

THE PANTHER OF THE PANAMA HAT

BY AN EX-OPERATIVE OF THE SECRET SERVICE

CAPTAIN DICKSON TELLS OF ACQUIRING AN UGLY SCAR EARLY IN HIS CAREER

"Yes, I did promise to tell you a story. I got this wound," recalled Capt. Dickson, when I recalled his mention, in a former reminiscence, of the scar on the back of his neck.

"It happened when I was young in the service, and it was due to my ambition and foolishness in a situation that is dangerous in any one's system. The adventure came near costing me my life. I have always connected that affair with a Panama hat, as a Panama hat got me into trouble and got me out again, in the end saving my life."

"The Chinese exultant act has given a lot of trouble to the government in one way and another, but the consequence I am most familiar with is the courting of coolies in the country through Mexico and Canada. Coolie labor is cheap, and it is a profitable job to ship a bevy of them, across the frontier."

"This is a fertile field for the coolie smugglers, and thousands of them in a state of nature, for a week and never met a soul, except it be a bandit, smuggler, cattle thief, herder, or a Texan in the west, who were sent generally from the gulf coast to El Paso. It is much the same except where the railroads cross the Rio Grande and where the small, dirty villages have sprung up."

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"The assignment was not a desirable one, but new men were being tried out on it and I had to serve my apprenticeship. I imagined that there would be little to do, as I was asked to stuff a custom house under a burning sun. This latter idea was correct in part, for the custom house was a formidable frame, and the sun was as hot as a furnace. I found plenty to do besides lolling about the house, however."

"It was next to impossible to track them down, once they had entered the brush. They would make their way to the railroad at various points, traveling in three and three, and armed with the naturalization papers of citizens who had long been residents of our great republic, which is so free with its citizenship."

"The Conchos river at a stage of water which permitted boating, when I reached Presidio, and this indicated that we might make attempts to receive a large consignment of coolies. We had information that hundreds of them were waiting at Chihuahua awaiting the rattle of the river. So we put everything in readiness for their arrival."

"I had arrived at Presidio wearing a heavy Scotch hat. It had been cool when I left Washington and this was my first trip to the Texas border. I saw at once that the hat was a duplicate of the Panama hat, and I advised and bought a Panama hat and wheat and most conspicuous one."

"The next morning after my arrival at Presidio, I was in the morning, I was on the point of telling him that he had made a mistake, but something prompted me to play him along and see what he would do. I eagerly replied: 'Yesterday.'"

"Where is Munson?" he queried, looking me over carefully. "He will be here later," I replied at a venture. "Now let's get down to business," he began, and I replied: "All right," I replied. "We have 300 coming down tonight," he said, and 300 more in three days. The boats are ready and Manuel is in charge at Huastec. I have a chance for anything so good as that end of the line."

highball which he swallowed at a gulp. "Wait until I get my gun and I will go with you, Jarral shouted after me, but I paid no attention to him. "It was half-past ten, and I knew it would be a tight race to be at the appointed place on time. The messenger's horse was standing before the door. I mounted it and set out at a rapid rate for the trail. It was a wild ride through the chaparral that night, my heart beating time to the pounding of the horse's hoofs. At the giant cactus I hobbled the pony and hastened on foot, down the cattle-trail towards the river.

"As I came in sight of the water, shivering white and silver through the bushes, I could make out the bulk of boat approaching, I gripped my revolver nervously and waited for Jarral to land. The cottonwoods, I knew, gave me the advantage of the smugglers, for the moonlight was almost as bright as daylight. The grove of the boat, fringed by the bushes and four men stepped out, I had counted on two. In my hurried ride I had planned out my course of action. I had read somewhere of a soldier capturing a company of the enemy singlehanded, and I intended to follow his plan.

"As the four men advanced upon the shelving bank I gave a tense command to an imaginary posse hid back in the shadows and, with my revolver leveled, I stepped out into the moonlight, covering the nearest of the men. "This trick will have worked with soldiers, but certainly didn't work with border outlaws. No sooner had I stepped from the shadows than the four men reached for their guns, at

the same instant dropping flat upon the ground, where they were almost invisible. "I took hurried aim at the foremost man and pulled the trigger. The hammer fell with a metallic click, which rang sharp and distinct in the still air. Then, with a sickening sinking of the heart, I remembered in pursuit of a band of cattle thieves, I sprang for the shadows of the cottonwoods just as the third revolver cracked. That bullet cut across the back of my neck and I fell unconscious.

"When I came to myself I was in the bottom of a boat and the four men were paddling with might and main for the Mexican shore. My amide-headed attempt to capture them into I realized that the men would have no mercy, that death probably awaited me at the landing. But I was mistaken in this. They did not know that I had recovered consciousness, and I could hear their voices when they passed in their furious rowing to catch their breath.

"They seemed highly excited over my amide-headed attempt to capture them. One of them, a Mexican, wanted to kill me at once, but the American wouldn't hear of it. He said I had been revived and made to look like I knew. This met with general approval, and it was decided that I should be taken to the border town. He had visited that morning in company with the American. They were going to hold me a prisoner there until they had killed the American. "I turned on him and snarled in his face. "You are not big enough to hold me and you shoot me any other way unless you shoot me, and I don't think you want to commit murder." I jabbed out a volume of vile abuse which I was afterwards heartily ashamed of. "I am going," I concluded, and with

me that I did not know where they were. "Well, be sure that Munson brings them along," he admonished. This concluded the interview and I lost no time in getting back to the river to tell Jarral of my adventure. He was delighted at my luck and I rode with him on his back, the horses' hoofs pounding the sand to the south. I could almost have sworn that I was sure that it was David, and I could hear their voices when they passed in their furious rowing to catch their breath.

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Real Estate Exchange

OF WHITEHEAD & MITCHELL Exchange Bank, Birmingham, Mich.

The following is a partial list of Farms, City and Village Lots, and Real Estate generally which we have for sale. As our list is constantly changing, we request that parties will write us if they do not see what they want in this list.

- 21. New house with modern conveniences, with 5000 feet of land of Woodward Avenue, Birmingham, Ala. Price \$12,000.00. Terms on application.
- 22. Farm of 100 acres, Situated near the intersection of the C. & G. R. R. and the Birmingham & Nashville R. R. The farm is well improved with a fine house, barn, and other outbuildings. Price \$10,000.00. Terms on application.
- 23. Farm of 100 acres, Situated near the intersection of the C. & G. R. R. and the Birmingham & Nashville R. R. The farm is well improved with a fine house, barn, and other outbuildings. Price \$10,000.00. Terms on application.
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