

The Golden Hoard

By Edwin Balmer
and Philip Wylie

SYNOPSIS

Fear for the safety of his gold brings Horace Denslow, New York financier, to his death in a Georgia hunting lodge, where he flew with Pilot Davy Allen to cache the precious metal. Prescott, Denslow's manager, is warned by a woman over the phone that the millionaire is flying to certain death. He phones Linda Telfair by long distance to ask her to go to the lodge adjoining her plantation to warn Denslow. She finds him dead. Beside his body on the floor are bits of paper which, pieced together, form a note incriminating the murdered man's son, Gregory, of whom she is fond. Linda conceals the scraps. Linda tells Henriette, Gregory's mother, who divorced the financier when another woman in his life—and this woman's son—made her marriage intolerable, about the note. They agree to be on guard at the inquest, to keep the finding secret. Davy Allen, Denslow's pilot and confidant, is the "other woman's" son. Linda learns. In a midnight walk on the plantation Linda sees Allen's lifeless body in the crook of a tree. Prescott and Linda examine the "conjure stone" found by old Lucius, family retainer, in the swamp where he saw men digging the night of the murder. Cracked by a blow, the stone proves to be a cement shell—filled with bars of gold. The inquest is about to open. Sheriff Clem Clay is getting famous, with the eyes of the nation on the murder. The place swarms with reporters, radio broadcasters, movie sound machines, and the curious who wander about on the land where gold is believed to be hidden.

INSTALLMENT VI.

MANY of the gold hunters remained in the woods. Linda could see them through the trees on both sides of the road. Some of them emerged and surrounded the lodge.

The cars, on the way to the inquest, crept the last hundred yards through a lane in the crowd in the clearing. The radio engineers, the telephone linemen, and the sound trucks were here now, and barefooted "cracker" children from the hills and Negroes from the swamp stood and stared side by side with city tourists from the through routes below.

They all went into the lodge together. It had grown hot during the afternoon. Men without coats, men without ties, and women who slowly waved palm-leaf fans at in close-crowded rows in the big room facing the end where the coroner confronted the jury.

The witnesses passed in front of them, every palm leaf pausing and then fanning faster. Four chairs in the first row had been saved. Linda sat down before she recognized that, in the row behind her, were her mother and Dan, and next her but for one person was the casual, competent Kate Kelly.

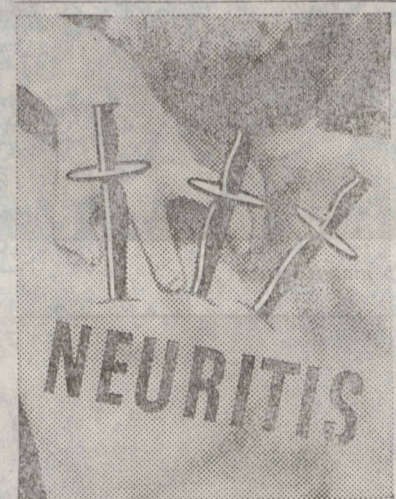
Between Kate and Linda was a small, lovely young woman, very tense and abstracted. She held a letter in her hands which she pressed tight clasped together.

She was, Linda realized, Davy Allen's widow, and she had loved Davy. Her lips were moving, whispering something to herself which Linda could hear.

"For, lo, the wicked bend their bow . . . for, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string. . . ."

It startled Linda out of all proportion to its import. It was a few phrases from the psalms that Davy Allen's widow was repeating, so why should it stir this in Linda?

SHE gazed at the closed door of the room where she had found Mr. Denslow yesterday morning and she saw again the hole in the panel made by the single bullet he had fired at his murderer. Her eyes could not pass the door, but suddenly the room and all its contents, as she had seen them, stood in sharp relief on the photographic membrane of her memory. She could see the book opened on the desk; a prayer book, it had been, and now for the first time she realized that, in the tremendous tension of that moment, she had read the very verse this woman was repeating: "For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string. . . ."



Stop those stabbing pains with "Ben-Gay"—it goes deeper...routs pains faster

"Ben-Gay," the original baume analgesique, penetrates right to the spot of the pain . . . it goes deeper—through skin, flesh, muscles, into the very joints themselves—it stays in longer. This almost immediate hypersensitizing (pain relieving) effect of "Ben-Gay" has never been equaled by its many imitators. It is infinitely more effective than they are. Keep a tube handy . . . use it promptly and generously. Don't suffer pain an hour longer. Every box of the original carries the red "Ben-Gay."

RUB PAIN AWAY WITH
BAUME "BEN-GAY"
IT PENETRATES

Chicago Sunday Tribune

ner; and the sheriff then followed Yerkes out.

The lane through the crowd at the door closed behind them and, while every one waited and watched, it opened again and Clem reappeared, escorting, on his arm, a veiled woman.

She was in deep mourning, with a black widow's cap with only a strip of pure white, and the black veil that fell from it completely concealed her features. From behind the veil she, of course, could see out and she halted with Clay and stood inspecting the gathering.

No one spoke; no one breathed, scarcely, for a moment. She stood perfectly still and straight, only her head turned slowly as she examined those before her in the room. Her cap came a little above Clay's shoulder.

Some one whispered: "The other woman!" Other lips took it up. No one needed to name her; every one knew who she must be—the woman whom, first, Horace Denslow had loved and who had been Davy Allen's mother.

Still the woman stood before them all, studying the room. She had begun her inspection on the side and her head, slowly turning, had not brought her yet to face Gregory and Mrs. Denslow, but it must in a moment. Even the whispers were silenced. The outdoors confusion completely ceased as those, barred from the lodge, strained to catch the result from this intrusion.

Linda wondered if the ears under the veil were hearing. The veiled features now were facing Mrs. Denslow directly and the veiled head ceased to move. The woman stood stock still confronting, before them all, Denslow's lawful son and her who had been Denslow's lawful wife.

There was a loud exclamation, as if every one almost at the same instant had begun to hold breath and now gasped together, and there was, throughout the room, the rustle of movement, the scraping of chairs as eyes everywhere were turning from the woman standing in black to the woman seated in gray—to Mrs. Denslow.

Linda, herself, almost turned to her; almost, but did not. What an ordeal for her! What a frightful ordeal for her who had no veil to hide her!

The woman in black, satisfied with her scrutiny,



Some one whispered: "The other woman!" Other lips took it up. No one needed to name her; every one knew who she must be—the other woman.

turned her back and for the first time her head inclined a little. Clem Clay whispered and she nodded, and he led her to the door with the bullet hole in the panel. He opened the door and she lifted her hands to raise her veil and she preceded him. He closed the door behind them.

The buzz of voices broke out, but nothing proceeded. Nothing could proceed while she was with her dead—her son and his father. The buzz of voices seethed over violently stirred emotions. Here was the stuff of hatred and death—even deliberate, merciless killing; here was the stuff of murder. The very air of the room, which a few minutes ago seemed almost calm and considering, was charged and surcharged with passion and prejudice. It had turned all against Gregg and Mrs. Denslow.

THE door of the room of the dead slowly opened and the woman's hands were dropped from her veil. And now she made no mistake, either. She neither departed and left the inquest nor joined the audience and the witnesses. She turned to the stairs, up which Clay and Yerkes slowly escorted her and she held again every eye until her ascent took her away.

Then Clay reappeared and descended. Yerkes evidently remained with her, wherever she was. Undoubtedly it was within hearing, Linda thought; she was in the upper hall, out of sight herself yet present and hearing. No one could speak during the inquest without consciousness of her. There she would surely be, concealed, as she had lived most of her life, but hearing.

The coroner was plodding through the formal preliminaries of the inquest.

He was a large, well meaning man of forty, a lawyer with a family of his own and a local politician. His name was Milton Rowley and he had a good mind, but he was too indolent to be ambitious. He was far more intelligent than Clem Clay, but whereas Clem frankly embraced the fame coming to him Milton Rowley faltered before the gaze of the world and fumbled.

The fact of the death of Horace Denslow and David Allen already had been made a matter of the personal observation of the jury, and now they received Dr. Ames' formal statement of his findings, together with a detailed report as to the exact courses of the bullets which had caused the deaths. He described also the evidence which led him to believe that Allen had been given "the water cure" before he was killed.

ROWLEY called Henry Prescott.

Mr. Prescott described briefly his association with Mr. Denslow and his acquaintanceship, therefore, with David Allen; he swore to the identification of both. Then he told of the telephone call which came to his office, from some woman still unknown, warning him that Mr. Denslow and Allen were in danger; he told how he was about to phone Mrs. Allen when she called him in great alarm, having received the same warning from some unknown woman.

"You say you have no idea who the woman was who called you, in such alarm, and warned you that Mr. Denslow and Allen would be killed?" the coroner asked.

"I have no idea. To the best of my knowledge I had never heard the voice before, and she refused to give a name."

"Would you know the voice if you heard it again?"

Prescott hesitated, and Linda guessed that his thoughts, like hers—and like that of most of the others in the room—went to the silent, veiled woman upstairs. Was she sitting there with her veil on, Linda wondered.

"I might know it," Prescott replied. "It was a distinctive voice."

"You know the former Mrs. Denslow's voice?"

"Yes. It was not hers; it did not suggest her voice at all."

"Do you know Mrs. Allen's voice?"

"Mrs. David Allen's? Yes; it was not hers. She said she heard from the same woman."

"I mean," corrected Rowley courteously and patiently, "do you know the voice of—David Allen's mother?"

"No. I have never heard it."

"We will leave that for a moment," Rowley proceeded. Did he mean, Linda wondered, that later he would call the silent, veiled woman downstairs and make her speak? "We have established that some one in telephonic communication with New York had knowledge, early on Wednesday forenoon, that Mr. Denslow was killed or would be killed. Did Mr. Denslow leave the city under any unusual apprehension? When did you last see Horace Denslow alive?"

"The previous morning—Tuesday, the eighth of March."

"Where did you see him?"

"In his office on William street. I called on an ordinary bit of business and found him quite as usual."

"Exactly what was your last business with him?"

"I turned over to him an accounting on the sale of his interest in a chemical company and I delivered to him the buyer's check."

"In what amount was that?"

"Four hundred thousand dollars."

"And you call that an ordinary bit of business?"

"It was, for Mr. Denslow in recent months, quite ordinary. He had been withdrawing from his interests in every quarter—selling out his holdings for cash."

"And you brought him the cash?"

"No, I never brought him actual cash. Transactions of that size are not paid in cash. I brought him checks which he seems afterward to have converted into cash—and gold."

"Did you ever personally convert the checks into cash or gold?"

"Never."

"Who did?"

"From my own direct knowledge," Prescott replied frankly, "I cannot answer, but by the process of elimination I know who was the only person Horace Denslow would, in this last year have entrusted with the secret of his hoardings."

"Who was that?"

"The man who now," Prescott began and halted before completing the reply, "who now lies dead beside him—David Allen."

Davy Allen's widow startled a little in her chair; Linda longed to clasp her hand, but on her other side Kate Kelly did that. Upstairs,

Linda remembered, the woman in black was alone except for the deputy sheriff, Yerkes.

"Have you information of the amount which Mr. Denslow and Allen converted into cash and gold?"

"I have. We have traced, in New York, forty-three separate withdrawals of appreciable size on or near to seven different dates, including the last."

"You have totaled these amounts?"

"We have. The total may increase, but it cannot be less. I am naming, you understand, the minimum figure converted into cash and gold."

"What is it?"

"It is fourteen million nine hundred and sixty-two thousand dollars that we have traced."

A CONFUSION outside rose almost to a clamor, for word went out that the witness was telling now of the gold; he was giving clues to the hiding places of the buried gold! Rowley waited for quiet.

"You traced these millions, you said—where?"

"We traced it from its sources solely," Prescott replied. "We have not, unfortunately, been able to trace any of it to any of its—destinations."

"You traced this money out of banks, you mean?" Rowley proceeded.

"Yes, out, but never in again. For months it was perfectly plain that Mr. Denslow was hoarding and hiding millions in cash and gold."

"How much in metal gold?"

"A million and a half; it may be more; again I can give but a minimum figure—a million and a half in metal gold."

A rustle ran through the room.

"Do you know where he hoarded and hid it?"

"No, and I think that no one now living knows unless—"

"Unless—who?"

Then Linda hated him. Not for any further word he said, for he said no more. It was his refusal to speak which shouted louder than any word; it was his refusal to reply while he glanced just once at Gregg and looked away.

Linda wanted to cry out herself. Unable to, she reached for Gregg's hand, but he drew it away and would not look at her, but sat there staring at his father's lawyer and biting his lip. Linda looked past Gregg at his mother and saw that she was deadly pale.

"Unless Niles Evans knew," suddenly Prescott said, and it startled both Gregg and his mother so that they jerked. Like Linda, they had been sure he meant to name Gregg.

"Who is Niles Evans?" the coroner said.

"Mrs. Denslow is to testify here?"

"It is my intention to question her."

"Then may I make a suggestion?"

"What is it?"

"Ask her about Niles Evans."

How the fling of a few words—even a glance without a word—could aggravate everything in that room! A moment ago they all had been against Gregg; now they were against his mother, too!

"We will pass the matter of Niles Evans for the present," Rowley finally ruled. "The point I am endeavoring to clear," he explained to his jury, "is whether the murders might reasonably be ascribed to persons who more or less chanced to come here—to reckless or criminal individuals who previously had no connection with Mr. Denslow and no intimate knowledge of his affairs—or whether the evidence indicates that persons closer to him followed him to this place and killed him and David Allen."

"Exactly!" spoke a voice from above.

"Exactly!"

It was a woman's voice, clear, full, and contralto. It did not seem to descend; it seemed instead to float overhead.

Rowley, every one waited. Every one looked up. Linda, glancing down, caught Prescott cocking his head as if to hear more closely. Was that the voice that had given him the first warning? Linda wanted to know.

It spoke no other word except the one it once repeated. Technically, for such an interruption, there should be a rebuke or a caution against its repetition. Rowley appealed to Clem Clay, and Clem shook his head. Things were going very well for him.

"The point is," Rowley returned to the inquiry, "do you know, Mr. Prescott, whether Mr. Denslow expected to meet any one here. Or who, in ordinary course, might have come here to confer with him?"

"Niles Evans frequently tried to confer with Mr. Denslow in New York, and Mr. Denslow refused to see him. Niles Evans knew about this place. There was nothing to keep him from coming here."

"Who else," continued Rowley, "besides Niles Evans?"

Prescott glanced again at Gregg. He spoke no reply; he did not have to. It was far more damning when he said:

"I would name no one else."

"Name him!"

Again the voice floated overhead; again it seemed to possess no point of emanation.

"Name him!"

"The point is," the coroner caught again at the proceedings, "is there any reason to believe that Mr. Denslow and Allen were victims of marauders or whether there was a particular personal plot against him?"

"As to that," replied Prescott, "I can give only an opinion."

"I can give more!" Linda heard at her left, and Davy Allen's widow was on her feet. She was trembling in the tension of her excitement; she had risen because physically she was unable

to sit still longer, and she had spoken because silence no longer was possible. Her little hand holding the letter tightened convulsively.

"You are?" said the coroner confusedly, for he knew her.

"Mabel Allen. My husband's—there!"

"Yes," said Rowley. "Yes."

"He expected to be killed!"

Milton said: "That's all just now, Mr. Prescott; thank you. . . . Step up here, Mrs. Allen."

She was very small. She told her name and age and how Davy and she had married and had lived in a little house on the edge of Newark. She had married Davy not knowing that he was Mr. Denslow's son; Davy had told her only a little over a year ago, and reluctantly, "because he was afraid that trouble would come from it." He had sworn her to absolute secrecy; in no way was she ever to mention it or use it.

Davy had told her about a year ago that Mr. Denslow and he were putting away gold. He never told her where nor the amounts. She never knew where he was to fly, because Davy never knew himself until they were ready to start. It worried her frightfully—not the flights, but because they carried gold.

BUT nothing happened—until this time. And this time Davy knew something was going to happen, but he did not let her know until too late. He had been killed when his letter reached her.

"What letter?" asked Milton Rowley.

"I have it here." She unclenched her little fist and with difficulty drew the inclosure from the envelope, it was so crumpled.

Milton Rowley carefully and respectfully smoothed it and read aloud:

Hello, Mabel: I am sending you something that sounds queer this time, but keep it. It's important, more than you'll ever guess—unless you're good. As you are.

The eleventh Psalm goes with the place down here. Start with the second verse. Remember that, but don't tell anybody—unless something happens.

"For lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string."

We were here the first time on the second of November; now it's March eighth, but the second date doesn't mean anything, here or at any of the other places.

Just keep this. O. K. Good-night. Davy.

Rowley looked up at her, puzzled; then he read it aloud again and asked:

"When did you receive this?"

"Late yesterday, by the last mail in Newark."

"That verse is from the Psalms?"

"Yes. I looked it up—the second verse of the eleventh Psalm—but he did not quite send it all. It really says: 'For lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.' Now, don't you see what it means? Somebody was laying for Mr. Denslow and him here! He knew it! He couldn't quite send the whole verse, for he wouldn't call himself, I suppose, 'the upright in heart.' He wouldn't name them in a letter before they did anything. Maybe he couldn't really believe they'd do anything, yet he wanted me to know that he knew something was up—if anything happened. And O, it happened!"

Rowley waited a moment and then, instead of questioning her, he had the letter and envelope passed among the jury.

"The postmark, you see, is in Albemarle Tuesday night."

ROWLEY himself crossed quickly to the door of the room in which Mr. Denslow had been killed; he went in and returned with writing paper in his hand. This also he passed to the jury.

"The paper," one of the jurymen observed, "is identical. He wrote that in that room."

"Yes, after their arrival Tuesday," Rowley turned now to Mabel Allen.

"Was it unusual for your husband to include a verse from the Psalms in a letter?"

"Unusual? He'd never done it at all. He didn't know the Bible—not to quote. He wasn't religious at all. He—"

Linda ceased to hear, because of her own excitement. So those words which she had heard on Mabel Allen's lips were not a verse which she merely happened to repeat. She had been saying it because it was in Davy's last letter to her. And Davy was not religious; he had never done anything at all like it before.

Mr. Denslow had not been religious either, but he had been killed with a prayer book before him and opened at that same eleventh Psalm!

What did that mean? What had Mr. Denslow been doing when the men who were to murder him entered the room? He had not been reading the Psalms. He had been doing something else with the book—something which Davy Allen also knew about and which he had tried to tell, guardedly, in the letter to his wife.

Linda almost gasped that strange something. She paid no more attention to the evidence. She was clutching and all but catching the explanations which just eluded her.

Again she was able to see almost photographically the articles in that room where Mr. Denslow lay dead over the desk with the prayer book before him. She could see! If they gave her a minute more now she would know what strange thing it was that Mr. Denslow was doing when he looked up to face the revolver that was emptied into him.

But she had not that minute. Mabel Allen was returning to her seat. "Miss Telfair!" Milton Rowley was saying.

"Will you now please testify?"

(Copyright: 1933: By Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie.) (To be continued.)