Laze easy, boy, a while longer. Till your blood gets to flowin' good. Don't worry about your pack. It's right there where you left it. I could have been loadin' it on your ponies, but I'm waitin' your order!"

Edwin Bannard tossed off the blanket and rose to his feet. He was smiling now when he looked deep into the older man's glowing eyes. "You have my order, Burke," he told the man. "We'll all take the trail together!"

PRUNING OF APPLE TREES

In order to develop a well balanced tree, with main branches evenly spaced, pruning is necessary. Four main branches, with a central leader, is usually the aim, the side branches evenly spaced around the trunk and six to eight inches apart ascending the trunk. The side branches should be evenly spaced around the trunk and six to eight inches apart ascending the trunk. It is necessary to direct the growth from year to year, as otherwise the branches on one side may grow faster than on the other. The faster growing branches should be lightly headed in at the tip. The weaker and slower-growing main branches should not be cut at all at the tip of the branch, only some of the weaker lateral growths being eliminated. To do this annual moderate pruning is essential.

After three years of age, when the tree should be in good fruiting, the pruning should be confined to a thinning out of the weaker, slow-growing lateral branches and those which are likely to cross each other, or one of two branches competing for the same space. The best fruiting branches with good fruiting buds should be left. A judicious thinning of the small lateral growths, particularly those branches which may be bunched together outside and which obstruct sunlight should be given first consideration.

The heading back of fruit trees is necessary if they are to be kept low, and this can usually be done by heading back the leading terminal shoots without the severe repressive pruning so often practiced. The removal of branches reduces both fruiting wood and leaf area and very often is so severe that best growth and production are not possible. Annual light, corrective rather than severe repressive pruning should be the aim.

OTHER WAY ABOUT

"Was your landlord put out when you asked him to trust you for another month?"

"No, indeed; I was."

LABOR DIRECTOR



Formerly Labor M.P. for Hamilton, Humphrey Mitchell has been named director of Labor transference at Ottawa. Mr. Mitchell's duties will have to do with the transfer of relief camp workers to other tasks as the camps are closed.

HINTS ON GROWING ASPARAGUS

Asparagus will grow on a wide variety of soils, but the warm rich, deep, sandy loams with a clay subsoil are preferred, as these soils are open and porous, permitting the development of an extensive root system.

Asparagus is a permanent crop, therefore it is advisable to give special attention to the preparation of the soil. Summer-fallowing the land for one season and applying well-rotted manure in the fall is advised. It is important that the land be used for asparagus be free from weeds and grasses.

In prairie areas where winter frosts are severe, spring planting has given more satisfactory results than fall planting. Plants one year old have produced larger shoots and have produced crops for longer period than have older ones.

Plant as early in the spring as the soil will permit, the plants being spaced 1 1/2 to 3 feet apart in the row. The rows may be covered 6 to 7 inches deep in light soils and 4 to 5 inches deep in heavy soils, care being taken to spread the roots out in their natural position. Asparagus is set deeply because the crowns gradually grow upwards as the plants grow older, also it allows manure to be worked into the soil without injury to the crowns.

No shoots are cut until the third season, when only the strongest ones are used. Cutting may begin in earliest the fourth season. With proper care, asparagus will produce satisfactorily for many years. At the Dominion Experimental Station, Scott, Sask., the varieties Colossal and Argenteuil have been grown successfully in the same plantation for over 15 years.

Late in the fall of each year the top growth may be cut off and manure applied. This is worked into the soil every spring. The destruction of tops is advised for the purpose of helping to control diseases and insects.

THE SHORTAGE

Two Georgia Negroes were discussing the financial condition of the country. They didn't agree.

"You're all wrong," one vociferated. "Dey ain't no money shortage. Ah asked mah bankah is he out of money, and heuk me in de vault an' showed me piles o' money. An' Ah says could he let me have jus' a little. An' he says, 'sh' he could. Has Ah any collat'ral?' An' Ah hasn't. Now dey's who's de mattuh wid dis country. Dey's plenty o' money but we're jus' runnin' sh'nt on collat'ral."

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VEGETABLES FOR THE HOME GARDEN

It is now time to think about the seed required for the vegetable garden. Many varieties are offered in seed catalogues, practically all of which are good for certain purposes. The object at this time is to give a short list of the kinds likely under varying conditions to be as satisfactory as any.

Beans, Dwarf: Round Pod Kidney Wax, Refugee Wax, Stringless Green Pod, and Refugee Green Pod. Pole: Kentucky Wonder Wax and Green Pod. Beets: Detroit Dark Red, globe and Detroit Half-long. Carrots: Chantenay and Danvers Half-long. Cabbage: Golden Age, early; Glory of Enkhuisen, medium, and Danish Headhead for late keeping; Danish Stonehead, purple, for pickling; Cauliflower: Snowball and Early Erfurt. Celery: Golden Self-blanching, Corn: Golden Sunshine, Golden Bantam and Country Gentleman, a late white sort. Cucumbers: White Spine and Snows Pickling. Lettuce: Grand Rapids, open head, and New York, cabbage head. Muskmelon: Lake Champlain and Hackensack. Watermelon: Pinner's Early. Preserving Melon: Colorado Ostrander. Extra Early Flat Red, Globe Danvers, and for transplanting, Cranston Excelsior; for pickling, Barkella. Peas: Alaska, very early; Gradus or Prosperity and Thomas Laxton, medium, and Stratagem and Telephone, late. Parsnips: Mellow Crown, Peppers: Herald's Earliest. Parsley: Yellow Field. Radish: French Breakfast and Icicle. Squash: Boston Marrow Champion. Pumpkin: Small Sugar and Golden and Green Hubbards. Vegetable Marrow, both bush and trailing.

Splach: King of Denmark. Tomato: Bonny Best and Alacerty. Turnip: Golden Ball. Egg Plant: Black Beauty. Herbs: Summer Savory, Sage, Sweet Marjoram and Mint.

Crops such as peas, lettuce, onions, all root crops and herbs, start at a low temperature and may be planted to the open ground as soon as it is dry enough to work. Cabbage, cauliflower and celery may be started at the same time in the open for later transplanting. Tomatoes, peppers and egg plants should be started in a hotbed eight weeks before transplanting to the open when danger from frost is past. Beans, corn, pumpkin, squash and cucumbers are planted late in May when the ground is warm.

SO DISCOURAGING

A Scottish caddy, explaining to a visitor why there was little golf in the district during the winter said: "If it's no snow, it's frost! If it's no frost, it's rain; if it's no rain, it's wind; and if it's a fine day, it's the Sawbath."

FACTOGRAPHS

All desert creatures are provided muscularly with the ability to shut out from their nostrils and eyes the sand that is blown by the strong winds. Most of the insects are wingless, that they may not be blown away.

Steamers are called tramp steamers when they do not belong to any regular steamship company but are operated by individuals and have no regular routes.

DOWN

1-Dry, an wine 6-Settlement 2-Hair of sheep 7-Cultivar, etc. 3-Like 8-Hypothetical force super- 4-Lingotta 9-A watch of 5-Infants 10-articles of the dead

CROSS WORD PUZZLE

Grid for cross word puzzle with numbers 1-44

ACROSS 1-To trade 2-Year (abbr.) 3-Shaft of a column 4-Colum of dawn 5-A roll 6-Character in troubled life of Dan McGrew 7-Together 8-Title of a knight 9-Vended 10-A probability 11-Variant of hammer (plural) 12-Serf 13-Adopt 14-Postscript 15-Co-ordinat-

DOWN 1-Graves 2-Gentlemen 3-Blondes 4-Blonde 5-Unbeliever 6-Flavored water-tea 7-Form of the verb "to be" 8-Lake port on Lake Erie in N. W. New York 9-Observe verb "to be" 10-Internal 11-Plant 12-Palpitate 13-Euphonic form of AD 14-Summerize in water 15-Observe verb "to be" 16-Fourth state of the scale 17-Lake Erie in N. W. New York 18-Observe verb "to be" 19-Fourth state of the scale

C O C K S R I F L E O D O R W Y T R A M P R E F E R B L O N D E S P A L P I T A T E E U P H O N I C F O R M O F A D F L A V O R E D W A T E R - T E A F O R M O F T H E V E R B " T O B E " I N T E R N A L P L A N T P A L P I T A T E E U P H O N I C F O R M O F A D S U M M E R I Z E I N W A T E R O B S E R V E V E R B " T O B E "

PHOTOGRAPH DISPROVES STATEMENT FROM BERLIN



Camouflaged German cannon point at France from the barracks square, near Cologne. Although German official sources stated that no heavy cannon were moved into the Rhineland demilitarized zone in the army's recent re-occupation of the sector, our cameraman found these 144's unlimbered and dressed in full war paint, as they point toward France. The cannon were found in a slaughterhouse yard. The gunners are quartered at a nearby schoolhouse. Meanwhile, Adolf Hitler addressed huge throngs during his "election" campaign. He is shown ABOVE in his first appearance in the Rhine re-militarized zone. This photo was taken at Karlsruhe.

SCOTT'S SCRAPBOOK by R. J. SCOTT

Advertisement for Scott's Scrapbook featuring a portrait of Montgomery Ward and various stamps and cutouts.