

# THE INDIAN DRUM

By William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer

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## INDIAN DRUM NEVER MISSES COUNT

"You mean you want me to marry you—at once, Henry?"  
He drew her to him powerfully; she felt him warm, almost rough with passions. Since that day when, in Alan Conrad's presence, he had grasped and kissed her, she had not let him "realize" their engagement, as he had put it.  
"Why not?" he turned her face up to his now. "Your mother's here; your father will follow soon; or, if you will, we'll run away—Constance! You've kept me off so long! You don't believe there's anything against me, dear? Do you? Do you?"  
"No; no! Of course not!"  
"Then we're going to be married. . . . Right away, we'll have it then; up here; now!"  
"No; not now, Henry. Not up here!"

And they were not married—Henry Spearman and Constance Sherrill—either there or then or ever. For Constance was to marry a worthier man, Alan Conrad—which wasn't his real name—who had so guilt on his soul. And this is the stirring story that revolves about the Indian drum.

The Indian drum! Have you never heard this fascinating tradition? Why, near the northern end of Lake Michigan, just out of the historic straits of Mackinac, there is a dark, primeval wood of pine and hemlock back from the shining beach. And from this wood in time of storm on the water comes the beat of an Indian drum—one beat for every life that goes out as ships go down.

Never, says tradition, has this Indian drum missed the exact count. Nevertheless, once was the drum one beat short—as it seemed to those who go down to the inland sea in ships. But in the end its count was verified. And this is the story of why the Indian drum boomed but twenty-four times when the new steel freighter *Miwaka* went down in 1895 with twenty-five who never made port.

### CHAPTER I.

#### The Man Whom the Storm Haunted.

Near the northern end of Lake Michigan, where the bluff-bowed ocean-carriers and the big, low-lying, wheat-laden steel freighters from Lake Superior push out from the Straits of Mackinac and dispute the right of way, in the island-divided channel, with the white-and-gold, electric-lighted, wireless-equipped passenger steamers bound for Detroit and Buffalo, there is a cove of pine and hemlock back from the shining beach. From this cove—dark, blue, primeval, silent at most times as when the Great Manitou ruled his inland waters—there comes at time of storm a sound like the booming of an old Indian drum. This drum beat, so the tradition says, whenever the lake took a life; and, as a sign perhaps that it is still the Manitou who rules the waters in spite of all the commerce of the cities, the drum still beats its roll for every ship lost on the lake, one beat for every life.

So—men say—they heard and counted the beat of the drum to thirty-five upon the hour when, as afterward they learned, the great steel steamer *Wenota* sank with twenty-four of its crew and eleven passengers; so—men say—they heard the requiem of the five who went down with the schooner *Grant*; and of the seventeen lost with the *Susan Hart*; and so of a score of ships more. Once only, it is told, has the drum counted wrong.

At the height of the great storm of December, 1895, the drum beat the roll of a sinking ship. One, two, three—the hearers counted the drum beats, time and again, in their intermittent booming, to twenty-four. They waited, therefore, for report of a ship lost with twenty-four lives; no such news came. The new steel freighter *Miwaka*, on her maiden trip during the storm—aboard never made her port; no news was ever heard from her; no wreckage ever was found. On this account, throughout the families whose fathers, brothers and sons were the officers and crew of the *Miwaka*, there stirred for a time a desperate belief that one of the men on the *Miwaka* was saved; that somewhere, somehow, he was alive and might return. The day of the destruction of the *Miwaka* was fixed as December 5 by the time at which she passed the government lookout at the straits; the hour was fixed as five o'clock in the morning only by the sounding of the drum.

Storm—the stinging, frozen sleet slash of the February norther whistling down the ice-jammed length of the lake—was assailing Chicago. So heavy was this frost on the panes of the Fort Dearborn club—one of the staldest of the downtown clubs for men—that the great log fires blazing on the open hearths added appreciable light as well as warmth to the rooms.

The few members present at this hour of the afternoon showed by their lazy attitudes and the desultoryness of their conversation the dulling of vitality which warmth and shelter bring on a day of cold and storm. On one, however, the storm had had a contrary effect. With swift, uneven steps he paced now one room, now another; from time to time he stopped abruptly by a window, scraped from it with finger nail the frost, stared out for an instant through the little opening he had made, then resumed as abruptly his nervous pacing with a manner so uneasy and distraught that, since his arrival at the club an hour before, none even among those who knew him best had ventured to speak to him.

The man who was pacing restlessly and alone the rooms of the Fort Dearborn club on this stormy afternoon was the man who, to most people, bodied forth the life underlying all other commerce thereabouts but the least known, the life of the lakes.

The lakes, which mark unmistakably those who get their living from them, had put their marks on him. Though he was slight in frame with a spare, almost ascetic leanness, he had the wiry strength and endurance of the man whose youth had been passed upon the water. He was very close to sixty now, but his thick, straight hair was still jet black except for a slash of pure white above one temple; his brows were black above his deep blue eyes. His acquaintances, in explaining him to strangers, said he had lived too much by himself of late; he and one man servant shared the great house which had been unchanged—and in which nothing appeared to have needed replacing—since his wife left him, suddenly and unaccountably, about twenty years before. People said he looked more French, referring to his father who was known to have been a skin-hunter north of Lake Superior in the '50s but who later married an English girl at Mackinac and settled down to become a trader in the woods of the North peninsula, where Benjamin Corvet was born.

During his boyhood men came to the peninsula to cut timber; young Corvet worked with them and began building ships. Thirty-five years ago he had been only one of the hundreds with his fortune in the fate of a single bottom; but today in Cleveland, in Duluth, in Chicago, more than a score of great steamers under the names of various interdependent companies were owned or controlled by him and his two partners, Sherrill and young Spearman.

He was a quiet, gentle-mannered man. At times, however, he suffered



For Nearly an Hour the Quarrel Continued, With Intermittent Truces of Silence.

from fits of intense irritability, and these of late had increased in frequency and violence. It had been noticed that these outbursts occurred generally at times of storm upon the lake, but the mere threat of financial loss through the destruction of one or even more of his ships was not now enough to cause them; it was believed that they were the result of some obscure physical reaction to the storm,

and that this had grown upon him as he grew older.

Today his irritability was so marked, his uneasiness so much greater than anyone had seen it before, that the attendant whom Corvet had sent, a half hour earlier, to reserve his usual table for him in the grill—"The table by the second window"—had started away without daring to ask whether the table was to be set for one or more. Corvet himself had corrected the omission: "For two," he had shot after the man.

The tables, at this hour, were all unoccupied. Corvet crossed to the one he had reserved and sat down; he turned immediately to the window at his side and scraped on it a little clear opening through which he could see the storm outside. Ten minutes later he looked up sharply but did not rise, as the man he had been awaiting—Spearman, the younger of his two partners—came in.

Spearman seated himself, his big, powerful hands clasped on the table, his gray eyes studying Corvet closely. The waiter took the order and went away.

When he returned, the two men were obviously in bitter quarrel. Corvet's tone, low pitched but violent, sounded steadily in the room, though his words were inaudible. The waiter, as he set the food upon the table, felt relief that Corvet's outburst had fallen on other shoulders than his.

For nearly an hour the quarrel continued with intermittent truces of silence. The waiter, listening, as waiters always do, caught at times single sentences.

"You have had that idea for some time?" he heard from Corvet.

"We have had an understanding for more than a month."

"How definite?"

Spearman's answer was not audible, but it more intensely agitated Corvet; he dropped his fork and, after that, made no pretense of eating.

The waiter, following this, caught only single words. "Sherrill"—that, of course, was the other partner. "Constance"—that was Sherrill's daughter. The other names he heard were names of ships. But, as the quarrel went on, the manners of the two men changed; Spearman, who at first had been assailed by Corvet, now was assailing him. Corvet sat back in his seat, while Spearman pulled at his cigar and now and then took it from his lips and gestured with it between his fingers, as he jerked some ejaculation across the table.

Corvet leaned over to the frosted window, as he had done when alone, and looked out. Spearman shot a comment which made Corvet wince and draw back from the window; then Spearman rose. Corvet looked up at him once and asked a question, to which Spearman replied with a snap of the burnt match down on the table; he turned abruptly and strode from the room. Corvet sat motionless.

The revulsion to self-control, sometimes even to apology, which ordinarily followed Corvet's bursts of irritation had not come to him; his agitation plainly had increased. He pushed from him his uneaten luncheon and got up slowly. He went out to the coat room, where the attendant handed him his coat and hat.

He winced as he stepped out into the smarting, blinding swirl of sleet, but his shrinking was not physical; it was mental, the unconscious reaction to some thought the storm called up. The hour was barely four o'clock, but so dark was it with the storm that the shop windows were lit; motorcars, slipping and skidding up the broad boulevard, with headlights burning, kept their signals clattering constantly to warn other drivers blinded by the snow. The sleet-swept sidewalks were almost deserted; here or there, before a hotel or one of the shops, a limousine came to the curb, and the passengers dashed swiftly across the walk to shelter.

Corvet turned northward along Michigan avenue, facing into the gale. The sleet beat upon his face and lodged in the folds of his clothing without his heeding it.

He continued to go north. He had not seemed, in the beginning, to have made conscious choice of this direction; but now he was following it purposely. He stopped once at a shop which sold men's things to make a telephone call. He asked for Miss Sherrill when the number answered; but he did not wish to speak to her, he said; he wanted merely to be sure she would be there if he stopped in to see her in half an hour. Then—north again. He crossed the bridge. Now, fifteen minutes later, he came in sight of the lake once more.

Great houses, the Sherrill house among them, here face the Drive, the bridge path, the strip of park, and the wide stone esplanade which edges the lake. Corvet crossed to this esplanade. He did not stop at the Sherrill house or look toward it, but went on fully a quarter of a mile beyond it; then he came back, and with an odd

strained and queer expression and attitude, he stood staring out into the lake.

Suddenly he turned. Constance Sherrill, seeing him from a window of her home, had caught a cape about her and run out to him.

"Uncle Benny!" she hailed him with the affectionate name she had used with her father's partner since she was a baby. "Uncle Benny, aren't you coming in?"

"Yes," he said vaguely. "Yes, of course." He made no move but remained staring at her. "Connie!" he



She Thought, "No, Father."

exclaimed suddenly, with strange reproach to himself in his tone. "Connie! Dear little Connie!"

"Why?" she asked him. "Uncle Benny, what's the matter?"

"Has Spearman been here today?" he asked, not looking at her.

"To see father?"

"No; to see you."

"No."

He seized her wrist. "Don't see him, when he comes!" he commanded.

"Uncle Benny!"

"Don't see him!" Corvet repeated.

"He's asked you to marry him, hasn't he?"

"Connie could not refuse the answer."

"Yes."

"And you?"

"Why—why, Uncle Benny, I haven't answered him yet."

"Then don't—don't, do you understand, Connie?"

"She hesitated, frightened for him. 'I'll—I'll tell you before I see him, if you want me to, Uncle Benny,' she granted.

"But if you shouldn't be able to tell me then, Connie; if you shouldn't want to then?" The humility of his look perplexed her; if he had been any other man—any man except Uncle Benny—she would have thought some shameful and terrifying threat hung over him; but he broke off sharply. "I must go home," he said uncertainly.

"I must go home; then I'll come back. Connie, you won't give him an answer till I come back, will you?"

"No." He got her promise, half frightened, half bewildered; then he turned at once and went swiftly away from her.

She ran back to the door of her father's house. From there she saw him reach the corner and turn west to go to Astor street. He was walking rapidly and did not hesitate.

How strangely he had acted! Constance's uneasiness increased when the afternoon and evening passed without his coming back to see her as he had promised, but she reflected he had not set any definite time when she was to expect him. During the night her anxiety grew still greater; and in the morning she called his house up on the telephone, but the call was unanswered. An hour later, she called again; still getting no result, she called her father at his office, and told him of her anxiety about Uncle Benny, but without repeating what Uncle Benny had said to her or the promise she had made to him. Her father made light of her fears; Uncle Benny, he reminded her, often acted queerly in bad weather. Only partly reassured, she called Uncle Benny's house several more times during the morning, but still got no reply; and after luncheon she called her father again, to tell him that she had resolved to get some one to go over to the house with her.

Her father, to her surprise, forbade this rather sharply; his voice, she realized, was agitated and excited, and she asked him the reason; but instead of answering her, he made her repeat to him her conversation of the afternoon before with Uncle Benny, and now he questioned her closely about it. But when she, in her turn, tried to question him, he merely put her off and told her not to worry.

In the late afternoon, as dusk was drawing into dark, she stood at the window, with one of those delusive hopes which come during anxiety that, because it was the time of day at which she had seen Uncle Benny walking by the lake the day before, she might see him there again, when she saw her father's motor approaching. It was coming from the north, not from the south as it would have been if he was coming from his office or his club, and it had turned into the Drive from the west. She knew, therefore, that he was coming from Uncle Benny's house, and, as the car swerved and wheeled in, she ran out into the hall to meet him.

He came in without taking off hat or coat; she could see that he was perturbed, greatly agitated.

"What is it, father?" she demanded.

"What has happened?"

"I do not know, my dear."

"It is something—something that has happened to Uncle Benny?"

"I am afraid so, dear—yes. But I do not know what it is that has happened, or I would tell you."

He put his arm about her and drew her into a room opening off the hall—his study. He made her repeat again to him the conversation she had had with Uncle Benny and tell him how he had acted; but she saw that what she told him did not help him.

Then he drew her toward him.

"Tell me, little daughter. You have been a great deal with Uncle Benny and have talked with him; I want you to think carefully. Did you ever hear him speak of any one called Alan Conrad?"

She thought. "No, father."

"No reference either to any one living in Kansas, or a town there called Blue Rapids?"

"No, father. Who is Alan Conrad?"

"I do not know, dear. I never heard the name until to-day, and Harry Spearman had never heard it. But it appears to be intimately connected in some way with what was troubling Uncle Benny yesterday. He wrote a letter yesterday to Alan Conrad in Blue Rapids and mailed it himself; and afterward he tried to get it back, but it already had been taken up and was on its way. I have not been able to learn anything more about the letter than that. To-day that name, Alan Conrad, came to me in quite another way, in a way which makes it certain that it is closely connected with whatever has happened to Uncle Benny. You are quite sure you never heard him mention it, dear?"

"Quite sure, father."

He released her and, still in his hat and coat, went swiftly up the stairs. She ran after him and found him standing before a highboy in his dressing room. He unlocked a drawer in the highboy, and from within the drawer he took a key. Then, still disregarding her, he hurried back downstairs.

As she followed him, she caught up a wrap and pulled it around her. He had told the chauffeur, she realized now, to wait; but as he reached the door, he turned and stopped her.

"I would rather you did not come with me, little daughter. I do not know at all what it is that has happened—I will let you know as soon as I find out."

The finality in his tone stopped her from argument. As the house door and then the door of the limousine closed after him, she went back toward the window, slowly taking off the wrap. For the moment she found it difficult to think. Something had happened to Uncle Benny, something terrible, dreadful for those who loved him; that was plain, though only the fact and not its nature was known to her or to her father; and that something was connected—intimately connected, her father had said—with a name which no one who knew Uncle Benny ever heard before, with the name of Alan Conrad of Blue Rapids, Kansas.

Who was this Alan Conrad, and what could his connection be with Uncle Benny so to precipitate disaster upon him?

Softening Hard Putty. Putty that has become hardened by exposure, as around window glass, may be softened and removed by the use of the following mixture: Shake 3 pounds quicklime in water and add one pound pearlash, making the whole about the consistency of paint. Apply to the putty on both sides of the glass and let it remain for about 12 hours. It should then be possible to lift the glass out without trouble.

Rich Asphaltic Deposits. Bituminous sands 150-200 feet thick lie along the Athabasca river for 73 miles. Drawn out by the sun the tar runs into deep pools. Similar sands are found at intervals from latitude 57 degrees north to beyond the Arctic circle. The soaked area is possibly 10,000 square miles in extent. This deposit represents the largest known occurrence of solid asphaltic material.

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Misunderstanding. A man from the backwoods of western America visited New York for the first time and went into a restaurant to have dinner. All went well until the waiter brought him a napkin. The eyes of the backwoods man flamed, and pulling a six-shooter from his pocket he gave the waiter a piece of his mind.

"You take that blamed thing away at once," he said evenly. "I reckon I have a handkerchief if I want one, without having them darned hints thrown out."

Rule With No Exceptions. When you meet a wealthy old bachelor you may be sure that you have at last encountered a man who has learned to say no and stick to it.

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We are glad enough to send free samples in the same spirit that we'd hand you our pouch if circumstances permitted. We wish it were possible to save you even the little trouble of writing for Edgeworth.

Edgeworth is a likable smoke. Men who have tried it and found it to be the right tobacco for them never think of smoking other tobaccos. They'll tell you there are many good tobaccos—and there are. And when you offer them your pouch with "stranger" tobacco in it, they may use up a pipeful just to be friendly.

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