

The Free Press Short Story

GREEN TIMBER

JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS

THE native's paddle was jerked from his coffee-colored hands by the half-submerged root of a tree, to go flying along in the raging, muddy current of the Cordoba River. The second paddler had just received orders from Lee Vines to make a landing above the falls. Now, however, his paddle remained frozen above the murky waters and he stared with wide black eyes ahead to the place where flanking walls of jungle verdure framed a patch of blue sky.

Penn Townsend's blue eyes narrowed as the young man gazed ahead to the place where the river fell off into space. Orinoco Falls! He snatched the paddle from the native's stiff hands as Lee half turned in the dugout with the same intention. The rumble of the falls had risen to a roaring crescendo.

"Row for your life!" screamed Lee Vines hoarsely. His voice was barely audible above the thunderous roar of the falls. Penn Townsend was forcing all the strength of his rough-hewn body into his strokes, his tanned face strained and grim under his broad-brimmed sombrero.

It seemed that tons bore against his paddle as he tried to force the dugout toward shore against the seething protest of the current. His arms ached in their sockets and a paralyzing numbness took possession of him as he realized he was losing the fight.

Closer and closer he approached to what seemed the brink of the earth. Ripping spray bathed his hot face, his breath came in sobbing gasps. The lean face of Lee Vines was haggard as he crouched in the center of the dugout. "Can't make the shore, Penn!" he shouted. "Current's swifter there! Try shooting the falls; it's our only chance."

Penn's rugged face hardened as his blue eyes darted once to the shore where the flooded river whirled over the submerged banks. Lee was right. The current was swifter there. What chance of safety did they stand, however, going over the falls? None, it seemed to Penn, none at all! Yet he knew that Lee was right, that but one course lay before them. "Warn the natives!" he called hoarsely.

Lee rattled off some words of a native Brazilian dialect while Penn veered the nose into the current with one powerful thrust. The natives turned apprehensively, the whites of their fear-widened eyes showing prominently. The dugout was flying forward, propelled by Penn's swiftly-dipping paddle.

Suddenly it pitched crazily, the prow above space. Penn was dimly aware of hurrying his paddle away, of clutching with cold fingers the sides of the dugout as the support dropped away beneath them. Green banks, iridescent mist, a tenuous thread of water mingled before his eyes, and his ears seemed bursting with the din.

The breath was pounded out of his body as he was immersed, pounded down—down by mountains of tumbling waters. He claved his way to the surface and saw Lee gasping and gagging near by. The natives were swimming toward one bank, and toward this bank Penn towed his friend.

Lee contrived a faint, twisted smile when they reached the bank. "It's all over now," he said, watching Penn peculiarly with his gray eyes. "Our supplies gone—our dugout smashed—nothing to do but turn back to the last native village we passed until this food goes down."

Penn stiffened, and his blue eyes grew cold and grim. "Turn back with half the men on your father's rubber plantation down with yellow fever? What are you thinking of, Lee? We can't turn back."

"And we can't go on," continued Lee. "The natives at that last village we passed will keep us until we have a chance to get back to the plantation."

"We'll go ahead," said Penn firmly. "Go ahead? Impossible! You forget that there are lakes and swamps ahead, which cannot be crossed by foot!"

Having come in by aeroplane to take his position as timekeeper on the Vines plantation, Penn was not ignorant of the hydrography of the region. He was aware that the Cordoba degenerated into swamps and lakes along its course and that foot passage along this route would be well-nigh impossible.

His trip in by aeroplane from Para, Brazil, however, had shown him one other important fact in geography. As the bird flies, Orinoco Falls was perhaps not more than three or four days' march through the jungle. Such a march would end on the Tocantins River, a waterway leading with boats.

Before mentioning this fact to Lee Vines, Penn ordered the native Brazilians to salvage the wrecked dugout from the rocks below the falls. This they did, only to find that it contained not a particle of provisions. A machete, the four-foot long blade used on plantations for every conceivable purpose, had been driven into the side of the dugout by the fall, and this was the only article saved.

"This machete will cut out a way through the jungle, anyhow," declared Penn. "Three or four days, and we'll be on the Tocantins. A boat will pick us up there, taking us to Para. And a

silence. As from far off, they heard Penn call, "Follow my trail!"

Darkness made this well-nigh impossible for Lee, but the natives were accustomed to this twilight world. They led the way, and came at last upon Penn standing on the brink of a small dark stream. Before him lay a small river pig. "We eat to-night," he called heartily.

He had a few matches in a waterproof container. They built a fire and roasted the pig. Eating it on the bank of the little stream, Penn watched the dark surface of the water, listening to the steady chant of the jungle.

"Realize what you're up against now, Penn!" demanded Lee, as he wiped his hands on a piece of succulent moose. "Days of this sort of thing! A mistake in our directions, and we're hopelessly lost! What do you say we follow our trail back in the morning?"

Penn's rugged face was grim in the dancing light of the flames. "Go back while those natives are rolling and tossing with yellow fever? Never! The moon will be up before long. We can build a raft then, and get across to the other side of this stream. Then it'll be behind us by morning!"

Lee snorted. "Aren't we tired enough to rest, now?"

Penn said nothing, watching the great black bats, whirling overhead. When the moon rose above the blackness of the jungle, Penn began to feel two-inch sticks with the caution to his cut scores of them; then he cut a number of llama vines, using them to fasten the sticks together into a raft.

The raft would hold only two. He and Lee made a rope of llama vines, giving one end to the natives. The raft sank just below the surface with the weight of the two while men on it, and they pulled it cautiously forward.

Great, loglike shapes broke the surface. Alligators! Penn caught his breath as he pulled the raft forward. One alligator moved toward them, its head barely showing where two bulging eyes cut the water. "Cut it short!" whispered Lee, his bronzed face anxious.

Penn exerted all his strength against the pole, and the raft moved clumsily through the water. Suddenly the alligator thrashed the surface with its powerful tail, Penn threw himself to the winds. The raft seemed to leap forward; then bumped sharply on the shore. The creature dived under the raft, upset it, and then vanished in the mud.

"Just his way of being playful, I guess," Penn said with white lips as he climbed, dripping, up onto the shore. They righted the raft, found that the llama vine rope the natives had held was still intact, and instructed the Brazilians to pull the raft to their own side of the stream. This they did, poling across without mishap.

When Penn and Lee awoke the next morning, however, the two natives were gone. The raft on the other side of the stream told its own story. The natives had felt the trip too hazardous and the near accident with the alligator had caused them to desert the little expedition. "I guess they're waiting for you, Penn," said Lee tauntingly. "Now are you going to turn back?"

"No," said Penn stubbornly. "I'm glad they left the machete though." On and on they went, doggedly hacking their way. That second night was notable for two things. Lee Vines felt ill with malaria, and a jaguar with a crippled hind paw stayed just outside the range of light of their camp fire.

They expected it to be gone by morning; but it was not. Perhaps its recently injured paw made it impossible for the jaguar to attack game with its former quickness, and it saw possible food in the presence of the white men.

Penn tried to drive the beast away. It would retreat only a few paces, snarling, and then it would leap after him when he returned to Lee. That night it was again just outside the range of their fire.

As Lee grew weaker and was able to do less work while he required more help, the jaguar lessened its distance, watching them with merciless, yellow-green eyes.

The fifth night, Penn, used his last match and tossed away the waterproof container. They had eaten no food all

day. Once he had been about to catch a pink ibis, but the bird was too much for Penn's overtaxed strength. Lee stared disconsolately into the fire, his body shaking with malaria. For a long time he deliberated without speaking. "Penn," he said at length, "you'd better leave me. I can't go on much farther without help; but you can get through by yourself."

Penn laughed, but the sound seemed forced and strained in his own ears. "Leave you nothing, Lee? Another day and we'll be through."

"That's what you said two days ago. 'I'm sure of it now.'"

Lee said nothing, watching the bottomless yellow-green eyes outside the circle of firelight. Hungry eyes!

The next morning he was muttering in delirium. Penn slashed a long trail, then carried Lee to the end of it. Lee's reduced weight seemed unbearable, but Penn knew Lee would have no chance with that hungry jaguar pursuing them.

"That night he thought he could hear the distant clamor of the river. Was it just his imagination? Was he becoming delirious, like Lee?"

Penn eased his friend to the soft, rotting earth of the jungle floor. He mopped his damp brow, staring back to the place where the jaguar watched him. "Knows we're just about all in! Thinking of attacking us to-night! And we haven't any matches, either!"

Darkness fell like a curtain and the pulsating chant of the jungle grew louder, more insistent. Penn had to keep his weary eyes open. He saw the phosphorescent-like eyes gleaming not far away, and threw something from time to time to be answered by a low snarl. He knew the jaguar would attack once he relaxed his vigilance.

"That vigil seemed endless. A pale dawn began to drive away the intense blackness. Lee stirred uneasily, opened his eyes. Temporarily, his mind seemed quite clear. 'The jaguar's just about decided to attack!'"

"I'm afraid so, Lee!"

Penn rose slowly. The jaguar snarled and held its ground. "Come on," said Penn. "Perhaps he won't attack."

He tried to raise Lee, but his friend was too weak to stand. He got Lee over his shoulder somehow, and staggered a few steps.

"Look out!" called Lee in warning. Penn lowered Lee against the bole of a mahogany tree and turned. The jaguar was crouching there.

"Leave me," pleaded Lee. "I'm just a drag. If one of us stays, per—"

"We're both staying," said Penn doggedly. "He's coming!"

The warning was cut short by a cry from Lee. Unnoticed by either of them, a boa constrictor had weaved its way down a branch above the jaguar. As the jaguar was about to spring, the boa constrictor released itself on the beast.

Its gigantic coils were wrapped about the yellow-brown body with its dark spots. The jaguar was snatching and tearing with its claws, the snake's tail thrashing for a better hold. The struggles of the jungle cat grew feebler and feebler.

"God's deliverance!" said Penn huskily. Duck had fallen when they reached the river, although they had traversed only a few miles. A boat bound for Para saw them and took them aboard. The captain gave Lee quinine to relieve the malaria.

After a good meal, Lee, staring at the jungles from the shore, said, "Forgive me for misjudging you, Penn. You'll be Dad's overcoat!"

Penn's eyes widened. "You're still sick, old son!"

Lee shook his head impatiently. "No; I'm quite well. Remember what you said about quitting in that football game? Well, I happened to be one of the few persons who knew you did, Penn. I was in the stadium, watching you through field glasses."

"Dad liked your work tremendously, wanted to promote you to overseer of the whole plantation, despite your youth. He admired the way you took hold of things, your bulldog determination. I liked you, too, but I couldn't forget your quitting when your team needed you. Dad said you must have buried that characteristic, if you'd had it."

"He admitted you were 'green timber,'"

untried, unseasoned. But he said this trip down the flooded Cordoba would be your test. It would prove the green timber had been seasoned. I said if emergency arose, you'd take the easy way out. Dad declared you wouldn't. Neither of us contemplated the upset in the falls. That was more of a test than we'd expected."

"But I did try to make you back down all along the way, Penn. To test you. You wouldn't back down! The Penn Townsend who quit in that football game was not the Penn Townsend who brought me through the jungle when I was down with malaria. That Penn who failed himself is dead; long live the new one!"

HEE WORTH

Sandy Gordon was getting married, and as the wedding day drew near, he began to find that it was costing him more than he bargained for so he asked a crony what the minister charged for officiating at the ceremony.

His friend replied: "Well, Sandy, after I got married I asked the minister: 'How much am I due ye for that?'"

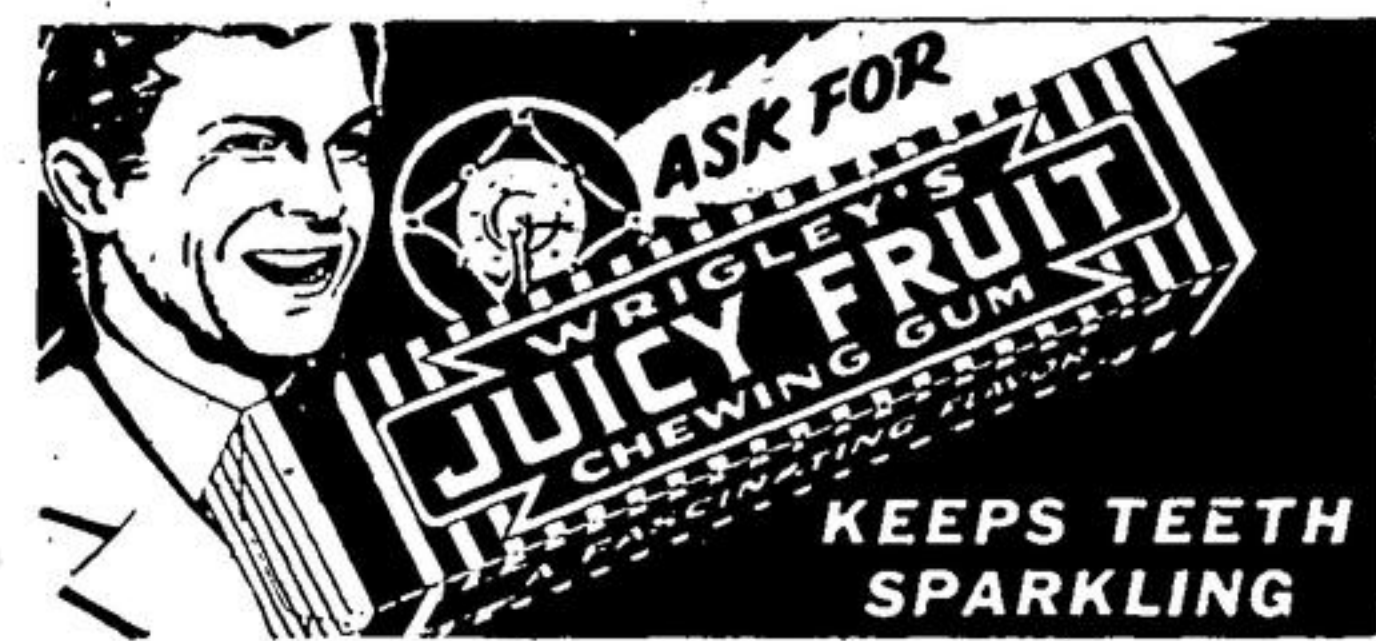
"Oh," he replied, "just what ye think she's worth," so I handed him a shilling."

"You're far too generous," said he, and handed me back a shapence. An' d'ye ken, Sandy, he was right."

CLEAN SUMMER CAMPS OF POISON IVY TEST

The eradication of poison ivy in the vicinity of holiday camps, summer cottages, and tourist resorts is being undertaken by various communities throughout Canada. Although nothing is so effective against poison ivy as tillage this method is usually out of the question where eradication is most needed. In woods and rocky situations in the close proximity to temporary or permanent residences. As pointed out in the circular issued by the Dominion Department of Agriculture entitled "Poison Ivy," eradication by hand is a laborious substitute for tillage, but removal of the pest bodily is often the simplest and surest way to clean out small areas around dwellings. Incidentally, it is an interesting point that cattle, sheep, and goats can eat poison ivy with impunity and seem to relish it.

Extensive tests of chlorate herbicides have shown them to have advantages in several respects over other chemical weed-killers. Sodium chlorate is a compound at present cheapest and easiest to procure, as it is sold by all wholesale druggists. A 10 per cent solution (one pound to a gallon of water) of sodium chlorate is applied as a spray at the rate of a gallon for 200 square feet. The first application may be made about the first of June when the leaves are well spread.



The Duke of Kent Opens Hospital



The Duke of Kent is shown ABOVE, chatting with a little patient at the Lord Mayor Trevelyan Cripples Hospital and College at Alton, Hants, England, following his official opening of the new building. The Duke met this little chap during an inspection of the hospital.

Potatoes

NEW 6 LARGE SIZE 25c

Oranges

Sweet and Juicy
Nice Size
Per Dozen 17c

Lettuce

Nice Size
Firm Heads
Each 5c

Tomatoes

HOTHOUSE
HOME GROWN
Delicious Flavor, lb. 19c

Bananas

Full Flavor
Golden Yellow
Nice Size—Dozen 21c

New Beets — Cabbage — Cucumbers, Etc. SALE

CARROLL'S

LIMITED

SPECIAL

Orange Jellied CANDY 2 Lbs. 25c

McLaren's Lemon PUNCH Bottle 23c

Carew's Dry GINGER ALE (Dozen) 12c

Carroll's Economy COFFEE Pound 21c

Carroll's Golden TIP TEA 1-lb. Package 33c

Good Sized PRUNES 2 Lbs. 19c

Keen's English MUSTARD 2-oz. Tin 14c

Worah JELLY MAKER Package 14c

For Jam or Jelly CERTO Bottle 25c

Red Jar RUBBERS Dozen 5c

Our PEANUT BUTTER 2 Lbs. 25c

Rich Old CHEESE Pound 25c

Picnic Specials

Scorching July days and picnics go hand in hand. What a relief it is to leave the stifling city behind for the clear freshness of the country air. And what a treat of an appetite everyone has! Here are some suggestions for the lunch.

Party "Blue Back" Red SALMON 2 1/2-lb. Tins 25c

Delicious Orange Mallow BISCUITS 2 Pounds 27c

Table Shakers of Ground PEPPER 1 1/2-oz. Jar 6c

Plain or Iodized SALT Shaker Pkg. 6c

For a SAFER, WHITER, HOSPITAL-CLEAN Wash

SPECIAL 18c Look for the heavy BLUE BOX

Use CONCENTRATED SUPER SUDS

FREE Glass Bowl with Kellogg's New ALL-WHEAT 2 Packages 25c

Quaker Good WHITE CORN No. 2 Tin 9c

Aylmer Choice TOMATOES 3 No. 2 Tins 25c

Carroll's LIMITED

SPECIAL

Fraser Bonedless CHICKEN 7-oz. Tin 25c

King Oscar Branding SARDINES 2 Tins 27c

Victory Sweet Mixed PICKLES 27-oz. Jar 23c

McLaren's Stuffed OLIVES 3-oz. Jar 11c

Shelled Broken WALNUTS 1-lb. 17c

Liberty Brand CHERRIES 3-oz. Bottle 9c

Cowan's Protection COCOA 1-lb. Tin 25c

Nestle's or St. Charles' Evaporated MILK 3 16-oz. Tins 25c

Campbell's PORK AND BEANS 21-oz. Tin 9c

Campbell's Cooked SPAGHETTI 16-oz. Tin 9c

Jellit JELLY Powders 7 Pkgs. 25c

Campbell's MARSH-MALLOW'S 1-lb. Package 23c

STORE CLOSING SATURDAY NIGHT—10.30 P. M.

MILL STREET

Free Delivery

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