THE INDIAN DRUM

By William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer

"NO! NO! HENRY!"

SYNOPSIS.—Wealthy and highly placed in the Chicago business world, Benjamin Corvet is something of a recluse and a mystery to his associates. After a stormy interview with his partner, Henry Spearman, Corvet seeks Constance Sherrill, daughter of his other business partner, Lawrence Sherrill, and secures from her a promise not to marry Spearman until he returns. He then disappears. Sherrill learns Corvet has written to a certain Alan Conrad, in Blue Rapids, Kansas, and exhibited strange agitation over the matter. Alan arrives in Chicago. From a statement of Sherrill it seems probable Conrad is Corvet's illegitimate son. Corvet has deeded his house and its contents to Alan, who takes possession. That night Alan discovers a man ransacking Corvet's apartments. The intruder thinks Alan a ghost and raves of the "Miwaka." After a struggle the man escapes. Next day Alan learns from Sherrill that Corvet has deeded his entire property to him. Introduced to Spearman, Alan is astonished at the discovery that he is the man whom he had fought in his house the night before. Spearman laughs at and defies him. Spearman poisons Constance's mind against Alan. Somebody tries to kill Alan in the night. Corvet's Indian servant, Wassaquam, tells Alan he believes his employer is dead. He also tells him the legend of the Indian drum, which according to old superstition beats once for every life lost on the Great Lakes. Twenty years before, the great freighter Miwaka had gone down with twenty-five on board, but the Drum had sounded for only twenty-four, leaving the inference that one person had been saved. Luke, who has long been blackmailing Corvet, appears, talks mysteriously and dies. Alan goes to the Land of the Drum.

CHAPTER XII—Continued.

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It was in January, 1896, Constance remembered, that Alan Conrad had been brought to the people in Kansas; he then was "about three years old." If this wedding ring was his mother's, the date would be about right; it was a date probably something more than a year before Alan was born. Constance put down the ring and picked up the watch. It was like Uncle Benny's watch—or like one of his watches. He had several, she knew, presented to him at various times—watches almost always were the testimonials given to seamen for acts of sacrifice and bravery. The spring which operated the cover would not work, but Constance forced the cover open.

There, inside the cover as she had thought it would be, was engraved writing. Sand had seeped into the case; the inscription was obliterated in part.

"For his courage and skill in seam . . . master of . . . which he brought to the rescue of the passengers and crew of the steamer Winnebago foundering . . . Point, Lake Erie, Nov. 26, 1890, this watch is donated by the Buffalo Merchants' Exchange."

Uncle Benny's name, evidently, had been engraved upon the outside. Constance could not particularly remember the rescue of the people of the Winnebago; 1890 was years before she was born, and Uncle Benny did not tell her that sort of thing about himself.

Constance left the watch open and, shivering a little, she gently laid it down upon her bed. The pocketknife had no distinguishing mark of any sort. The coins were abraded and pitted disks—a silver dollar, a half dollar and three quarters, not so much abraded, three nickels, and two pennies.

Constance Choked, and Her Eyes Filled With Tears.

Constance choked, and her eyes filled with tears. These things—plainly they were the things found in Uncle Benny's pockets—corroborated only too fully what Wassaquam believed and what her father had been coming to believe—that Uncle Benny was dead. The muffler and the scrap of paper had not been in water or in sand. The paper was written in pencil; it had not even been moistened or it would have blurred. There was nothing upon it to tell how long ago it had been written; but it had been written certainly before June 12. "After June 12," it said.

That day was August the eighteenth.

It was seven months since Uncle Benny had gone away. After his strange interview with her that day and his going home, had Uncle Benny gone out directly to his death? There was nothing to show that he had not; the watch and coins must have lain for many weeks, for months, in water and in sand to become eroded in this way. But, aside from this, there was nothing that could be inferred regarding the time or place of Uncle Benny's death. That the package had been mailed from Manitowoc meant nothing definite. Some one—Constance could not know whom—had had the muffler and the scrawled leaf of directions; later, after lying in water and in sand, the things which were to be "sent" had come to that some one's hand. Most probably this some one had been one who was going about on ships; when his ship had touched at Manitowoc, he had executed his charge.

Constance left the articles upon the bed and threw the window more widely open. She trembled and felt stirred and faint, as she leaned against the window, breathing deeply the warm air, full of life and with the scent of the evergreen trees about the house.

The "cottage" of some twenty rooms stood among the pines and hemlocks interspersed with hardwood on "the Point," where were the great fine summer homes of the wealthier "resorters."

This was Uncle Benny's country. Here, twenty-five years before, he had first met Henry, whose birthplace—a farm, deserted now—was only a few miles back among the hills. Here, before that, Uncle Benny had been a young man, active, vigorous, ambitious. He had loved this country for itself and for its traditions, its Indian legends and fantastic stories. Half her own love for it—and, since her childhood, it had been to her a region of delight—was due to him and to the things he had told her about it. Distinct and definite memories of that companionship came to her. This little bay, which had become now for the most part only a summer playground for such as she, had been once a place where he and other men had struggled to grow rich swiftly; he had outlined for her the ruined lumber docks and pointed out to her the locations of the dismantled sawmills. It was he who had told her the names of the freighters passing far out, and the names of the lighthouses, and something about each. He had told her, too, about the Indians. She remembered one starry night when he had pointed out to her in the sky the Indian "Way of Ghosts," the Milky way, along which, by ancient Indian belief, the souls of Indians traveled up to heaven; and how, later, lying on the recessed seat beside the fireplace where she could touch the dogs upon the hearth, he had pointed out to her through the window the Indian "Way of Dogs" among the constellations, by which the dogs too could make that journey. It was he who had told her about Michabou and the animals; and he had been the first to tell her of the Drum.

The disgrace, unhappiness, the threat of something worse, which must have made death a relief to Uncle Benny, she had seen passed on now to Alan. What more had come to Alan since she had last heard of him?

Word had reached her father through shipping circles in May and again in July which told of inquiries regarding Uncle Benny which made her and her father believe that Alan was searching for his father upon the lakes. Now these articles which had arrived made plain to her that he would never find Uncle Benny; he would learn, through others or through themselves, that Uncle Benny was dead. Would he believe then that there was no longer any chance of learning what his father had done? Would he remain away because of that, not letting her see or hear from him again?

She went back and picked up the wedding ring. The thought which had come to her that this was Alan's mother's wedding ring, had fastened itself upon her with a sense of certainty. It defended that unknown mother; it freed her, at least, from the stigma which Constance's own mother had been so ready to cast. Constance could not yet begin to place Uncle Benny in relation to that ring; but she was beginning to be able to think of Alan and his mother. She held the little band of gold very tenderly in her hand; she was glad that, as the accusation against his mother had come through her people, she could tell him soon of this. She could not send the ring to him, not knowing where he was; that was too much risk. But she could ask him to come to her; this gave that right.

She sat thoughtful for several minutes, the ring clasped warmly in her hand; then she went to her desk and wrote:

"Mr. John Welton,

"Blue Rapids, Kansas.

"Dear Mr. Welton:

"It is possible that Alan Conrad has mentioned me—or at least told you of my father—in connection with his stay in Chicago. After Alan left Chicago, my father wrote twice to his Blue Rapids address, but evidently he had instructed the postmaster there to forward his mail and had not made any change in those instructions, for the letters were returned to Alan's address and in that way came back to us. We did not like to press inquiries further than that, as of course he could have communicated with us if he had not felt that there was some reason for not doing so. Now, however, something of such supreme importance to him has come to us that it is necessary for us to get word to him at once. If you can tell me any address at which he can be reached by telegraph or mail—or where a messenger can find him—it will oblige us very much and will be to his interest."

She hesitated, about to sign it; then, impulsively, she added:

"I trust you know that we have Alan's interest at heart and that you can safely tell us anything you may know as to where he is or what he may be doing. We all liked him here so very much. . . ."

She signed her name. There were still two other letters to write. Only the handwriting of the address upon the package, the Manitowoc postmark and the shoe box furnished clues to the sender of the ring and the watch and the other things. Constance herself could not trace those clues, but Henry or her father could. She wrote to both of them, therefore, describing the articles which had come and relating what she had done.

The next noon she received a wire from Henry that he was "coming up." It did not surprise her, as she had expected him the end of the week.

Late that evening, she sat with her mother on the wide, screened veranda. The lights of some boat turning in between the points and moving swiftly caught her attention. As it entered the path of the moonlight, its look was so like that of Henry's power yacht that she arose. It was his way, as soon as he had decided to leave business again and go to her, to arrive as soon as possible; that had been his way recently, particularly. So the sight of the yacht stirred her warmly and she watched while it ran in close, stopped and instantly dropped a dingey from the davits. She saw Henry in the stern of the little boat; it disappeared in the shadow of a pier . . . she heard, presently, the gravel of the walk crunch under his quick steps, and then she saw him in the moonlight among the trees. She went down on the path to meet him.

"How quickly you came!"

"You let yourself think you needed me, Connie!"

"I did. . . ."

He had caught her hand in his and he held it while he brought her to the porch and exchanged greetings with her mother. Then he led her on past and into the house.

When she saw his face in the light, there were signs of strain in it.

"You're tired, Henry!"

He shook his head. "It's been rotten hot in Chicago; then I guess I was mentally stoking all the way up here, Connie. But first, where are the things you wanted me to see?"

She ran upstairs and brought them down to him. Her hands were shaking now as she gave them to him; she could not exactly understand why; but her tremor increased as she saw his big hands fumbling as he unwrapped the muffler and shook out the things it inclosed. He took them up one by one and looked at them, as she had done. His fingers were steady now, but only by mastering of control, the effort for which amazed her.

He had the watch in his hands.

"The inscription is inside the front," she said.

She pried the cover open again and read, with him, the words engraved within.

"'As master of . . .' What ship was he master of then, Henry, and how did he rescue the Winnebago's people?"

"He never talked to me about things like that, Constance. This is all?"

"Yes."

Henry put the things back in the box. "Of course, this is the end of Benjamin Corvet."

"Of course," Constance said. She was shaking again and, without willing it, she withdrew a little from Henry. He caught her hand again and drew her back toward him. His hand was quite steady.

"You know why I came to you as quick as I could? You know why I—why my mind was behind every thrust of the engines?"

"No."

"You don't? Oh, you know; you must know now!"

"Yes, Henry," she said.

"I've been patient, Connie. Till I got your letter telling me this about Ben, I'd waited for your sake—for our sakes—though it seemed at times it was impossible. You haven't known quite what's the matter between us these last months, little girl; but I've known. We've been engaged; but that's about all there's been to it. Don't think I make little of that; you know what I mean. You've been mine; but—but you haven't let me realize it, you see. And I've been patient, for I knew the reason. It was Ben poisoning your mind against me."

"No! No, Henry!"

"You've denied it; I've recognized that you've denied it, not only to me and to your people, but to yourself. I, of course, knew, as I know that I am here with your hand in mine, and as we will stand before the altar together, that he had no cause to speak against me. I've waited, Connie, to give him a chance to say to you what he had to say; I wanted you to hear it before making you wholly mine. But

He Drew Her to Him Powerfully; She Felt Him Warm, Almost Rough With Passions.

now there's no need to wait any longer, you and I. Ben's gone, never to come back. I was sure of that by what you wrote me, so this time when I started to you I brought with me—this."

He felt in his pocket and brought out a ring of plain gold; he held it before her so that she could see within it her own initials and his and a blank left for the date. Her gaze went from it for an instant to the box where he had put back the other ring—Alan's mother's. Feeling for her long ago gazing thus, as she must have, at that ring, held her for a moment. Was it because of that that Constance found herself cold now?

"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!"

"Not here? Why not?"

She could give no answer. He held her and commanded her again; only when he frightened her, he ceased.

"Why must it be at once, Henry? I don't understand!"

"It's not must, dear," he denied. "It's just that I want you so!"

When would it be, he demanded then; before spring, she promised at last. But that was all he could make her say. And so he let her go.

The next evening, in the moonlight, she drove him to Petoskey. He had messages to send and preferred to trust the telegraph office in the larger town.

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Alan was driving northward along the long, sandy peninsula which separates the blue waters of Grand Traverse from Lake Michigan; and, thinking of Constance, he knew that she was near. He not only had remembered that she would be north at Harbor Point this month; he had seen in one of the Petoskey papers that she and her mother were at the Sherrill summer home. His business now was taking him nearer them than he had been at any time before; and, if he wished to weaken, he might convince himself that he might learn from her circumstances which would aid him in his task. But he was not going to her for help; that was following in his father's footsteps. When he knew everything, then—not till then—he could go to her; for then he would know exactly what was upon him and what he should do.

His visits to the people named on those sheets written by his father had been confusing at first; he had had great difficulty in tracing some of them at all; and, afterward, he could uncover no certain connection either between them and Benjamin Corvet or between themselves. But recently, he had been succeeding better in this latter.

He had seen—he reckoned them over again—fourteen of the twenty-one named originally on Benjamin Corvet's lists; that is, he had seen either the individual originally named, or the surviving relative written in below the name crossed off. He had found that the crossing out of the name meant that the person was dead, except in the case of two who had left the country and whose whereabouts were as unknown to their present relatives as they had been to Benjamin Corvet, and the case of one other, who was in an insane asylum.

He had found that no one of the persons whom he saw had known Benjamin Corvet personally; many of them did not know him at all, the others knew him only as a name. But, when Alan proceeded, always there was one connotation with each of the original names; always one circumstance bound all together. When he had established that circumstance as influencing the fortunes of the first two on his lists, he had said to himself, as the blood pricked queerly under the skin, that the fact might be a mere coincidence. When he established it also as affecting the fate of the third and of the fourth and of the fifth, such explanation no longer sufficed; and he found it in common to all fourteen, sometimes as the deciding factor of their fate, sometimes as only slightly affecting them, but always it was there.

In how many different ways, in what strange, diverse manifestations that single circumstance had spread to these people whom Alan had interviewed! No two of them had been affected alike, he reckoned, as he went over his notes of them. Now he was going to trace those consequences to another. To what sort of place would it bring him today and what would he find there? He knew only that it would be quite distinct from the rest.

The driver turned aside from the road across a cleared field where ruts showed the passing of many previous vehicles; crossing this, they entered the woods. Little fires for cooking burned all about them, and nearer were parked an immense number of farm wagons and buggies, with horses unharnessed and munching grain. Alan's guide found a place among these for his automobile, and they got out and went forward on foot. All about them, seated upon the moss or walking about, were Indians, family groups among which children played.

Alan saw among these looking on, the bright dresses and sport coats of summer visitors who had come to watch. The figure of a girl among these caught his attention, and he started; then swiftly he told himself that it was only his thinking of Constance Sherrill that made him believe this was she. But now she had seen him; she paled, then as quickly flushed, and leaving the group she had been with, came toward him.

He had no choice now whether he would avoid her or not; and his happiness at seeing her held him stupid, watching her. Her eyes were very bright and with something more than friendly greeting; there was happiness in them too. His throat shut together as he recognized this, and his hand closed warmly over the small, trembling hand which she put out to him. All his conscious thought was lost for the moment in the mere realization of her presence; he stood, holding her hand, oblivious that there were people looking; she too seemed careless of that. Then she whitened again and withdrew her hand; she seemed slightly confused. He was confused as well; it was not like this that he had meant to greet her; he caught himself together.

Cap in hand, he stood beside her, trying to look and to feel as any ordinary acquaintance of hers would have looked.

"What is it, Alan? What is it about the Miwaka?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Requests Provisions in Swing Bill.

Washington.—Arizona's request for specific provision in the Swing bill for the participation of that state in the benefits expected to follow federal improvements for the control of the Colorado river will be presented to the House Arid lands irrigation committee when it resumes its sessions, Representative Hayden of Arizona, ranking Democratic member of the committee, has stated. A delegation from Arizona will appear before the committee, Mr. Hayden said, with a recommendation that the flood-protection section of the bill, contemplating the construction of a dam at Boulder cañon, contain definite apportionment to Arizona of electric power and of storage waters for irrigation purposes.

Reports on Grain Trading Bill.

Washington.—The Senate agricultural committee, informally reporting the Capper-Tincher futures trading bill, declared that the fluctuations in prices since the original futures trading act was held unconstitutional, had done much to "confirm the belief of the farmers that prices were being manipulated to his distinct disadvantage." Grain exchanges contend, according to the statement, that the fall in price was due to unusually heavy hedging sales, but the committee statement added, the belief persisted that the drop resulted from "short selling by professional speculators."

Vienna Unemployed Storm Capital.

Vienna.—Several thousand unemployed persons dissatisfied because the government had rejected or delayed its answer in their demands, unhinged the doors of the parliament building and entered, wrecking the furniture.

International Farm Congress May Move Home from Kansas City to Denver.

Denver.—Sites were considered, new directors were added to those already elected, and plans were made for the furthering of the plan for a gigantic Colorado Industrial exposition at a meeting held recently in the club rooms of the Gentlemen's Driving and Riding Club, 1525 Curtis street.

The idea of a great exposition and annual fair and permanent exhibits come into being at a meeting held in the club rooms a few weeks ago.

A. J. Simonson, one of the members of the board of directors, read a letter recently received from the International Farm Congress at Kansas City, in which it was said that Denver was being favorably considered for the permanent headquarters of the association. This, according to Mr. Simonson, would mean the bringing to Denver of a large number of persons engaged in the work of the association, and probably of the establishment of the permanent fair or exhibits of the association in Denver.

Rail Factions Stand Pat.

New York.—"We are like bats; we can't see the way out"—thus did the chief of one of the big five railroad brotherhoods describe the position in which the running trades found themselves after their latest efforts to settle the shopmen's strike, now nearing the end of its eighth week. Peace negotiations centered on conferences between the brotherhood chiefs, cast as mediators, and the executives of more than a score of roads.

BUSY MAN GATHERS THE NICKELS

New York Street Musician Might Be Said to Be a Whole Concert in Himself.

A whole choir seems to burst forth into music along Chambers street these evenings as the workers are rushing along homeward bound, the New York Sun states.

There is a volume of song supported by an organ accompaniment. At first it seems as if some singing band had taken possession of the street. No one would imagine for a moment that one human being could be responsible for all this music.

But the crowd, pausing for a brief second, discovers that this is the case. Drawn up to the curb is a street organ which the owner is operating with one hand. With the other hand he holds a megaphone through which he sings. Not having a third hand, the singer-player cannot accept the tributes of passers-by while the concert is in progress, but this concert, like all such affairs, has its intermission when the orchestra becomes the business manager.