

# The Aztec Mystery

A Thrilling Story of the Old West

BY MURRAY LEINSTER

## SYNOPSIS.

Sonny Holman, believing he is the rightful owner of the Aztec, holds up the mine payrolls. Janet Laurier, who holds legal title to the Aztec, believes that Sonny is at the bottom of numerous ore thefts and offers a reward for his capture. Janet is kidnapped by Garcia's gang and Sonny follows and rescues her. Tilford, the Aztec manager, imports mine guards. Two of them kill Jake Hornaby, Sonny's friend. In the absence of the sheriff, Sonny, single-handed, arrests them, then rides out of town. News comes of a cattle raid. Sonny rides after the rustlers and his horse, Garouder, is shot by two of Janet's mine guards. He brings back the cattle. Under the name of John Doe he runs for sheriff, opposing the candidacy of Tilford.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Tilford stopped and stared at the placard. It had been hastily printed, so much was evident, but it meant more than a political announcement to Tilford.

Hoofs sounded behind him. Thompson, of the Circle Bar, and Jamison, of the Star Wheel, reined up. Tilford nodded nervously. "Hello."

"Hello," said Thompson grimly. "We wanted to talk to you."

"Hell's bells, yes!" grunted Jamison. His grizzled moustache seemed to bristle. "What in blazes," he roared, "d'you mean by trying to pass off a poor fake like that letter you sent out to the Circle Bar?"

"I don't know what you mean," protested Tilford.

"That letter," said Thompson grimly, "was supposed to be from Garcia to Sonny Holman, asking him to help raid my herds." He regarded Tilford steadily. "It's on exactly the same kind of paper the Aztec Mine uses for its letterheads," he explained softly. "It's spelled too well—much better than a greaser like Garcia would spell. The man who wrote it had just heard of the raid. It wasn't written until after I'd phoned in to town and asked for riders."

"I don't get you," said Tilford nervously. "I assure you—"

"Yuh get us, all right," growled Jamison. "Yuh, faked that there letter 't set us against Sonny Holman! Us bein' durned fools, yuh came near doin' it. But that there poster yuh readin', fawzin' John Doe, that there's the result. An' we goin' 't put through the stuff at the courthouse new 't make him a reg'lar candidate. Yuh got no more chance of bein' elected than a snowball in hell."

"I—I've got to be going," said Tilford nervously. He moved away with as much haste as he could, short of outright flight.

He reached the mine enclosure, and a greasy halfbreed Mexican lounging before the office grinned at him. Tilford swallowed suddenly and stopped short. Then he waveringly motioned the Mexican to come with him and led the way into his private office.

"Senior Garcia," he says, "grinned the halfbreed, 'w'at 't hell you goin' do?" Tilford gnawed at his finger ends. He was shaking all over. The question was clear enough to him. Garcia wanted to know what he was going to do about the guards who had cut off his ore stealing. How was he going to square himself for having double-crossed Garcia? What inducement would he offer Garcia not to have him shot or knifed at the earliest opportunity?

"I am taking care of him for a friend," said Janet abruptly. "Mr. Tilford will pay you for your trouble. And thank you."

The horse doctor bowed profoundly and departed, though with an expression in which curiosity unsatisfied still lingered. Janet stroked the big stallion's silky muzzle. "I hate to do it, Gunpowder," she said uncertainly. "But I have to."

Gunpowder nuzzled her shoulder affectionately. Janet herself had supervised his removal from Little Canyon after he had been brought down by a bullet from one of the mine guard's pistols, and he had ridden in state in an ore wagon that had been carefully padded. And for a week Janet had visited him daily, bringing lump sugar and tidbits dear to the heart of a horse.

Janet put her arm about his neck. Somehow she was not very happy. "Don't you see Gunpowder?" she asked uncertainly. "My father is in a terrible position. He hasn't been very nice to me sometimes, Gunpowder—but he is my father. If we can't raise some money somehow he'll have to go to prison. And this mine is all we

"Look here," he managed to say nervously, at last. "I'm going to be the next sheriff. I'll split the county with Garcia. Tell him I'll give him a free hand rustling and now and then let him get away with a payroll of the mine and I'll promise not to interfere with anything he chooses to do among the Mexicans."

"Si?" queried the halfbreed. "You let heem tek girls hol' up stores an' tip heem off when men chase heem?"

"Yes," agreed Tilford unhesitatingly. "I won't make it too raw, but we'll work together."

The halfbreed rolled a corn husk cigarette and lighted it, sprawling out familiarly in the office chair. "An' w'at else?" he demanded insolently. "Garcia, 'e dor' lak you so much now. You are buyin' your life, hombre. Pay high."

Tilford shuddered. He knew he was buying his life. The system of terrorizing that had made the ore wagon drivers docile aids in Garcia's high-grading scheme had proved its efficiency more than once. More than one man had disappeared very quietly. More than one case of "fever" would have shown traces of arsenic if pains had been taken to look. And especially, more than one man had found bullets plopping unexpectedly out of nowhere and singing unpleasantly close to him.

Tilford had ordered enough of these events to know that his life was not worth much if Garcia chose to have his assassinated. A courageous man, of course, would have taken the chance. But Tilford was hardly a courageous man.

"What else does Garcia want?" he asked dully. "He can't drive me too far!"

The halfbreed grinned at him and spoke one word. And Tilford licked suddenly dry lips and said weakly: "All right. I'll arrange it. I—I—"

He choked suddenly. He could not speak any more.

The halfbreed was laughing when he went out. Meeting Janet on her way to the mine office, he leered anticipatorily at her as she passed.

The horse doctor inspected the fore hoof of a big black stallion and stood up with some pride.

"Now you look at that, ma'am," he said proudly. "There ain't another pheelician in Gila County nor the state neither, could ha' done that as neat as I did. You take one of these here drenchin', physikin' hoss doctors an' he'd ha' used the iron on this animal an' you'd 'a' had a lamed hawss, good for nothin'."

But me, ma'am, in less'n a week I got him as good as new if not better. That there leg, ma'am, is somethin' to be proud of."

Janet, her under lip caught beneath her teeth, nodded absently. "Can he be ridden now?" she asked.

"Well, ma'am," said the vet judiciously, "if it was a ordinary hoss, I'd say no, ma'am. But this here is a speerited animal. Keep him stabled much longer ar' he'll get to frettin'."

It ain't as if he'd lost a lotta blood. That bullet just about nicked his hoof, an' 'twas the shock that numbed the whole hock more'n anything else that messed him up. Yes, ma'am, I rek'n you can ride him. I wouldn't be goin' too far, y' know. But I'd give him a enough exercise to keep him gentled."

They were in the stables of the Aztec mine and amid the rustling, thudding noises of stabled mules.

Janet nodded again. "Now," she said abruptly, "you'll be going back to Lefover. And you won't mention why you came here?"

"No, ma'am." The veterinary surgeon drew himself up to his full four feet nine. "I'll just say, ma'am, that I was called in as consultin' pheelician on an obscure case among the mine mules." He preened himself. Then curiosity overcame him. "Ma'am, who all owns this animal? There ain't many more like him."

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## Stripes Are in



Sally Eilers, film star, pauses for a moment and allows us to view the very latest in striped crepe de chine. Quite swanky—what?

## From a Window in New York

A certain drab and desolate grandeur was always present in our outlook, but sometimes, at sunset, when slate-blue clouds piled mountain-high in the southwest and the mists of our foreground and softly tinted the blank sides of skyscrapers with violet; or when a flaming vapor drove in across the southern sky and the far-away lights of the Queensboro Bridge sparkled like prodigious loops of diamonds, the city took on the dignity of an imperial capital. It became noble as well as vast.

There was one precise spot in our sitting room from which I could glimpse, across the roofs of my millionaire neighbors, a curve in the Park reservoir. Often at dusk this water took on the appearance of a lamp-light bay (with a wall of palaces just beyond) along whose highway a stream of carriages flashed in endless procession. It was my habit to sit at this window, permitting myself to imagine that I was looking out upon some lovely Old World town. At times I proudly displayed that bit of water to my guests. It was our noblest possession, one of those outer glories which partly compensated for the plainness of our walls and the narrow spaces of our floors.

At other times, when a robe of new-fallen snow concealed the gravel roofs of lesser houses, the towering hotels of Park Avenue assumed the majesty of citadels. They were especially impressive at sunrise, although no one but myself ever rose in time to enjoy their dawn-lit walls of flame and gold. It was my habit, however, to call the entire family to the window to share in any especially resplendent phase.

At all hours and seasons Central Park was a solace and a refreshment. One of our regular evening exercises was "a spin around the reservoir," which meant a walk along the path which circled the raised bank of the upper pool. Often as we left Fifth Avenue and mounted the embankment we came upon a scene of enchanting beauty. The misty towers and vague battlements of the houses seen across the pond assumed an ethereal alien charm, rising like dim cliffs of Arizonian planes, sparkling with campfires, their images floating softly on the still surface of the water, while below us motor cars fitted among the trees through purple dusk like monstrous, hastening fireflies.—From "Back-Trailers From the Middle Border," by Hamlin Garland.

own now. He's lost everything else we owned. Maybe he deserved to, but I can't think of that, can I, Gunpowder?"

The big stallion nosed tentatively at the pocket of her riding jacket. "It's just that we must have money, Gunpowder. We must have a lot—such a lot, Gunpowder, or he'll go to prison. And your master has been taking so much from the Aztec that the bankers say it hasn't been paying dividends for years and it can't be any good. They won't buy it and they won't even lend us any money on it. So I've got to make your master leave the mine alone. Honestly, Gunpowder, I'll give him a chance to get away. I promise! I'll tell him about your hoofs and I'll promise him that if he'll go away I won't let them chase him."

(To be continued.)

Canadian Flour Tested in Rome

Rome—The superior qualities of Canadian flour for bread-making purposes were demonstrated in striking fashion before the International Bread-Making Congress here recently by Dr. F. J. Birchard, chemist of the Canadian Grain Commission, Winnipeg, one of the Dominion's delegates to the Congress.

Twelve loaves baked at Bologna with Italian flour, were compared by Dr. Birchard with loaves made with mixtures of Canadian and Italian flour, and finally with bread in which the Canadian product only was used. The Canadian flour was used in increased, the loaves gained in volume and improved in color and texture. The loaf made 100 per cent from Canadian flour was twice the size of that made entirely from Italian.

Ten-Ton Crocodile Caught

Manila—A crocodile weighing 19,800 pounds and measuring sixteen feet, set a new record for the Philippines. The reptile was caught in a pond in the southern province of Caramarines Sur and brought to the Bureau of Science here, but died in a few days.

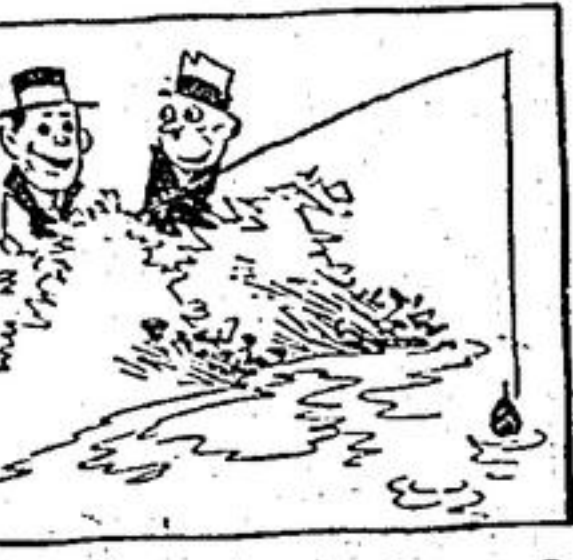
Ray Penetrates 18 Feet of Lead

Panama City—Dr. Arthur H. Compton, noted physicist of the University of Chicago, said recent investigations by his cosmic ray expedition here and in New Zealand, Australia and Hawaii showed a ray which penetrates 18 feet of lead.

It is definitely affected by the earth's magnetic field, he said, and added this indicated it was not light, but a stream of electrical particles.

John Barrymore Jr. Makes His Bow

John Blythe Barrymore, heir apparent of the royal footlight family and son of John and Dolores (Costello) Barrymore, eyes the camera nonchalantly as he poses at Hollywood with his parents.



"You been fishin' here every day, ain't you, William?" "Yep." "Ever ketch anything?" "Nope, but Grandpa sez he kin remember when a man did ketch a fish right in this spot!"



John Blythe Barrymore, heir apparent of the royal footlight family and son of John and Dolores (Costello) Barrymore, eyes the camera nonchalantly as he poses at Hollywood with his parents.

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## Spring-Flowers of Australia

Come, roam with me in the wilds of Australia. In the home paddock, near a house in the western district of Victoria, there grows a tall, wiry grass, and among it, in spring, all sorts of little orchids. There is one tiny green fellow about three inches high with very open mouth (old Nannie used to call him the grandfather); and spider orchids, as though cut out in velvet, in every shade of cream and buff and dark red, with thin, tough stalks. Also a dear little blue one, not unlike an English bluebell, but shorter, more sturdy and of a gentian blue. One is a daffodil yellow and its first cousin has brown on the petals.

It is September, the equivalent of April in northern lands, with glimpses of sunshine and intervals of squally rain. A little later there will be a small flower, possibly of the scabious or cornflower family, but a bright forget-me-not blue with gray stalk and two tiny gray leaves on either side, flat on the ground. A child is with me there. How happily we hunt for the sweet flowers! Overhead the wattle—mimosas you call it—is in full bloom, its fragrance filling the air.

Near by one could find an occasional specimen of what we used to call the she-oak, an untidy, sad-looking tree with long needles for leaves. You know, if you put a cockle shell to your ear, how you get a sound as of the ebbing of the sea? One gets the same soothing of wind and waves under these strange trees. A moment comes back to me, when, riding home in the twilight one summer's evening with a dear companion, we lingered and listened. What did the tree tell us?

Now let us skip over some one hundred and fifty miles or so to the Grampian ranges, in Victoria still. There, under a big hill called ambitiously Mount Abrupt, we find ourselves at its base among a species of low scrub, with very red soil, and all around us heaths tall and short, pale pink, deep pink, white and red, and a bush with

spiky red flowers which may be a grevillea. In such country, there will be later a shrub which we called wild luecia, with long hanging narrow flowers, red near the stem and then so green; and bottle-brush, resembling its name but a brilliant crimson, and with notches rather like small nuts on its scrappy boughs.

Shall we take a long flight now, right away to the Riverina in New South Wales, where the great plains are? There they stretch before us for miles and miles, covered with myriads of everlasting, white and yellow. Is there a wattle here? In every damp hollow we shall find a delightful yetch with large flowers, some mauve and some violet, and a delicious perfume is wafted on the breeze, reminding one of wistaria or, still more of, hyacinth-moreno.

The sun is burning, even in spring and the sky is a brilliant, cloudless blue. The crows are cawing lazily. Presently we are baked and wander toward the river which skirts the plain on one side with a narrow belt of timber. There it is cool and shady; not a tidy riverside, as in England, but with great gum trees and fallen logs, where one may rest and dream a little. In the bends there are tall tattertops, two or three feet high, and mallows similar to those in other countries, but a sweet, half-forgotten fragrance seems to come to me from them—that is missing elsewhere. There are patches of mint beneath one's feet.

Long ago one would have come across an occasional mia-mia, the temporary dwelling of a native, shaped like a tent but made of green branches.

The mountain thrush is calling to his mate, a wild, beautiful note, echoing down the river.

A deep peace reigns. How sweet are reminiscences of other days and other climes.—Contributed.

Imperial Conferences Date Back to 1887

Ottawa, Canada.—Evidence of the universal interest in connection with the forthcoming Imperial Economic Conference which opens in Ottawa on July 21 next is shown by the volume of inquiries being received at official and semi-official sources for information concerning it.

Imperial conferences are by no means a new departure. Their origin dates back to 1886 when the first conference of representatives of different parts of the British Empire was held in London. In that year the Prime Ministers of the various Dominions were in London at the celebrations of the Jubilee of the late Queen Victoria and they seized the occasion for a discussion of matters relating to mutual welfare. Another gathering was held in London in 1907. These two assemblies were known as Colonial conferences and were presided over by the British Colonial Secretary. In 1907 representatives of the various parts of the British Empire again met in London, this time as an Imperial Conference with the Prime Minister of Great Britain as chairman. Since then conferences have been held in the British capital in 1911, 1917, 1918, 1921, 1923, 1926 and 1930. The conference in Ottawa will be the first held outside of Great Britain.

The delegates to the conference represent a total population of 450,000,000 persons and countries that occupy an area of 13,999,782 square miles, or about one-quarter of the known surface of the globe, distributed almost equally over the northern and southern hemisphere. Of the population of 450,000,000 about 60,000,000 are white, the remaining 390,000,000 include 315,000,000 of the native races of India and Ceylon, 40,000,000 of black races, 6,000,000 Malays, 1,000,000 Chinese and 1,000,000 Polynesians, with various other elements. The religions represented include 210,000,000 Hindus; 1,000,000 Mohammedans; 80,000,000 Christians, of which 67,000,000 are classed as Protestants and 13,000,000 as Catholics; 12,000,000 Buddhists; 12,000,000 Animists; 4,000,000 Sikhs, Jains and Parsies; 750,000 Jews, and the remainder Polytheists and others.

There is no fundamental law upon which the constitution of the British Empire rests, but the two main principles underlying its administration are self-government and self-support.

For words are wise men's counters—they do but reckon by them; but they are the money of fools.—Thomas Hobbes.

## World is Growing Colder and Drier

Scientists Declare Forests and Animal Life Migrated South With Climate Changes

Washington.—Evidence that the world is growing cooler and drier—and has been doing so for millions of years—has been found in tropical jungles by two scientist-explorers.

Traces of changes in climate, and also hints of what the world may be like in the future, have been discovered during a strange journey into the past by Dr. Ralph W. Chaney, of the University of California, and Dr. Erling Dorf, of Princeton. Their findings were described by Dr. Chaney in an announcement of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

In the hot, moist rain-forests of Central America and Venezuela the scientists found a sort of "lost world," where plant and animal life closely akin to that of the earth's ancient past still survives.

SECRETS OF PAST FOUND. "In the depths of this forest," said Dr. Chaney, "lie many of the secrets of the past—many of the explanations for conditions on the earth today—suggestions even of what may be expected in the years that lie ahead."

Two-thirds of the trees that lived in western North America millions of years ago, known today by the fossil imprints of their leaves in ancient rocks, have close relatives living in the forests of Venezuela, the scientists found.

These forests and those in Central America, said Dr. Chaney, "give a picture of the past which has endured down to the present in Costa Rica and Guatemala, a picture of California and Oregon as they may be once more if warm ocean currents and winds return to make more hospitable the northern borders of the Pacific."

RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY. "Reconstructing the history of the earth on the basis of the fossil flora of western America and their living equivalents in the mountain forests of Venezuela and Central America, a trend may be observed during past ages from a moist warm climate to the relatively dry and cool conditions of our day," he went on.

"Just what were the causes of this gradual change is a difficult question to answer. Variations in the amount of heat given off by the sun or in the insulating power of the atmosphere, shifting in position of continental masses with a resultant alteration of currents of water and air—all these and many more factors may have contributed.

"The fact of this climatic change is fully demonstrated by the migration southward of the forests, and the animals which lived in them, to the only part of the world where suitable conditions of temperature and moisture still exist."

Humans also may have shared in this southward migration, Dr. Chaney said. He finds evidence of it in the similarity of appearance and mode of living between the Maya Indians of Central America and the Mongol tribes of Asia.

But Old Houses Go

The old house was lovely at all times, but especially so in spring, when the daffodils flamed up in the grass yellow and untended. And it was loveliest of all in the summer dusk. Opposite stretched a great pasture, curving down into the great western sky, and this sky blazed at dusk with orange or scarlet, swirling down as the minutes went, into thin lemon, or vague mauve. The air was full of pricking half-noises, and above them, like the cut of a knife, the shrill of peacocks across in the Macdonald Farm. We children sat out on the front steps in the soft light, clinging closely together; behind us gleamed the one window in the attic, colored with the west, and before us the furlows of vast rich sky, thrust through with that separate and knife-like sound. We were sad; we felt ourselves alone in a wide, bare world.

But houses go. The town pushes out, and clutches the fair meadows, and the uneven lanes are straightened into uniform streets, and the few roofs glow way to hundreds, each after the same fashion, and the single shop to a sprawling dozen. And this was the way of the old house. They built a new one on the opposite side of the orchard, and transplanted the white lilac bushes to a space alongside another weather-beaten fence. It grieved my childish heart to see the enchanted place go.—From "A Victorian Village," by Lizzette Woodworth Reese.

They Weren't There

Two Irishmen made their boat fast to a wharf and went to sleep. The boat broke away in the night and drifted far out to sea. When Mike awoke he could see nothing but water. He shook Pat and said, "Wako up, quick, Pat. We're not here at all."

Pat replied himself and looked out and said, "No, begorra! And we're a long ways from here."

THE JOY AT HAND

Let us enjoy the scenery of the present moment. The landscape around the bend will still be there when our life-train arrives.—Horatio W. Dresser.

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